



**DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS**

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

*Agenda 2030: paving the way towards a peaceful, independent and sustainable
State of Palestine*

Stockholm, 19 and 20 May 2016

Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Executive summary	3
I. Introduction	5
II. Opening session	5
III. Plenary sessions	11
A. Plenary session I	11
B. Plenary session II	18
C. Plenary session III	21
IV. Closing session	25

Annexes

I. Summary of the Chair	26
II. List of participants	29

Executive summary

The United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People was organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the theme: “Agenda 2030: paving the way towards a peaceful, independent and sustainable State of Palestine”. Following the adoption by the entire United Nations membership in 2015 of the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the pledge to “leave no one behind”, the Committee was requested to organize a discussion around challenges and opportunities in relation to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for the future of the State of Palestine. The Seminar’s starting point was to acknowledge that the occupation was not only the main political obstacle to an independent State of Palestine, but also the cause of its de-development over the years. Therefore, connecting development efforts to humanitarian action, human rights and the advancement of the peace process was considered to be particularly critical to ensuring the long-term sustainable development of Palestine and its people.

Comparisons with other previously colonized countries exemplified how ending the occupation would boost the economic growth prospects of the State of Palestine. The occupation generated limited or no development, pillaged the natural resources of Palestine, restricted the movement of people and goods and created obstacles to production, trade, market access, job creation and the full utilization of its human potential, including of young people and women.

Noting some social successes in the Palestinian development trajectory, such as the low maternal mortality rate and high literacy rates, especially among women, speakers discussed the economic and political challenges ahead. Ending poverty, reducing inequality, particularly among women and young people, reducing violence against women and enhancing employment were among the priorities identified in the Palestinian National Development Plan for 2017–2022 with a view to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals.

When discussing the lack of economic growth, the Seminar acknowledged that the protocol of 1994 on economic relations between Israel and Palestine had left the Palestinian market in thrall to Israeli products, further weakening the Palestinian economy. The need to change the framework from one of reliance on foreign aid to one of a locally oriented, self-reliant economy was highlighted as a tool to attain sustainable development. The lifting of the Gaza blockade and allowing access to ports and trade were paramount to alleviating poverty, accelerating reconstruction and boosting the Palestinian economy.

The Seminar heard the uplifting experience of the Palestinian winner of the Global Teacher Prize for 2016, Hanan al-Hroub, who shared her education methodology to promote peace and dialogue among young people. Discussions highlighted the need to invest in young people and to break gender stereotypes that were limiting the full human potential of the State of Palestine.

The Seminar warned that the State of Palestine would not be able to achieve sustainable development under occupation. It stressed the need for greater engagement and commitment by

the international community to persuade Israel to end its illegal and disruptive occupation. The Seminar noted that the Palestinian people must not be left behind and ought to be helped to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People was held at the A7 Odenplan Conference Centre in Stockholm on 19 and 20 May 2016, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 70/12 and 70/13. The theme of the Seminar was: “Agenda 2030: paving the way towards a peaceful, independent and sustainable State of Palestine”.
2. The Committee was represented by a delegation headed by Rodolfo Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba), the Vice-Chair of the Committee, and comprising Sacha Sergio Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia), Raden Bagas Hapsoro (Indonesia), Morina Muuondjo (Namibia), Rafael Darío Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) and Riyad Mansour (State of Palestine).
3. The Seminar consisted of an opening session, three plenary sessions and a closing session. The themes of the plenary sessions were: “Sustainable Development Goals: challenges and constraints to implementation under occupation”; “Enabling sustainable solutions for a dignified future”; and “Strengthening global partnerships for reconstruction and sustainable development”.
4. Presentations were made by 12 speakers, including Palestinian and international experts. Representatives of 46 Governments, two intergovernmental organizations and nine civil society organizations participated in the Seminar (see annex II).
5. The summary of the Chair on the outcomes of the Seminar (see annex I) was published shortly after the Seminar concluded and is available from the website of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat (www.unispal.un.org), as are the papers of the experts who provided a copy for distribution.

II. Opening session

6. A statement was delivered on behalf of the Government of Sweden by the Director of the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Mats Karlsson. He stressed the right of the State of Palestine to self-determination and to shape its future politically and economically in accordance with international law. He also reminded the Seminar that, for many years, assistance to Palestine had been a priority for the Government of Sweden and Swedish civil society alike. The country’s provision of assistance enjoyed broad support in Parliament and bilateral assistance to Palestine would be increased by 50 per cent overall until 2019, to a total annual amount of some \$100 million, including support for Palestine refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Noting that support for UNRWA was seen as an investment in security and stability, Sweden had increased its non-earmarked support to the Agency by 15 per cent for 2016, reaching \$40.6 million, with additional earmarked funding also being made available.

