



**DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS**

**UNITED NATIONS SEMINAR ON ASSISTANCE
TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

“Speeding up relief, recovery and reconstruction in post-war Gaza”

United Nations Office at Vienna, 31 March and 1 April 2015

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Executive summary

The United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, organized under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, examined how the international community could support the relief, recovery and reconstruction of Gaza following the 50-day conflict during the summer of 2014. Representatives of governments, intergovernmental organizations, including various United Nations bodies, and civil society, together with international expert speakers and speakers from Palestine, including Gaza, shared their expertise. Participants expressed grave concern about the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, following the latest conflict, which had left over 2,205 people killed (521 children and 283 women), over 20,000 houses destroyed or damaged, and more than 108,000 people homeless. The reconstruction needs were staggering, and the international community had pledged US\$5.4 billion at the Cairo Conference on Palestine: “Reconstructing Gaza” (The Cairo Conference) held on 12 October 2014, which had only been partially honoured. Signs of progress were also reported; in particular, the temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism was making a difference and had started to facilitate reconstruction.

The situation following the conflict had compounded an already untenable situation, as outlined in the 2012 United Nations report "Gaza in 2020: A livable place?" Against this background, the Seminar focused in particular on the water and energy crises as well as on alternative sources of energy, such as solar, the possible Gaza seaport, off-shore gas resources, and desalination plants. These options were discussed in depth: referring to the National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza, experts noted that the building of a desalination plant had been endorsed as the solution to the water crisis even though the plant required a significant and reliable source of energy.

In addition to the humanitarian and relief needs, whose root cause rested on the occupation of Palestinian land, the Seminar clearly noted that the need to lift the blockade had to go hand in hand with Palestinian reconciliation. The Gaza blockade and the ‘divide and rule’ strategy pursued by Israel were related. Gaza was an essential part of a future Palestinian State and the Gaza-West Bank division continued to seriously undermine the two-State solution. While repeatedly calling on donors to honour pledges made at the Cairo Conference, the Seminar welcomed efforts at Palestinian reconciliation designed to bring about political and institutional unity. Access to food, water and energy were fundamental human rights; a sustainable plan to provide them in the Gaza Strip had to be put in place. However, only a political solution could ensure the realization of the two-State solution and a transition from relief to sustainability.

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People was held on 31 March and 1 April 2015 at the United Nations Office at Vienna, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”) and in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 69/20 and 69/21 of 25 November 2014. The theme of the Seminar was “Speeding up relief, recovery and reconstruction in post-war Gaza”.
2. The Committee was represented at the Seminar by a delegation composed of H.E. Mr. Fodé Seck (Senegal) Chair of the Committee; H.E. Mr. Zahir Tanin (Afghanistan), H.E. Mr. Desra Percaya (Indonesia), H.E. Mr. Wilfried Emvula (Namibia) and H.E. Mr. Riyad Mansour (State of Palestine). The Seminar consisted of an opening session, three plenary sessions and a closing session. The themes of the plenary sessions were: “Immediate and longer-term humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip”; “Looking ahead: prioritizing reconstruction tasks”; and “Strengthening cooperation by all parties to provide relief, promote reconstruction and reignite economic development”.
3. During the Seminar, presentations were made by 19 speakers, including Palestinian and Israeli experts. Representatives of 50 governments, three intergovernmental organizations, 12 United Nations system entities and 27 civil society organizations attended.
4. The summary of the Chair of the Committee on the outcomes of the Seminar (see Annex I) was published shortly after the Seminar concluded and is accessible on the website of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat at www.un.org/depts/dpa/qpal/calendar.htm.

II. Opening session

5. **United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon** sent a message to the Seminar, which was read out during the opening session by **Mr. Yury Fedotov**, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna.
6. The Secretary-General noted that the Seminar was taking place more than seven months since the end of the Gaza conflict in the summer of 2014. He welcomed the focus of the Seminar on the energy and water needs of the population in Gaza, as these pressing concerns had taken a greater urgency in the context of a humanitarian crisis. The temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM) brokered by the United Nations had until then enabled access to construction material for over 60,000 Gazan homeowners in support of shelter repairs. In addition, 42 construction and infrastructure projects funded by the international community and the private sector had been approved, and the mechanism was ready to be scaled up.
7. However, the Secretary-General remained concerned at the slow pace of reconstruction in Gaza and the suffering of its people in the aftermath of last summer’s brutal conflict. Tens of

thousands of men, women, children and the elderly still lived in temporary shelters; four children died during the winter due to inadequate housing.

8. The Secretary-General urged the Palestinians to overcome their divisions, which were hurting the people of Gaza. He urgently appealed to donors to honour their financial commitments, including for funding United Nations agencies in Gaza. He also called for the full opening of the crossings into Gaza. He emphasized the need to break the cycle of “build-destroy” and expressed the hope that, in 2015, the Quartet and other stakeholders’ engagement would result in a better chance in addressing issues that seemed intractable.

9. **Mr. Peter Launsky-Tieffenthal**, Director-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs of the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria, said that it was vital for the international community to act urgently to help Gaza civilians, who had paid the highest price.

10. Mr. Launsky-Tieffenthal noted that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had a special relationship with Austria because it was formerly headquartered there; he highlighted the extraordinary efforts of UNRWA staff in helping tens of thousands of refugee families with respect to education and health care. Reconstruction and development in the Gaza Strip depended on efficient aid, but also on politics, he stressed. Freedom of movement and access to Gaza were prerequisites for developing a viable Palestinian State. He welcomed Israel’s recent announcement that it would release previously withheld tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority.

11. Noting that Austrian assistance to Palestine since 1995 amounted to US\$95 million, he said that assistance largely focused on water management, health care and humanitarian aid. Austria also supported the training of Palestinian students and researchers at Austrian universities and the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna. In 2014, Austria provided US\$6.3 million including contributions to UNRWA, contributions via the European Union’s PEGASE (*Mécanisme Palestino-Européen de Gestion de l’Aide Socio-Economique*), and support for the Palestinian Water Authority. As a result of the contribution of Austrian civil society, people from Gaza were receiving medical treatment in Austrian hospitals. During his forthcoming trip to Gaza and Ramallah, he would be focusing on the water supply in Gaza, which was of utmost importance. Austria stood ready to continue assisting the Palestinian people to meet those challenges in order to find a lasting peace of two democratic States living side by side.

12. **H.E. Mr. Fodé Seck**, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, stated that while 2014 was optimistically declared the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the reality was different: negotiations had broken down and violence erupted once again, culminating in one of the deadliest wars Gaza had known; over 2,100 Palestinians had lost their lives, the vast majority of whom were civilians, and over 100,000 homes, schools, places of worship and hospitals, as well as much of Gaza’s already weakened infrastructure had been destroyed. Thousands of Gazans were forced to seek refuge in UNRWA facilities and even there they were not safe from Israeli military assaults. In the aftermath of the conflict, the already dire humanitarian situation in Gaza had become a near catastrophe. Although there had been encouraging first steps, such as pledges made at the Cairo

Conference and the setting up of the tripartite temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, many obstacles remained.

13. The Israeli blockade of the Strip was still being fully enforced. The Gaza ceasefire remained shaky, and the donor monies pledged in Cairo had not been fully disbursed. He emphasized that the situation in Gaza would not be truly resolved until the root causes of the conflict are eliminated: the Israeli occupation must end, including the blockade of Gaza, and the Israeli settlement activities must stop. More than ever, Palestine must become a sovereign, independent and viable State living side-by-side with Israel in peace and mutually assured security. Mr. Seck stressed that despite the bleak picture, positive developments must not be underestimated. The formation of the National Consensus Government and the start of its activities in Gaza were welcomed by the Committee, as was the fact that more countries were recognizing Palestine as a State and that a number of Parliaments had voted for such recognition. The Committee strived to support all efforts to ameliorate the humanitarian situation in Gaza and, above all, to move from relief to reconstruction and development.

14. **Mr. Mohammad Shtayyeh**, Senior Advisor to President Mahmoud Abbas and Representative of the State of Palestine, said that the entire Middle East region was at a crossroads experiencing demographic, political and geographic transformation. The Seminar was taking place only days after Israeli elections in which the Israeli public moved even further to the right.

15. Historically, the Palestinian leadership had moved from an armed struggle to a strategy of peaceful negotiations to achieve the two-State solution. After 24 years of negotiations – the longest peace process in the world – the occupation of Palestine continued. In recent years, the Palestinian struggle had taken a new direction. Although the United Nations Security Council had failed to adopt a resolution calling for a timeframe to end the occupation, Palestinians would continue their international endeavours. Palestine had been recognized by 138 countries as a State; it was a Member State of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and would continue to seek membership in other United Nations organizations. Mr. Shtayyeh called on the European Union to boycott products manufactured in the settlements. In addition, Palestine had acceded to the International Criminal Court, where it would seek justice for the aggressions against Gaza and the illegal settlements on its territory.