7. Turning to the situation on the ground, he noted that recent developments had been increasingly negative, putting the two-State solution at serious risk. While saying that the stated commitments by both parties to pursue that final goal were reassuring, he urged them to translate commitments into specific action by de-escalating tensions, ending settlement expansion and halting home demolitions. Addressing the situation in Gaza, by ending its isolation and fast-tracking reconstruction, was also crucial. He pointed to the need for a constructive approach by all actors involved in order to increase economic opportunities, including a fundamental change to the settlement policy employed by Israel, and the strengthening of Palestinian institutions. That course of action would enhance stability and security for both Israelis and Palestinians and ultimately move the situation towards the two-State solution, which remained the only solution ensuring peace and security for all.

8. A statement was delivered on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations by the Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Robert Piper. He welcomed the Seminar's focus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which provided a universal, integrated and transformative plan of action for people, the planet and prosperity, the three pillars of the Sustainable Development Goals architecture. The 2030 Agenda promised to leave no one behind, but its real test rested in the capacity of all stakeholders to implement it in a spirit of true partnership. He expressed thanks to Sweden for its firm commitment to the 2030 Agenda and for its steadfast support to the people of Palestine, going back to the service of a Swedish diplomat, Folke Bernadotte, who had been assassinated in 1948 while pursuing his duties as the United Nations Mediator for Palestine.

9. He noted that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda would be critical for the transition of Palestine to a peaceful, independent and sustainable State and for the achievement of the two-State solution. He welcomed the initial steps taken by the Palestinian Authority to integrate the 2030 Agenda into its national development plan and the signing of the Paris Agreement by the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, as signs of the commitment towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The United Nations remained firmly committed to helping Palestine to build its capacity to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

10. He observed that there could be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. Connecting development efforts to humanitarian action, human rights and the advancement of the peace process was critical for progress. He stressed that generations of Palestinians had lived under nearly half a century of occupation, fuelling frustration and despair, especially among young people. It was therefore incumbent upon the international community to do everything possible to re-establish a political horizon leading to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. Sustainable peace rested on a two-State solution that met the national aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians, living and prospering side by side in peace and security.

11. The Vice-Chair of the Committee delivered a statement on behalf of the Committee, noting that the Seminar would be focused on the constraints to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Palestine under the Israeli occupation and on the ways in which the 2030 Agenda could help to pave the way towards a peaceful, independent and

sustainable State of Palestine. The Seminar would also be focused on two key constituents of the 2030 Agenda, namely women and young people, and how their empowerment would determine the successful and sustainable development of Palestine and help to realize a peaceful and inclusive society. Lastly, the participants would explore the critical role of international solidarity and partnerships to enable Palestine to reach its development goals.

12. He stressed how, in the particular case of Palestine, the 2030 Agenda would need to be implemented at the same time as addressing the ongoing humanitarian needs in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. Nevertheless, development could still take place amid a situation that also required strong humanitarian support. In fact, the best humanitarian assistance was that which seamlessly segued into sustainable development to provide a bright outlook for the future, which Palestinians so much deserved.

13. The present Seminar was one of the four annual international conferences organized by the Committee to raise awareness throughout the world about the situation of the Palestinian people and to showcase the contribution of the Committee to the realization of their inalienable rights.

14. The Minister for Social Development of the State of Palestine, Ibrahim al-Shaer, stated that his country was committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals as a means to contribute to peace and to enable the enjoyment of greater freedom by its people. Palestine was determined to take the bold and transformative steps needed to shift towards a sustainable and resilient development path. Nevertheless, the Israeli occupation was the main obstacle to sustainable development. He questioned how the Palestinian people could balance the three dimensions of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental - while living under occupation without sovereignty, without being able to enjoy their political and economic rights, nor the use of their natural resources, and in a country without geographical integrity between the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and Gaza. The occupation aggravated existing environmental concerns while the Gaza blockade and years of conflict had caused economic losses worth billions of dollars. International law and relevant United Nations resolutions had never been respected, including in the environmental field, which had led to environmental violations in Palestine, such as the loss of fertile land or the exploitation of oil, gas and water resources by illegal settlement activities.

15. Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would require a holistic approach, beginning with the recognition of the State of Palestine - within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital - by European countries and the United States of America. Building resilient and sustainable economic growth in Palestine would necessitate a just peace agreement based on the principles enshrined in United Nations resolutions, meeting the Palestinians people's basic needs and aspirations for a dignified future.