16. Mr. Shtayyeh noted that, to date, no more than five per cent of Gaza aid pledged following the 2014 conflict had been delivered. Rather than relief, what was needed was reconstruction and development. He called for an end to the three-State reality of Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. He charged that Israel wanted to kill the possibility of a Palestinian State and keep the Gaza Strip separated from the West Bank. By 2020, the population between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean would be more than 50 per cent Palestinian. Mr. Shtayyeh warned that Israel had the choice of a two-State solution or a one-State solution, which would become a *de jure* apartheid State.

III. Plenary sessions

A. Plenary I

Immediate and longer-term humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip

17. **Mr. Samer Salameh**, Assistant Minister of Labour, State of Palestine, noted that the latest war on Gaza caused tremendous losses and that there was an urgent need for the Strip's reconstruction. According to available data, 2,145 people died in the 2014 war, among whom 581 were children, and huge numbers of children were orphaned as a result of the war. In the Gaza Strip, 25 per cent of the population lost their homes and another 10,000 houses were seriously damaged. Also, hospitals, schools, universities and civil society organization buildings were damaged as well as 269 mosques and two churches. Moreover, Gaza's power plant was seriously damaged.

18. Mr. Salameh said that the destruction of 1,265 commercial entities paralyzed the entire territory as it had a direct impact on work and life conditions. This damage raised unemployment rates to extremely high levels. Further, 80 per cent of the Gaza population is low-income and depend on aid provided by international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and around 57 per cent of inhabitants suffer from food insecurity. Mr. Salameh called for immediate social safeguards because the level of poverty in Gaza had reached alarming levels. He noted that following the Cairo Conference, only 5 per cent of pledges had been received, which had a serious impact on the life and dignity of the people in Gaza.

19. Mr. Salameh pointed out that a large number of schools and universities were damaged and the premises of 222 NGOs were destroyed. Before the war, these NGOs filled gaps where the Government could not play its role fully. According to Mr. Salameh, the infrastructure and the environment were the most affected sectors, severely affecting life in Gaza. Since job creation depends on the economy's rehabilitation, the Government of Palestine should directly cooperate with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and International Labour Organization (ILO). Donor support is required in a post-war setting to create jobs and pay salaries, including for municipal workers. For Mr. Salameh, reconstruction programmes are directly linked to the sustainable development plans prepared by the Palestinian Ministry of Planning; therefore, relief efforts should be undertaken with a focus on future development. Mr. Salameh added that US\$1.2 billion was needed to meet the immediate needs in the Gaza Strip including social protection, health infrastructure and job creation.

20. **Mr. Ahmed Sourani**, Resilient Development Expert based in Gaza, said that more than half of the population of Gaza was excluded from economic activities and a huge number of people lived on the brink of poverty. Many people were wholly dependent on aid, which was often late in reaching them. Unemployment primarily affected young Palestinians, who aspired to a life of dignity, including graduates. Regarding food security, Mr. Sourani spoke about the need to revive the agricultural sector and animal husbandry in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, as well as the need for a strategy to revive fisheries.

21. The great pressure on Gaza's aquifers had resulted in the severe depletion of water resources, which endangered the health and well-being of the population. Thousands of people had no choice but to purchase drinking water on a daily basis; a new water-desalination plant was urgently needed. Mr. Sourani called for positive initiatives, such as the collection of rain water and the decontamination and recycling of water for agricultural needs. He stressed the need to focus on community-based initiatives and micro-projects that could play a small but very positive role in economic revival, and gave examples of kitchen garden food production and small-scale water projects. Mr. Sourani also emphasized the need to strengthen the role played by women in the economy, including in the agricultural sector. A new and comprehensive approach had to be based on shared responsibility, enlisting financial resources both from the international community and the Arab world in particular, while focusing on capacity building at the local level.

22. **Ms. Katleen Maes**, Head of the Gaza Office of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), shared a slide presentation giving an overview of the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Ms. Maes said that 80 per cent of people in Gaza received some form of humanitarian assistance, mostly food aid. At the height of the crisis in 2014, around 500,000 people – 28 per cent of the population of Gaza – were displaced and currently 100,000 remained displaced. There had been massive damage to property and infrastructure: 20,000 homes were damaged beyond repair and 144,000 homes needed repairing. Gaza's power plant was shelled repeatedly until it stopped functioning, and most people in Gaza only had electricity for a maximum of six hours per day. The water and sanitation infrastructure had sustained extensive damage, and 90 per cent of wells, wastewater treatment plants and desalination plants were inoperable due to power cuts and lack of fuel. The capacities of the health sector were exhausted.

23. Most people in Gaza were recovering from three wars in six years, and their psychosocial needs were often neglected, particularly those of the 300,000 traumatized children. Ms. Maes said that the way forward had to involve accountability and a durable ceasefire that addressed the root causes of conflict and lifted the blockade. The priority interventions focused on finding solutions for the plight of internally displaced persons, water, sanitation and hygiene services, and the provision of durable energy. The OCHA Gaza Crisis Appeal Strategic Response Plan had requested US\$551.2 million, but humanitarian assistance could at best stabilize the situation: Ms. Maes warned that this was not a solution. The light of hope was waning quickly, and the people of Gaza could not live without hope.

24. **Ms. Eva Pilipp**, Special Coordinator for Palestine of the Society for Austro-Arab Relations, said that she had recently returned from a two-week visit to the Gaza Strip, which she had visited seven times over the last two years, including during the summer of 2014, during which she reported and documented the impact of the conflict on people. She focused her intervention on the needs of children and young adults in the Gaza Strip who made up 60 per cent of the total Gaza population of 1.7 million. The median age in Gaza was 18 years. According to United Nations figures, 495 children were killed during the 2014 "Operation Protective Edge" and every young person she had interviewed in Gaza said that war had been the worst because of the absence of any 'red lines', which meant that everyone was a target – including children. Trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, increased aggression, fears and other

symptoms are a natural by-product of war. An eight-year-old Gazan child would have witnessed three wars in his or her life. The physical reconstruction needs were of utmost urgency, but it should not be forgotten that the war had destroyed many minds, especially those of children. Every person in the Gaza Strip was in need of therapy, but there was little opportunity to get treatment.

25. Following the war, rates of domestic violence in Gaza were rising, often following a chain of command from husband to wife, and from wife to children. Children were increasingly engaging in extremely aggressive behaviour towards other children, often in reaction to what they had seen at home and during the war. Ms. Pilipp also shared the powerful stories of four children from the Gaza Strip: Rula, Sameer, Basma and Tamer. Their stories spoke of fear, destruction, yearning to leave Gaza for other countries to live a normal life without war, occupation by Israel and oppression by Gazan authorities. They all dream of using art as an escape but accessing materials to build their pieces of art or developing creativity is a challenge.

26. **Mr. Robert Turner**, Director of Gaza Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), spoke via video conference from Gaza about the challenges in the Strip, compounded by the political situation, the blockade and the occupation. The blockade, which was nearing the end of its eighth year, had largely destroyed Gaza's economy and caused massive unemployment and poverty. He said that the 2014 conflict had been incredibly difficult. UNRWA lost 11 members of staff, and it was fortunate that there was no outbreak of communicable diseases. The psychological impact of the conflict, in addition to the massive death, destruction and displacement, could not be underestimated. There was a marked change in the attitude of the Gaza population after the latest war. For the first time, there was illegal emigration from Gaza on a large scale. The border with Egypt had largely been closed for almost two years, and for the vast majority of people, Gaza was indeed a prison. The general population was angry and frustrated, particularly with the political process. The reality was there was no effective government in Gaza, and there had not been one since June 2014. Moreover, given the recent statements by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, a two-State solution seemed further away than ever before.

27. Turning to challenges faced by UNRWA, Mr. Turner said that the Agency's funding shortfall was US\$540 million, which was hampering its capacity to provide relief and assistance. However, the challenges in Gaza were not only financial, he added, noting the difficulties in accessing construction materials. Not a single home destroyed in the summer of 2014 had been rebuilt. Gaza's future was unclear, and there were many questions, including whether the Palestinian Authority would take control of Gaza, whether there would be economic development and job creation, and whether the water situation would improve. He concluded that history had shown that if the root causes of the repeated conflicts were not addressed, the path would once again lead to more conflict.

28. **Mr. John Gatt-Rutter**, European Union (EU) Representative for West Bank and the Gaza Strip, underlined that the European Union was a long-standing and consistent supporter of Palestinians in Gaza at the political level and through its development assistance. The EU had consistently called for the lifting of restrictions on movement and access in respect to Gaza and welcomed efforts at Palestinian reconciliation.

29. The EU addressed needs on the ground, including by paying the salaries of civil servants throughout Palestine, and continued financial contribution of more than 80 million euros per year to UNRWA, making it the agency's largest multilateral donor. The EU also supported strengthening key sectors, notably water and land development and the private sector as well as contributed to job creation and institution building. The EU also supports NGOs working in Gaza on human rights, good governance and rule of law. Following the 2014 conflict, the EU stepped up its humanitarian response and increased its contributions to UNRWA.

30. In this context, the separation of Gaza from the West Bank had been a disaster not only for the living conditions of the Palestinians, but also at the political level, which resulted in two divergent legal and political systems. The EU welcomed the formation of the National Consensus Government in June 2014, and noted the fresh hope culminating in Prime Minister Hamdallah's visit to Gaza the previous week.

31. Turning to reconstruction, Mr. Gatt-Rutter said that although progress was slow, credit should be given to the United Nations for its relentless efforts, even though it had become fashionable to blame the United Nations for what was a collective failure. The international community was unanimous that "Operation Protective Edge" should be the last such operation, and that there should be an end to the status quo and a collective effort to address the root causes of the conflict. Reconstruction efforts should be allowed to proceed without excessive security restrictions or internal political obstacles in order to allow Gaza's economy to revive. Democratic political renewal was needed on the Palestinian side. The EU would continue to use its political influence and its financial and technical means, but ultimately change would come about through the domestic powers, in particular, the Palestinians and the Israelis, and the Egyptians.

32. The representative of **the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** said that in 2014 the world witnessed the most recent Israeli offensive, which left more than 2,000 killed and incalculable infrastructure damages. Since the beginning of the conflict and until December 2014, Venezuela had sent tens of tonnes of food and humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people. Venezuela reiterated its view that the international community must make financial and material efforts to support the Palestinian people.

33. The representative of **Egypt** said that Israel, the occupying Power, was wholly responsible for the blockade. Regarding the Rafah closing, Egypt noted that there were also six Israeli crossings that were constantly closed. The Rafah crossing was not part of the reconstruction process and was strictly a bilateral issue. Egypt faced an ongoing war on terrorism, especially in the northern Sinai desert, which made it very difficult to secure humanitarian assistance and personnel in that area. During the war of 2014, the Rafah crossing was kept open, and Egypt cooperated with the humanitarian exercise, allowing foreigners in Gaza to leave and treating the injured in Egyptian hospitals.

34. The representative of **Spain** said that Spain had made considerable commitments to the Palestinian people and had provided over €500 million in aid, in particular, in support of agriculture, food security and water.

35. The representative of **Morocco** said that the Gaza Strip, which since 2008 had suffered three wars, faced an unprecedented humanitarian disaster. Morocco called on Israel to immediately lift the siege and to re-start negotiations with Palestinians. Morocco's assistance included US\$14 million in humanitarian relief for Gaza, the establishment of a field hospital in Gaza, the opening of Moroccan markets to Palestinian products, the provision of medical treatment in Morocco for injured Gazans, and technical assistance in various areas, from agricultural development to water resources.
36. The representative of **Pakistan** expressed hope that the pledges made at the Cairo Conference would be honoured. The 'build-destroy, build-destroy' cycle had to end. Recent statements by the Israeli leadership seemed to be moving further away from a two-State solution. Pakistan considered a viable two-State solution as the only recipe for stability in the region.
37. The representative of **Afghanistan** called for renewed investment in the Gaza Strip and the immediate lifting of the blockade. Afghanistan was confronted with very similar challenges to those faced in Gaza, particularly with regard to rebuilding housing and providing access to basic services, and expressed strong solidarity with the Palestinian people.
38. The representative of **China** expressed deep concern about the continued unrest in the Middle East and said that the spreading of violent extremism highlighted the urgency of solving the Palestinian issue. China viewed Palestine's attempt to integrate into the international community through the United Nations as an attempt to prompt Israel into an early return to peace talks.
39. The representative of **Turkey** said that between 2004 and 2014, Turkey had provided US\$301 million in development assistance to Palestine; in the aftermath of the Israeli attacks on Gaza in 2014, Turkey had been at the forefront in providing humanitarian aid. Turkey would resolutely continue its efforts for the reconstruction of Gaza and the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
40. The representative of **Indonesia** said that the blockade had had a debilitating impact on the Gaza Strip and expressed particular concern about the denial of clean water to the people of Gaza. The international community should speak with one voice to demand that Israel lift its blockade.

B. Plenary session II

Looking ahead: prioritizing reconstruction tasks

41. **Mr. Haitham Ghanem**, Project Manager for Sunshine4Palestine Association, based in Gaza, addressed the Seminar via Skype from Gaza, because he had been prevented from travelling to Vienna. The Gaza Strip had been heavily affected by energy shortages since 2006, and private and public building, schools, public areas, streets and hospitals only had four to six hours of electricity per day, which had a dramatic impact on the provision of services, particularly of healthcare. He stated that given the geographic position of Gaza and abundant

sunlight, photovoltaic plants, such as those engineered by Sunshine4Palestine, were the best alternative to produce energy. He explained that these plants were reliable and robust, lasted 30 years, produced a constant and predictable supply of energy, and were eco-sustainable. The cost was comparable to that of powering a building for less than one year using a petrol generator.

42. The challenges related to such a power plan included energy storage, because Gaza did not have an accumulation point, the fact that off-grid systems were in general more expensive than on-grid systems, and that photovoltaic plants required large surfaces. Mr. Ghanem described the use of a photovoltaic plant to power the Jenin Charitable Hospital. Prior to the installation by Sunshine4Palestine, the hospital could offer its services only for four hours daily due to energy shortages. With the Plant fully operational, all the clinics, the equipment and the operation room at the hospital were now fully active. He cited the use of ‘trees of light’ or vertical photovoltaic plants to illuminate public spaces, streets and refugee camps with the support of UNRWA. This project also stimulated the production of equipment and the training of technicians.

43. **Mr. Michael Neuwirth**, Coordination Officer with the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) in Jerusalem, drew attention to UNESCO’s 2012 report entitled “Gaza 2020: a liveable place?” With a projected population of 2.1 million by 2020 (from 1.8 million people today), he said that progress in the energy and water sectors, including wastewater treatment and desalination, was practically a pre-requisite for all other reconstruction efforts. Gaza received only 150 to 200 megawatts of the required daily 450 megawatts. This resulted in daily power cuts of 18-20 hours. Without increased and reliable energy supplies, the planned wastewater treatment plants and the large-scale water desalination plant (without which Gaza’s aquifer may be irretrievably damaged by 2020) were highly unlikely. In the short term, continued support for the Gaza power plant was needed, including an improvement in the power distribution system. In the medium-term, importing an additional 150 to 300 megawatts of cost-efficient electricity from Israel was needed to alleviate electricity shortages and supply the planned water treatment and desalination works. In the long term, the conversion of the Gaza Power Plant to natural gas and the increased import of electricity from the Arab Regional Grid via Egypt and offshore gas were key. The Palestinian Government was currently leading efforts on the Gaza Marine field, which would likely be capable of supplying sufficient gas to the power plant. Mr. Neuwirth noted that the import of electricity over the Arab Regional Grid was complicated by the conditions in the Sinai and was thus not considered a medium-term option. These steps had to be taken irrespective of the political context in the Gaza Strip for Gaza to remain a liveable place by 2020, he concluded.

44. **Mr. Simon Henderson**, Director of the Gulf and Energy Program at the Washington Institute, said that the Gaza Marine gas field was located 36 kilometres off the shore of Gaza, at a depth of 600 metres. A series of commercial, technical and political challenges had to be overcome to make the project a reality. The gas field was the largest, single, currently identified economic asset for the Palestinians. In technical terms, the field was comparatively easy to access; however, the investment required was more than US\$800 million, a considerable challenge for any business enterprise. Mr. Henderson stated that the gas field was small, but still commercially viable, and the amount of projected revenues varied between US\$2.4 billion to

US\$7 billion over a 20 year lifespan, making it attractive for investors. The Gaza Marine had enough gas to fulfil the energy demands of the Gaza Strip, but it would be a stretch for it to also meet the energy demands of the West Bank.

45. The question of how Gaza and Israel's gas and electricity flows would be interconnected was key to a viable solution. Mr. Henderson said that the notion of 'gas swapping' and 'electricity swapping' with Israel had already been agreed and should not be a business hurdle, although it may be a political one. Hamas-Israel hostility together with Hamas-Fatah strained relations would make the project difficult to implement, as would be the Palestinian public opposition to joint energy ventures with Israel. Finally, a system whereby the Palestinian population would be paying for electricity had to be introduced, which would be politically unpopular for the Palestinian leadership.