16. The Government of Palestine was working on its national policy agenda for the period 2017–2022, which would take into account the objectives outlined in the 2030 Agenda. In that regard, the Government had formed a national team for the Sustainable Development Goals. Within the team, the mandate of the Ministry of Social Development would be focused on ending poverty through a transformative social protection system, economic empowerment

programmes, inclusive social services and the establishment of minimum standards for social protection. Priority groups would include women, young people, poor farmers and persons with disabilities, with more resources dedicated to mainstreaming gender and disability issues.

17. Palestine shared the global vision of a world free of poverty, hunger, disease, fear and violence. Palestinians looked forward to a life without brutal military occupation. Palestine sought the support and assistance of the international community to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in terms of accelerating economic growth and policy support. Palestine also needed to draw on the expertise of the United Nations with regard to sustainable development and governance, without which it would be difficult to attain the Goals.

18. The Assistant Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Said Abu Ali, stated that Arab countries supported the 2030 Agenda and that achieving sustainable development in the State of Palestine should be addressed in parallel with a serious effort to dismantle the Israeli occupation and achieve Palestinian independence, leading to peace and prosperity for the entire region. Sustainable development plans in the State of Palestine continued to be hampered by the challenges and obstacles resulting from the occupation. Achieving freedom, social justice and dignity and combating poverty and hunger while providing education and health were just some of the goals that the Palestinian people had struggled to attain for many decades, but to no avail owing to restrictions imposed by the occupation, including the total control of the country's natural resources.

19. In that context, the implementation of the sustainable development agenda carried a particular significance for Palestine and constituted a challenge for the international community, which should not consider itself relieved of its responsibilities. On the contrary, the challenges faced by the State of Palestine should motivate the international community to do its utmost to end the Israeli occupation, including through international partnerships aimed at promoting the capacity of Palestinian State institutions. The international community should endeavour to end the conflict, not just manage it, by providing protection for the Palestinian people, reaffirming the framework of the peace process based on the Security Council principles and stopping the illegal settlement activities, which undermined the prospect of the two-State solution. Therefore, his organization fully supported the French initiative. In closing, he reiterated that the States members of the League of Arab States were committed to actively and effectively contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

20. The representative of Indonesia said that it was important that other countries considered following the example of Sweden in recognizing the State of Palestine and providing assistance to the Palestinian people. In that regard, Indonesia and Sweden had agreed to cooperate to improve capacity-building programmes in Palestine through greater triangular cooperation. Indonesia had decided to establish a consulate in Ramallah, which would open later in 2016. Moreover, in 2015, Indonesia had hosted the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem and Indonesia also provided some \$100 million annually in assistance to the State of Palestine.

21. The representative of Tunisia said that her country stood firmly beside the State of Palestine in its quest for peace, independence and sustainability. It also provided bilateral assistance, especially for programmes aimed at creating opportunities for young people.
22. The representative of Morocco expressed concern that, despite negotiations since the 1990s, the Israeli occupation continued, including confiscation of Palestinian land; in addition, settlers' activities were spreading violence and extremism in the region. Morocco supported the French initiative and a process that would end the Israeli occupation and bring about a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. Morocco had adopted a policy that included diplomatic support to end the Israeli occupation, as well as contributing to the implementation of projects in the Palestinian territory to improve living conditions and the capacities of the Palestinian people, and to deter the spread of extremism and hatred. Morocco intended to present a draft resolution in May 2016 requesting the United Nations Environment Programme to send a delegation of environmental experts to the Gaza Strip to assess the environmental situation there and the impact of the wars in 2012 and 2014.
23. The representative of Malaysia noted that, through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the international community had put forward a vision of a world in which all nations would attain the Sustainable Development Goals and no one would be left behind. It was therefore crucial that Palestinians should not be forgotten. The occupying Power was denying the State of Palestine the right to its land, to its natural resources and to economic growth and continued its blockade of Gaza. Sustainable development could not be realized under those circumstances and without peace and security. Malaysia supported the two-State solution and was committed to achieving that goal. He also expressed the need for international protection for the Palestinian people, which would allow greater humanitarian efforts to take place. The international community and the Security Council should shoulder their responsibilities in ending the occupation. Capacity-building initiatives were the best way to assist the Palestinian people on the way to peace and sustainable development.
24. The representative of Uruguay stated that a solution to the question of Palestine could come only through bilateral negotiations and called upon the international community to encourage the parties to return to the negotiating table. The social and economic development of Palestine were key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and to peace and security in the entire region.
25. The representative of South Africa noted that the adoption of the 2030 Agenda supported the promise that no one would be left behind, including people living under occupation. He noted that, while the occupation's devastating effect on the establishment of a free Palestinian State was obvious, the negative impact on the country's socioeconomic development did not receive the attention that it deserved. Referring to the 2015 report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), entitled Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, he pointed out that the expansion of settlements had reduced access to economic resources and compromised the ability to achieve sustainable development. Furthermore, the ongoing blockade of Gaza had slowed down reconstruction