46. **Ms. June Kunugi**, Special Representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Jerusalem, provided an overview of what she referred to as Gaza "de-development". The cycles of conflict have required agencies to shift funds from development to crisis response. She said that almost 95 per cent of Gaza's aquifer was not safe for human use without treatment. The challenges were compounded by the energy crisis. The main problems were over-extraction of the water and pollution from sea-water intrusion, nitrates, pesticides and sewage. The 2014 conflict inflicted an estimated US\$33 million in damages to water infrastructure and losses of US\$94 million to the entire water sector, including through higher operational costs. Due to damages to the water and sanitation infrastructure, access was severely reduced, and in some cases, totally lacking. UNICEF was concerned that 120,000 people had been dependent on water tankers since August 2014, and the per capita water consumption had fallen to less than half of the 100 litres per day recommended by the World Health Organization.

47. Challenges included the delayed entry into Gaza of construction materials, which impeded maintenance and development of infrastructure. Ms. Kunugi said that the three key infrastructure development projects to be implemented urgently were a large-scale desalination plant, a north-south water carrier and additional wastewater treatment plants. In addition, it was important to ensure coordination, including on energy and housing, to prioritize action based on specific needs. According to UNICEF plans, increasing the amount of water imported from Israel and other sources should be also considered. Inaction on these priorities would mean that by 2020, the Gaza aquifer would be irreversibly damaged, serious public health risks would ensue, and Gaza food security and agricultural production would be undermined. Ultimately, she concluded, the livelihood of the population of Gaza would be threatened.

48. **Mr. Shaddad Attali**, Former Minister in-charge of the Palestinian Water Authority, said that the State of Palestine had acceded to the International Criminal Court, and it had many reasons to bring a complaint against Israel which included the water crisis. He emphasized that the water crisis in Gaza had been engineered, and the only solution was a political one for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. He recalled the history of actions to tackle the water crisis in Gaza dating back to 1993, many of which were thwarted for political reasons. Given that there was no alternative source of fresh water, a large-scale desalination plant was an absolute requirement.

49. The Palestinian Government had prepared the National Plan of Gaza Early Recovery and Reconstruction with a total budget estimated at US\$4 billion. The Plan was presented to the donors at the Cairo Conference in 2014, and the Palestinian Government had received pledges of US\$5.4 billion, half of which was earmarked for Gaza Reconstruction. Moreover, Mr. Attili said that the Palestinian Water Authority had prepared a detailed report that addressed the different components of interventions to address the water crisis estimated at US\$720 million.

50. Mr. Attili highlighted that the proposed large-scale desalination facility would cost around US\$450 million and thanked Kuwait for its pledge of US\$200 million. The plant was a necessary investment; before 2035, the desalination capacity would have to increase more than two-fold. If support to build the desalination facility could not be found, then soon there would be no water in Gaza. Mr. Attili informed that on 22 June 2011, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) designated the Desalination Project as its priority project. The construction of the desalination facility and distribution system in Gaza would offer a substantial opportunity for job creation because it would represent the largest single project in the Gaza Strip to date. In addition, the project would also contribute to the political stability of the area. Access to drinking water was a basic human right, said Mr. Attili, calling for a road map and a serious programme to address the water, food and energy crises in the Gaza Strip.

51. **Mr. Fuad Bateh**, International Advisor on water and environment, said that he had been working on advancing the desalination facility for the Gaza Strip project for more than six years, including previously as Senior Adviser at the Union for the Mediterranean. The water crisis in Gaza affected 1.8 million people, and the related impact on the environment had been made abundantly clear by UNEP reports. Mr. Bateh said that the lack of access to clean water in the Gaza Strip was political and man-made in origin; therefore, political solutions were needed. The desalination project was identified as a necessity by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Norway and the European Investment Bank; the State of Palestine included it in its Water Sector Strategy 2012-2032 and in its National Development Plan 2014-2016. In 2011, the 43 Member States of the Union for the Mediterranean, including Israel, endorsed it and mandated the UfM Secretariat to advance the technical preparations.

52. The project would create additional, high quality water and fairly distribute it through a national water carrier, rehabilitate the coastal aquifer and create job opportunities. The overall cost was estimated at €310 million. Arab Gulf countries had suggested that they would meet 50 per cent of the cost -- Kuwait alone pledged US\$200 million for this project; the other 50 per cent should be met by the European Union and other countries. Over the last few years, financial or technical support for the project was expressed by the European Investment Bank, UNEP, the Islamic Development Bank, World Bank and several Member States. Mr. Bateh said that it was unfortunate that after the 2014 conflict, the international community turned its attention to relief instead of development. The European Commission had expressed its readiness to provide a sizeable financial commitment conditional upon Palestine securing a power supply with one of its neighbours and a more explicit commitment from Israel on the integrity of the future facility. In closing, Mr. Bateh called on States to strengthen their political commitment to the project for a more sustainable future for the men, women and children of the Gaza Strip.

53. **Mr. Geoffrey Aronson**, former Director of Research and Publications at the Foundation for Middle East Peace, said that Gaza did not need humanitarian assistance, but rather, an open trading border that functioned according to international standards and that would enable long-suffering Gazans to go back to work. However, since Hamas had come to power in 2006, Israel's no-trade policy reflected a strategic choice to divorce itself from the Strip. After July 2013, Egypt also refused to countenance a trade border between Egypt and Gaza, viewing it as an Israeli responsibility. Mr. Aronson noted that following the 2014 conflict, it was even more urgent to lift the trade embargo; developing a seaport in Gaza was a sensible option.

54. Mr. Aronson stated that there were many alternatives to establish new maritime trade routes to and from Gaza that could make use of Israeli, Egyptian, Turkish and Cypriot facilities. Israel had an interest in a Gaza seaport because it would shift responsibility to Egypt and the international community in a way that protected its security. Egypt also had an interest in reducing pressure to assume responsibility for Gaza, while reducing the tunnel economy. Finally, Turkey had an interest in contributing to Gaza's economy while expanding trade links between Ankara and Israel. An international operator could manage the Gaza port together with Palestinians; goods destined for Gaza could be inspected and bonded in an offshore port. Establishing a port would recreate the historic route that linked the Mediterranean, through Gaza, to the Arab heartland and secure the distant prospect of a passage linking Gaza with the West Bank, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. In closing, he called on the international community, including Austria, to mobilize international support for Gaza's renewal.

55. **Ms. Barbara Capone**, Chief Executive Officer and Project Leader, Sunshine4Palestine Association, briefed the Seminar on the advantages and disadvantages of a single, large desalination plant as opposed to small-scale desalination stations, which she maintained were more sustainable. A single large plant would have a negative impact on the flora and fauna; moreover, it would require large amounts of energy, produced by a large-scale oil-based generator, making Gaza dependent on neighbouring countries. In a context where the water supply network was unreliable, a failure of the single plant would imply the failure of the whole water distribution system, she added. On the contrary, Sunshine4palestine Association advocated for smaller installations as a more sustainable alternative because the energy consumption per plant would be lower, and innovative technologies such as graphene, blue energy and hygroscopic salt could be used. Looking beyond reverse osmosis with new technologies and materials was optimal, also because desalination could be combined to waste-water recycling, thus recovering energy while minimizing pollution. Blue energy, obtained by mixing sweet and salty water to harvest salt, as utilized in the Netherlands, could be combined to graphene, a sturdy material that can filter salt and other pollutants from sea water. Other possible solutions included harvesting water from the air using condensation and the use of hygroscopic salt techniques. Ms. Capone said that the advantage of using small plants, new technologies and water condensers, which used photovoltaic energy, was that they could be tailored to the size and consumption needs of a family or smaller population groups, and be assembled with locally available materials.

56. A representative of **Jordan** emphasized that only a political solution could ensure a transition from relief to sustainability. Jordan, despite its own domestic challenges, had extended assistance to the Palestinian people, but there was clearly a need for an international solution.

57. A representative of **Austria** commended the Palestinian people, and especially the people in Gaza, for their determination to face the challenges they confronted in a very complex environment. Austria commented on the presentation by Ms. Capone, agreeing that it was important to support smaller-scale projects that could more efficiently ease the water crisis in the Gaza Strip. The representative noted that the Foreign Ministry of Austria had planned to send a delegation to the Gaza Strip the following month.

C. Plenary session III
Strengthening cooperation by all parties to provide relief,
promote reconstruction and reignite economic development

58. **Mr. Mohammad Shtayyeh**, President of the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR), emphasized the links between relief, reconstruction and development. The situation in the Gaza Strip was catastrophic. With each of its consecutive wars, Israel had targeted a certain aspect of Gaza's infrastructure. As usual, the destruction was followed by a donor conference, but the US\$5.4 billion pledged at the Cairo Conference was an inflated figure; the real figure was no more than US\$2.7 billion. Donor funds always took longer than expected to be disbursed, and because of budgetary technicalities, it was never equal to the amount pledged. Mr. Shtayyeh said although Palestine was grateful for generous donations from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Algeria, the European Union and many others, the funding received was not sufficient. He then elaborated on the conditions attached to donor funding, such as Palestinian reconciliation and the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza. Gaza families were sometimes forced to sell the cement they were given to help rebuild their homes in order to buy food, but that cement would not be given to them at the next distribution because there was no proof that it was used for reconstruction.

59. He stated that the main players in the reconstruction were: the people of Gaza, Hamas (who wished to replicate Hezbollah's model in Lebanon by becoming part of the Government but also maintaining an independent military), Fatah (who genuinely wanted reconciliation), as well as Israel and the donors. He pointed out how certain countries that repeatedly linked their funding to the Quartet conditions were perpetuating the Palestinian division. Mr. Shtayyeh emphasized that Palestinian reconciliation was essential for reconstruction and to preserve the two-State solution. It was also important to engage the private sector as well as civil society organizations as implementation partners in reconstruction. Against this backdrop, he said that it was unfortunate that the Minister in-Charge of reconstruction in Gaza had resigned the previous day and it was hoped that his successor would be announced as soon as possible to ensure continuous donors' funding. In this context, he called for donors to ensure better coordination with the relevant Palestinian authorities. Most importantly, he urged the international community to put pressure on Israel to lift its siege on Gaza because this was the root cause of all the political and humanitarian challenges faced in the Strip.

60. **Ms. Dana Erekat**, Head of the Aid Management and Coordination Directorate of the Ministry of Planning and Administration Development of the State of Palestine, explained the various lengthy budgetary processes associated with donors' funding that delayed reconstruction activities. Moreover, it had to be noted that amounts pledged at donors' conferences did not

necessarily translate into additional disbursements as funds were simply transferred from one activity to another, usually without replenishing the original basket.

61. The three main types of donor contribution for Palestine involved support to the Government's budget, development assistance, and humanitarian aid, the latter most prominently channelled through UNRWA. Whereas all budget support went through the Ministry of Finance, only about 25 per cent of development assistance did, which meant it was difficult to have an accurate picture of aid going into Gaza, particularly aid given to NGOs. Ms. Erekat specified that of the US\$5 billion announced in Cairo, only US\$2.5 billion was new funding pledged specifically for the Gaza Strip. To date, US\$350 million had been disbursed, and there were signed agreements for another US\$270 million (including the recent US\$200 million by Kuwait). Of the new funding, 81.4 per cent was pledged by Arab countries and Turkey. She pointed out that education and health were the least funded sectors. Finally, Ms. Erekat called on the donor community to meet their pledges for Gaza and to maintain their support to the State of Palestine as a whole.

62. **Mr. Frode Mauring**, Head of the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP/PAPP), spoke about UNDP's role in reconstruction in the Gaza Strip, which focused in areas other than refugee support. 2,205 Gazans were killed in the 2014 conflict (including 521 children and 283 women); 373,000 children required psychological support; approximately 1.1 million Gazan received food aid; 50 per cent of hospitals were destroyed or damaged; over 20,000 houses were destroyed or damaged and more than 108,000 people had been made homeless; 66 per cent of schools were destroyed and 1.4 million people lacked adequate access to water. UNDP had been actively involved in coordinating the removal of the two million tons of rubble generated during the war in Gaza, including schools and homes damaged beyond repair. To date 145,000 tons of rubble had been removed and 55,000 tons crushed, which could be used as input for road repairs. To date, UNDP had provided US\$5.3 million to help make repairs to water infrastructure. Over 5,519 private sector facilities were damaged during the war and so was Gaza's only power plant. Mr. Mauring stressed how the conflict redirected money that could have paid for development to repairs to infrastructure damaged by war. Despite disbursements by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Sweden, Norway, Republic of Korea, UNDP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the funding gap to cover immediate shelter needs of non-refugees amounted to US\$262 million. UNDP was also focused on assisting the economic recovery and jobs creation. While the blockade was the primary cause of the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, the Palestinian split was an impediment to effective governance in Gaza, thus negatively impacting development, he said. Finally, as previous speakers, he emphasized the need for donors to honour the pledges made at the Cairo Conference.

63. **Mr. Nasser Qatami**, Deputy Minister of Labour of the State of Palestine, said that if not for the occupation, Palestinians within their resources could become highly competitive among developed countries. The National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza developed by the Government should be prioritized. Gaza has always received a major part of the national budget spending, but the recurrent wars resulted in a deterioration of the situation there. According to Mr. Qatami, the Ministry of Labour originally estimated that approximately ten

years were needed to rebuild Gaza, but at the slow present pace the reconstruction would require 100 years.

64. In his view, conferences and programmes would not lead to results if the Israeli occupation continued. One of the main consequences of the war was that 80 per cent of the population in Gaza depended on humanitarian aid. In addition, 80 per cent of the labour force was outside of productive activity and dependent on aid. Mr. Qatami noted that it was a well-known fact that Palestinians contributed to education and development in many other countries. But financial resources and the freedom of movement were essential for a successful reconstruction.

65. Mr. Qatami stated that the Palestinian leadership cooperates closely with international partners and all stakeholders while avoiding duplication of efforts, thus creating the necessary conditions for the implementation of National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza in line with the priorities of the Government. The Government of Palestine presented assessments and plans for the reconstruction at the Cairo Conference even though the delivery of pledges was very slow, scarcely reaching 5 per cent. In his view, the main obstacles to reconstruction were the blockade and a lack of resources.

66. **Mr. Rachid Bencherif**, Head of the Grants Unit at the OPEC's Fund for International Development (OFID), said OFID had been established over 40 years ago by the OPEC Member States, its main objective being to support south-south cooperation for the benefit of non-OPEC developing countries. OFID always reflected member countries' priorities and supported the Palestinian people. Mr. Bencherif noted that the eight-year blockade of Gaza was a key element in explaining the current difficult situation. The tragic consequences of the 2014 military operation, the blockade and the total isolation of Gaza further aggravated the humanitarian crisis. OFID set up a special grants programme for the Palestinian people, which was now replenished on a yearly basis.

67. Mr. Bencherif stated that OFID's current strategy for Gaza covered needs in four fields: the reconstruction of destroyed houses, water, energy and the agricultural sector. OFID always made efforts to address humanitarian needs while striving to invest in sustainable interventions for the future State of Palestine, and this was particularly relevant for Gaza.

68. According to Mr. Bencherif, strengthening resilience should be a clear objective for the donor community. Gaza enjoyed 4 to 6 hours – or less – of electricity per day, which was clearly not conducive to economic and social development. All parties should strengthen their cooperation to diversify the energy generation mix. Renewable energy and natural gas should play a bigger role. Mr. Bencherif cited the UNDP/PAPP Solar Energy Project in Gaza to provide electricity for education, health and water supply facilities. In August 2014, when the only power plant in Gaza was bombed and a complete blockade was in place, this project continued to meet some of the electricity needs particularly in health facilities. This project is similar to the one presented by Sunshine4Palestine. One of the project sites was bombed during the war, and OFID approved supplementary funds for the restoration of full capacity.

69. As more than half of the population in Gaza is unemployed, one of the key development enablers is to increase the employability of young Palestinians through both capacity-building and microfinance. This activity was supported by OFID through initiatives such as the scholarship scheme for talented Palestinians operated by UNRWA. OFID was actively looking to build partnerships, such as through a joint project by OFID, UNESCO and the Palestinian Ministry of Education supporting inclusive education in the West Bank and Gaza. This triangular scheme had contributed to developing institutional capacity at the Ministry, and this successful partnership could be duplicated in many other sectors. Synergies among donors were also important and could partially compensate for the severe funding shortfall for Gaza reconstruction.

70. A representative of the **League of Arab States** recalled the history of the occupation, the increasing number of settlements and the confiscation of houses, as well as the situation in Jerusalem where Palestinians suffered daily abuse from extremist groups. He stressed that the international community had a responsibility vis-à-vis Palestine that went beyond aid and should encompass protection, guarantees of non-recurrence of conflict, and an end to the Israeli aggression. The League of Arab States provided US\$100 million every month to the State of Palestine.

71. A representative of **Ecuador** emphasized that a political solution was the only answer to meeting humanitarian needs in Gaza and called on the international community to urge the Security Council to adopt all necessary measures to prompt Israel to end its illegal activities, which contravened both human rights and international humanitarian law.

72. A representative of **Egypt** said that Israel, the occupying Power, was responsible for meeting all the needs of the people living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and for the reconstruction of Gaza. She said that the six check-points between Israel and the Gaza Strip should be opened to lift the siege and allow for freedom of movement between Gaza and the West Bank, adding that the Rafah crossing point had a capacity of a maximum of 400 persons per day, and due to the security situation in northern Sinai, military activities and the curfew, its opening had been hampered. However, she recalled that during the 2014 conflict, Egypt had opened the Rafah crossing to allow humanitarian relief and injured persons to pass through. The representative called for an end to the enablement of terrorist activity inside Egypt under the cover of humanitarian aid, and said that the tunnels used to smuggle arms and people had to be demolished. She added that to eliminate the risks posed to its security by the tunnels, Egypt had been forced to take difficult decisions such as the establishment of a buffer zone. Although Egypt had no legal commitments towards the Gaza Strip, it spared no efforts to help Palestinians. Egypt had played an important role in achieving the 2014 ceasefire and organized the Cairo Donor Conference, which resulted in pledges amounting to more than US\$5 billion.

73. A representative of the **United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)** commented on the transition from relief to resilient recovery and longer-term sustainable development. UNEP underscored the importance of including environmental safeguards and incorporating them into the design, cost and monitoring of the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip. It was important to rebuild Gaza in a strategic way that was both climate-proof and disaster-

resilient, not forgetting the issue of CO2 emissions. UNEP welcomed the innovative approaches taken by organizations such as Sunshine4Palestine.

IV. Closing session

74. In his closing remarks, **H.E. Mr. Riyad Mansour**, the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, said that the tragedy in Gaza was not just humanitarian; it was political. The blockade was immoral, illegal and a crime against humanity. He referred to the estimated US\$7 billion per year that the occupation cost the Palestinian economy, which was almost equivalent to its GDP. An independent Palestine would be a viable, remarkable and successful State that may even, in time, be able to assist its neighbours with economic aid, he asserted. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had correctly said that the international community could not be summoned time and again to make donations for Gaza to be rebuilt only for Israel to destroy it again. Recalling the history of the Palestinian question, which since its inception had been interlinked with the United Nations, Ambassador Mansour explained that was the reason for the presence of 20 United Nations agencies and bodies, including UNRWA dedicated to assisting Palestine.

75. The State of Palestine was acting as a responsible and civilized State by signing international treaties on the rights of women, children, and persons with disabilities, and joining the International Criminal Court. At the same time certain States condoned Israel's illegal behaviour in blockading the Gaza Strip, building settlements and committing crimes against the Palestinian people. If the international community did not have the will to say "yes" to the independence of the State of Palestine, the alternative would be one State in which, in a few years, the majority would be Palestinians.

76. **H.E. Mr. Fodé Seck**, Chair of the Committee, in his closing statement, said the Seminar had provided a very personal insight into the dire situation in Gaza following the 2014 war. Although the appalling situation in Gaza endured, signs of progress were also reported. Colleagues from the United Nations offices on the ground confirmed that the temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism was making a difference and was ready to facilitate large-scale reconstruction. The Committee called on the international donors to honour the pledges so that Gaza could be rebuilt, this time for good. The international community should continue to take practical steps to ensure that the blockade of Gaza was lifted, that its border crossings, including Rafah, were permanently opened, that its harbours could receive ships and its fishers could go about their daily work without hindrance.

Annex I

Summary of the Chair

1. The **United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People**, hosted at United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV) and organized under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, reviewed the pressing immediate and longer-term humanitarian and development needs in the Gaza Strip. During the Seminar representatives of governments, intergovernmental organizations, including various United Nations bodies, and civil society, together with expert speakers from Palestine, other countries and the United Nations, shared their expertise while examining Gaza's severe housing, fuel, power, environmental and water crises.

2. In his message to the Seminar at the opening session, the **Secretary-General of the United Nations** noted the progress represented by the temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism in moving forward with reconstruction. He warned, however, that the suffering of the people and the slow pace of reconstruction in Gaza persisted in the aftermath of last summer's brutal conflict. The Secretary-General urged donors to fulfil their commitments emphasizing the need to break the cycle of "build-destroy, build-destroy, build-destroy". He further called upon the Palestinians to overcome their divisions, noting that long-term stability and sustained reconstruction would only be achieved through the end to the occupation, a full lifting of the blockade on the Gaza Strip and by addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. This would require "a comprehensive peace agreement leading to a viable and independent Palestinian State".

3. The **Director-General of the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria** said that the international community had to help civilians, who continued to pay the highest price. Reconstruction and development in the Gaza Strip depended upon efficient aid but also on a political process and freedom of movement, a pre-requisite to access to Gaza. Austria's assistance to the Palestinian people focused on the water sector, UNRWA and the ICRC. Austria stood ready to continue to assist Palestinians to find tailored solutions to their problems. Realizing the aspiration of all the peoples in the region would entail negotiating a lasting peace between two democratic States living side by side.

4. **The Chairman of the Committee** said that Gaza's already serious housing, fuel, power, Environmental and water crises had intensified greatly in the aftermath of the war in 2014, becoming "a near catastrophe". Although there had been encouraging first steps, many obstacles remained on the road to full recovery. The Committee welcomed the formation of the National Consensus Government in the State of Palestine and the start of its activities in Gaza. Another encouraging development was that an increasing number of States were recognizing the State of Palestine.

5. The **Representative of the State of Palestine** recalled that following years of cumulative destruction, Gaza was only receiving "relief, not reconstruction assistance". The blockade of Gaza had to be removed if serious rebuilding were to take place. The Government likely to

emerge in Israel was openly opposed to the formation of a Palestinian State. Israel wanted to annex 45 per cent of the West Bank “to its settlement paradigm” and keep Gaza isolated from the rest of Palestine. The Palestinian journey to self-determination had evolved from armed struggle to accepting all Security Council resolutions promoting a lasting peaceful solution based on the two-State solution, but the occupation had not ended. The Palestinian leadership, now united under a National Consensus Government, would continue the same struggle through legal and peaceful means in its quest of further international recognition (138 States had already recognized Palestine), by seeking justice through additional Security Council resolutions and the International Criminal Court (ICC). Israel wanted to maintain the status quo, while Palestinians wanted to change it; the international community had a responsibility to induce a change of behaviour in Israel. Due to demographic realities, Israel would have the choice between a two- or a one-State solution. The latter would become a *de jure* apartheid state if Israel maintained current policies.

6. In the ensuing sessions, participants recalled statistics describing the human toll from the 2014 war, including the number of dead, wounded and orphans, and the devastation to Gaza’s physical and economic infrastructure. The number of victims in 2014 had increased dramatically compared to previous conflicts. The destruction of tunnels prevented the only communication with the outside world, and 80 per cent of the Gaza population had become dependent on assistance. Poverty had increased exponentially, requiring psychological support in addition to infrastructure rehabilitation. The last war had a major demoralizing effect because it showed that “there were no red lines”; about 60 per cent of the population in Gaza were children and youth, many of whom were traumatized because they had lived through three wars in a very short time-span. The 2014 war left a sense of pessimism among the population, which had to be reverted. The October 2014 Cairo Conference, combined with the United Nations Secretary-General’s visit to Gaza, provided a degree of optimism, but the population had turned angry and frustrated because of the slow pace of reconstruction and a clear trend towards “de-development”.

7. There was a housing shortage before the 2014 war, and three wars in the last six years had increased the sense of vulnerability and insecurity since the majority of the victims of the latest war were civilians, including children. Local capacities were exhausted after seven years of blockade. Statistics showed that 28 per cent of the Gaza population was displaced at one point; 20,000 homes were uninhabitable and 144,000 required repairs. Hundreds of facilities, including Gaza’s power plant, sewage treatment plant, schools and 75 health facilities, had been damaged. Municipalities were unable to provide water to around 270,000 persons, and 90 per cent of wells and desalination plants could not operate.

8. Participants emphasized that the majority of the population was excluded from any economic activity and in need of social protection; creating permanent or temporary jobs was the only way to lift Gaza from the current situation. International assistance programmes were useful, but only the agricultural, industrial and fishing sectors could give back to people access to a dignified and sustainable livelihood. However, shrinking arable land and scarcity of water presented serious challenges. An integrated reconstruction strategy had to be based on public and private partnerships, capacity-building at the local level, environmental awareness, community-based strategies, strengthening the role of women in the productive sector, special assistance to small and micro enterprises, particularly for sharing knowledge for innovative

technologies including recycling, careful water management and alternative energy sources. Respect for sovereignty – ending the occupation, freedom of movement, including the freedom to export and import goods and services – was paramount.

9. In the discussion, it was underlined that “the crisis in Gaza was man-made”. As long as the root causes of the conflict remained unaddressed, the potential for recurring conflict was dangerously present – a fact also recognized by the UN Secretary-General and the US Secretary of State. However, no tangible progress had been made to end the occupation and the blockade. Some participants pointed to the need to expedite Palestinian reconciliation efforts in order to give the population additional hope.

10. Extensive discussions took place regarding the need to re-establish reliable power supplies in Gaza by repairing the plant that was damaged during the 2014 war as well as through innovative alternative energy projects. The possibilities and challenges regarding the exploitation of Gaza gas resources were also discussed. Similarly, experts debated the challenges facing the construction of a large-scale desalination plant because Gaza’s water resources were compromised and fast diminishing. Non-governmental organizations also presented creative alternatives regarding water collection and energy generation as small-scale solutions for communities. A seaport was described as a necessary option not only for Gaza, but for Palestine as a whole; in the past, a port in Gaza had provided a sea outlet to its hinterland. Such a facility could be operated through modalities that took into consideration security concerns in Israel.

11. Regarding the level of international donor support, Palestinian representatives warned that the figures were misleading. The US\$4.5 billion dollars pledged in October 2014 in the Cairo Conference included funds already used as a bilateral contribution to United Nations agencies as well as budget support for the Palestinian Government; possibly only half of these funds were actually “new money” for Gaza’s reconstruction. There was a general consensus urging donors to honour their financial commitments, including funding for United Nations agencies that carried out vital operations in Gaza. Representatives of Member States took the floor to inform the audience about the level of assistance provided by their respective governments and non-governmental organizations.

12. Representatives of the Palestinian Government expressed gratitude for the international community’s generosity. They encouraged coordination among donors and with the Palestinian Government, which should be the ultimate authority on allocating funds for reconstruction. Existing challenges were acknowledged, but Palestinians were working to maintain unity between the West Bank and Gaza so that they could “get out of their cage and fulfil their basic needs”. The temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism was a positive step, but the Palestinian Government opposed the fact that Israel continued to have veto power on what could be imported or exported from Gaza; therefore, the limited duration of this mechanism had to be emphasized because “Israel had no right” to determine Gaza’s reconstruction needs.

13. In the closing session, the **Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations** provided a historical overview of Palestinians’ ordeal during the 20th century, and reaffirmed his country’s attachment to peaceful means to realize its right to self-determination.

He celebrated that on that very same day, the State of Palestine had joined the International Criminal Court. He further called on the international community to adopt resolutions to stop illegal Israeli behaviour and achieve the two-State solution.

14. **The Chairman of the Committee** summarized the results of the Seminar, acknowledging progress in the level of assistance provided but urging international partners and donors to fully engage in Gaza's reconstruction. He further called upon international donors to honour their generous pledges and to promote practical steps to end Gaza's blockade, to open its border crossing including with Egypt, as well as to ensure that Gaza's harbours received ships and that its fishers continued to work without hindrance.

Annex II**List of participants****Speakers**

Mr. Geoffrey Aronson	Former Director of Research and Publications Foundation for Middle East Peace Washington, D.C.
Mr. Shaddad Attili	Former Minister in-charge of Palestinian Water Authority Ramallah
Mr. Fuad Bateh	International Advisor on environment and water Barcelona
Mr. Rachid Bencherif	Head, Grants Unit The OPEC Fund for International Development Vienna
Ms. Barbara Capone	Chief Executive Officer and Project Leader Sunshine4Palestine Association Vienna
Ms. Dana Erekat	Special Advisor to the Minister Head of Aid Management and Coordination Directorate Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development State of Palestine Ramallah
Mr. John Gatt-Rutter	European Union Representative West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA Jerusalem
Mr. Haitham Ghanem	Project Manager, Sunshine4Palestine Association Manager of the Palestinian Branch Gaza
Mr. Simon Henderson	Baker Fellow and Director, Gulf and Energy Policy Program, The Washington Institute Washington, D.C.

Ms. June Kunugi	Special Representative United Nations Children's Fund Jerusalem
Ms. Katleen Maes	Head of Office United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Gaza
Mr. Frode Mauring	Special Representative of the Administrator United Nations Development Programme Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People Jerusalem
Mr. Michael Neuwirth	Coordination Officer Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Jerusalem
Ms. Eva Pilipp	Special Coordinator for Palestine Society for Austro-Arab Relations Vienna
Mr. Nasser Qatami	Deputy Minister of Labour State of Palestine Ramallah
Mr. Samer Salameh	Deputy Minister of Labour State of Palestine Ramallah
Mr. Mohammad Shtayyeh	President Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction Ramallah
Mr. Ahmed Sourani	Resilience development expert Gaza
Mr. Robert Turner	Director of Operations United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East Gaza

**Delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the
Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People**

H.E. Mr. Fodé Seck	Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations Chairman of the Committee
H.E. Mr. Zahir Tanin	Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations Vice-Chairman of the Committee
H.E. Mr. Desra Percaya	Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations Vice-Chairman of the Committee
H.E. Mr. Wilfried I. Emvula	Permanent Representative of Namibia to the United Nations Vice-Chairman of the Committee
H.E. Mr. Riyad Mansour	Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations

Representative of the Secretary-General

Mr. Yury Fedotov	Director-General, United Nations Office at Vienna Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
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Governments

Afghanistan	H.E. Mr. Ayoob Erfani, Ambassador Mr. Hassan Soroosh, Counsellor Mr. Wahid Amin, Second Secretary Permanent Mission to UNOV
Algeria	H.E. Mr. Mohamed Benhocine, Ambassador Mr. Ali Drouiche, Minister Counsellor Mr. Fouad Chalabi, Attaché Permanent Mission to UNOV
Angola	Mr. Mário de Jesus Luis Pacheco, Second Secretary, Adviser to the Permanent Representative Permanent Mission to UNOV
Argentina	Mr. Horacio Fernández Palacio, Minister and Deputy Permanent Representative Mr. Sebastián N. Kobaru, Third Secretary Permanent Mission to UNOV

Austria	Mr. Peter Launsky-Tieffenthal, Director General for Development, Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs Ms. Stella Avallone, Head of Unit Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs
Belarus	Ms. Ekaterina Ermilina, Counsellor Permanent Mission to UNOV
Brazil	Ms. Vivian Loss Sanmartin, Minister Counsellor, Alternate Permanent Representative Ms. Míriam de Castro Rodrigues Leitão, First Secretary, Alternate Permanent Representative Permanent Mission to UNOV
China	Ms. Shi Wuhong, First Secretary Permanent Mission to UNOV
Colombia	Mrs. Victoria Eugenia Pauwels Tumiñan, Minister Plenipotentiary Permanent Mission to UNOV
Cyprus	H.E. Mr. Marios Ieronymides, Ambassador Embassy in Vienna
Dominican Republic	Ms. Wendy Olivero, Minister Counsellor Embassy in Vienna
Ecuador	H.E. Mr. Wilson Marcelo Pastor Morris, Ambassador H.E. Mr. Fernando Augusto Suarez Moreno, Ambassador/Alternate Permanent Representative Ms. Rosa Vásquez Orozco, Minister/Alternate Permanent Representative Ms. Verónica Gómez Ricaurte, First Secretary/Alternate Permanent Representative Permanent Mission to UNOV
Egypt	H.E. Mr. Khaled Shamaa, Ambassador Mr. Mahmoud Omar, Counsellor Permanent Mission to UNOV Ms. May Khalil, Counsellor, Director of Palestine Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs Cairo
Estonia	Ms. Kristel Keerma, First Secretary Permanent Mission to UNOV

France	H.E. Mrs. Marion Paradas, Ambassador Mr. Jacques Raharinaivo, Deputy Permanent Representative Mr. Fatih Akçal, First Secretary Mr. Sylvain Fournel, First Secretary Mr. Clément Seitz, Attaché Permanent Mission to UNOV
Indonesia	H.E. Mr. Rachmat Budiman, Ambassador Mr. Amrih Jinangkung, Minister Counsellor Mr. Khasan Ashari, First Secretary Permanent Mission to UNOV
Iraq	Ms. Raghad Ali Hasan, First Secretary, Embassy in Vienna
Italy	Mr. Pierluigi Colapinto, First Secretary Permanent Mission to UNOV
Japan	Ms. Sayaka Ueda, Second Secretary Permanent Mission to UNOV
Jordan	H.E. Mr. Hussam Al Hussein, Ambassador Mr. Mohammed Hindawi, First Secretary Permanent Mission to UNOV
Kuwait	Ms. Aboalian Lajeon, Diplomatic Attachée Mr. Al-Obaidi Abdullah, First Secretary Permanent Mission to UNOV
Lebanon	Mr. Salim Baddoura, Chargé d'affaires, a.i. Permanent Mission to UNOV
Malaysia	Ms. Suzilah Mohd Sidek, Chargée d'affaires, a.i. Mr. Anis Wajdi Mohd Yusoff, Second Secretary Permanent Mission to UNOV
Malta	H.E. Mr. Keith Azzopardi, Ambassador Ms. Kristina Farrugia Mr. Joseph Debono Permanent Mission to UNOV
Mexico	H.E. Mr. Luis Alfonso de Alba, Ambassador Mr. Damián Martínez Tagüeña, Counsellor/Alternate Permanent Representative

	Ms. Lourdes Maria Zozaya Rojas, Third Secretary/Alternate Permanent Representative Mr. Gustavo Torres Cisneros, Third Secretary/Alternate Permanent Representative Permanent Mission to UNOV
Morocco	H.E. Mr. Ali El Mhamdi, Ambassador Mr. Mohammed Slaoui, Deputy Head of Mission Mr. Said Dahabi, Counsellor Permanent Mission to UNOV
Namibia	H.E. Mr. Simon Madjumo Maruta, Ambassador Ms. Ahisha Avril Coetzee, First Secretary, Alternate Permanent Representative Ms. Annie Kufwa Naanda, First Secretary, Advisor to the Permanent Representative Mr. Joseph Amutenya, Second Secretary Ms. Ndeshipanda Nghitewapo, Third Secretary Ms. Mary Hamukwaya, Third Secretary Permanent Mission to UNOV
Netherlands	Mr. Chris Terwisscha van Scheltinga, First Secretary Permanent Mission to UNOV
Nigeria	Mr. Gazing J.N. Dangtim, Deputy Head of Mission Permanent Mission to UNOV
Norway	Ms. Frida Kracht Ur, Trainee Mr. Joakim P. Berg, Trainee Permanent Mission to UNOV
Oman	H.E. Mr. Badr Mohamed Al Hinai, Ambassador Mr. Yahya Al Dughaiishi, First Secretary Permanent Mission to UNOV
Qatar	Mr. Ahmed Al-Homaidi, First Secretary Permanent Mission to UNOV
Russian Federation	Ms. Vera Khutorksaya, First Secretary Permanent Mission to UNOV
San Marino	Ms. Sussane Dellago Ms. Elisabetta Bucci Embassy in Vienna

Slovakia	Mr. Albin Otruba, Deputy Permanent Representative Permanent Mission to UNOV
Slovenia	Ms. Barbara Žvokelj, Minister Counsellor Ms. Alja Brinovec Juresa, Assistant Adviser Permanent Mission to UNOV
South Africa	H.E. Mr. Tebogo Seokolo, Ambassador Permanent Mission to UNOV
Spain	Ms. Maria Isabel Vicandi, Deputy Permanent Representative Mr. Ignacio Baylina, Counsellor Permanent Mission to UNOV
Sweden	Mr. Carl Mörner, Alternate Permanent Representative Permanent Mission to UNOV
Switzerland	Ms. Nora Lanari, Attachée Permanent Mission to UNOV
Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Abdul Kareem Khwanda, First Secretary Permanent Mission to UNOV
Tunisia	Mrs. Nabila Rezgui, Adviser to the Permanent Representative Permanent Mission to UNOV
Turkey	H.E. Mr. E. Birnur Fertekligil, Ambassador Mrs. Ayşe İnanç-Örnekol, Counsellor Permanent Mission to UNOV
Ukraine	H.E. Mr. Olexander Scherba, Ambassador Permanent Mission to UNOV
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Badreyya Abdulla M. Alshehhi, Chargée d'affaires, a.i. Dr. Ayad AlYasiri, Adviser Permanent Mission to UNOV
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	H.E. Mr. Ali Uzcategui, Ambassador Mr. Marco Antonio Castillo Parra, Second Secretary Permanent Mission to UNOV

**Non-member States having received a standing invitation to participate as observers
in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and maintaining
permanent observer missions at Headquarters**

State of Palestine	Mohammad Shtayyeh, Senior Advisor to President Mahmoud Abbas H.E. Mr. Salah Abdelshafi, Ambassador and Permanent Observer Mr. Hazem Shabat, Alternate Permanent Observer Mr. Ihab Al-Ghoul, First Secretary Ms. Safa Shabat, First Secretary Permanent Observer Mission to UNOV
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Intergovernmental organizations

European Union	Mr. John Gatt-Rutter, EU Representative Office of the European Union Representative West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA Jerusalem
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League of Arab States	H.E. Mr. Wael Al-Assad, Ambassador, Head of the Mission Mr. Mounir El Fassi, First Secretary Mr. Ahmed Essam Abdelhakim, Second Attaché Mr. Ali Maan, Press Advisor Vienna
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Organization of Islamic Cooperation	Mr. Adel Salameh, Political Officer, Palestine Affairs Department Jeddah
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United Nations organs, agencies and bodies

Food and Agriculture Organizations	Mr. Ciro Fiorillo, Head of Office/Senior Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordinator West Bank and Gaza Strip
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United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	Mr. Tarik Alami, Director of Emerging and Conflict-Related Issues Beirut
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United Nation Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	Ms. Katleen Maes, Head of Office Gaza
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United Nations Development Programme	Mr. Frode Muring, Special Representative of the Administrator Jerusalem
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United Nations Environment Programme	Mr. Hassan Partow, Environmental Affairs Officer Geneva
United Nations Population Fund	Mr. Anders Thomsen, UNFPA Representative State of Palestine
United Nations Children's Fund	Ms. June Kunugi, Special Representative Jerusalem
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	Mr. Robert Turner, Director of Operations Gaza
Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process	Mr. Michael Neuwirth, Coordination Officer Jerusalem
UN Women	Ms. Sabine Machl, Special Representative Jerusalem Ms. Heba H.S. Almadhoun, Programme Analyst Gaza
World Food Programme	Ms. Daniela Owen, Representative and Country Director WFP in Palestine Ramallah Mr. Carlo Scaramella, Deputy Regional Director Regional Bureau Cairo
World Health Organization	Dr Gerald Rockenschaub, Head of Office, Representative's Office, Palestine

Civil society organizations

Association Iceland-Palestine	Mr. Sveinn Runar Hauksson, Chairman Ms. Kristín Sveinsdóttir, Member Reykjavik
Care Austria	Ms. Christine Braun, Programme Officer Emergency Vienna
Fafo Research Institute	Ms. Beata Paragi, Researcher, Marie Curie Fellow Oslo

Fundación Internacional Olof Palme	Mr. Ahed Bsaiso, Palestine and Jordan Representative Ms. Anna Balletbò, President Barcelona
General Union of Palestinian Women	Ms. Amal Hamad, Secretariat Member Ramallah
Hellenic Youth Council	Mr. Ioannis Delakouridis, Vice-President Athens
Human Rights Initiative – Central European University	Ms. Simona Gamonte, Programme Coordinator Ms. Ekaterina Sumina, Project Manager
International Federation of Social Work	Ms. Dunja Gharwal Berne
International Progress Organization	Dr. Hans Köchler, President Vienna
Lazarus Union –CSLI	Mr. Oliver Gruber-Lavin, Secretary-General Mr. Wolfgang Steinhardt, President Mr. Christoph Ptak, Vice-President Vienna
Medico International	Mr. Riad Othman, Representative, Palestine and Israel Office Ramallah
Migratory Letters Campaign - Palestine	Mr. Mohammed S. M. Iqtifan, Campaign Coordinator Gaza
National Center for Community Rehabilitation	Mr. Adnan Shakhsa, Chairman Mr. Sarhan Abukalloub, Capacity Development Program Officer Gaza
Pal Media	Mr. Ezz Eldeen Elghouff, Director Gaza
Palestine Solidarity Campaign	Ms. Sarah Colborne, Director London

Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development	Ms. Amal Khraisha, Director-General Ramallah
Palestinians without Frontiers	Mr. Hashem Aljubairi, Board Member Mr. Khaled Almanai, Public Relations Officer Mr. Nouraldin Hijjo, Volunteer Gaza
Palestinos sin Fronteras	Mr. Mahmoud Eljammali, Chairman of the Board Madrid
Pan Pacific and South East Asia Women's Association of Thailand	Dr. Vanee Meisinger, Representative Vienna
Sawaed Association for Development	Mr. Mohammed Zaqout, Executive Director Mr. Ahmed Alsalmi, Media Officer Mr. Tarek Elhossary, Volunteers Unit Manager Mr. Ghassan Salem, Public Relations Gaza
Society for Austro-Arab Relations	Mr. Friedrich Edlinger, Secretary-General Ms. Eva Pilipp, Special Coordinator for Palestine Vienna
Sunshine4Palestine Association	Mr. Haitham Ghanem, Project Manager, Palestinian Branch Gaza Ms. Barbara Capone, Chief Executive Officer and Project Leader Mr. Ivan Coluzza , Project Coordinator Mr. Peter Van Oostrum, Scientific Team Member, in-Charge of Water Projects Mr. Kristof Retezár Mr. Bojan Masirevic Vienna Ms. Patrizia Cecconi, Humanitarian Impact Ms. Francesca Vitalini, Divulgation, Press Agent Rome Ms. Marina Manca, Communication London
United National Organization for Human Rights	Mr. Ahmed Abdelnaim, Chairman Cairo

Women in Black	Ms. Paula Abrams-Hourani, Founder Vienna
Women's Federation for World Peace International	Mr. Renate Amesbauer, President Vienna
World Council of Churches/ Church Commission on International Affairs	Ms. Teresa Mayr, Project Consultant Geneva
Youth Vision Society	Mr. Belal Alshaer, Director-General Mr. Iyad Alijel, Chairman Mr. Mohammed Kafina, Projects Manager Gaza