and increased unemployment, while the limitations on the import of cement and other so-called “dual-use” materials, together with ongoing delays in the construction of a seaport, had left the Gaza Strip effectively landlocked. South Africa had provided assistance for infrastructure development in the West Bank and Gaza, together with funding to UNRWA, but more pressure was needed to ensure that Israel did not hold the right to development hostage as a political tool. People under occupation should not be left behind.

26. The representative of Lebanon emphasized that, for almost 70 years, Israel had ignored Security Council resolutions; he was therefore pessimistic that things would change. Lebanon had a long experience with Israeli occupation and aggression, but had succeeded in liberating itself, not through United Nations resolutions, but by fighting for its freedom. Lebanon supported the two-State solution, but was concerned that it might not come to fruition.

27. The representative of Mexico expressed support for a two-State solution achieved through bilateral negotiations and dialogue and expressed hope for the early resumption of direct talks. Mexico was concerned about the dire situation in Gaza and had pledged \$250,000 to UNRWA.

28. The representative of China noted that the 2030 Agenda provided a holistic vision for development, which should be focused on the economic, social and environmental aspects. The State of Palestine faced constraints to achieving sustainable development and needed support from the international community through financing, capacity-building and trade. However, development required a peaceful environment to flourish, which China believed could be achieved only through direct peace negotiations. The immediate priorities were to put a halt to settlement activities, stop violence against civilians and lift the blockade of Gaza. China had always supported the rights of the Palestinian people and would continue to promote peace and stability in the Middle East.

29. The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela stated that the illegal Israeli occupation was directly responsible for the limited social and economic development of Palestine. The occupation was realized through illegal settlement activities, evictions and demolitions of homes, including in East Jerusalem; the construction of the wall; the blockade of Gaza; and the exploitation of natural resources. Not only did those activities contravene the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, they also prevented their full development and empowerment. Recalling the devastating effects of the Israeli military offensives against Gaza, he noted that the lack of economic opportunities had worsened unemployment, in particular for women, and he lamented that, despite the gravity of the situation, the Security Council had not taken action. During its presidency of the Council in February 2016, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had organized consultations on the humanitarian situation in the occupied territory. The people of Palestine needed support through international protection and emergency measures to promote development.

III. Plenary sessions

A. Plenary session I

Sustainable Development Goals: challenges and constraints to implementation under occupation

30. Participants in the plenary session examined sub-themes such as challenges and opportunities with regard to the post-2015 development agenda, synergies with the United Nations system, the Palestinian national plan to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and building resilient and sustainable economic growth in conflict situations. The session was chaired by the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations.

31. The Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Macharia Kamau, acknowledged the recent leadership of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the Security Council. Noting that the United Nations had spent significant time and effort on peacekeeping in the world, he stressed that militaristic solutions were not a sustainable way to maintain international peace and security. That fact had been the premise on which Member States had agreed upon an agenda for sustainable development, as a means to bring about sustainable peace.

32. Pointing to the challenges faced by Palestine living for almost 50 years under occupation and recalling the UNRWA report describing Gaza as the “least liveable place on earth”, he stressed that the international community could not continue to accept the suffering of Palestinians. He warned that, when people gave up hope in frustration and despair, they would eventually bring about a much more negative response. As a result, it was crucial for Palestinians to keep hope alive.

33. The intergovernmental process leading to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, which he had had the honour to co-chair, had been built on the belief in a better world for all people, with greater security, prosperity and peace, in which the planet would also be protected. At the outset, many had not believed that it would be possible for 193 countries to agree on a common agenda that would advance the well-being of the world’s people. Nevertheless, through that process, Member States had agreed that no one, and no country, should be left behind, which was a commitment that applied to the State of Palestine as well.

34. Referring to his own experience and to African history, he stressed that it was simply inconceivable that Palestine, or any other country, could achieve any of the Sustainable Development Goals in the context of occupation or foreign domination. Many thought that Africa was facing a very difficult economic and social situation, but current conditions would have been many times worse had African countries still been under colonial occupation. He described how, since the decolonization process, African countries had made great economic and social progress and, in Kenya alone, universities had produced thousands of graduates and doctors, improving the economy and the lives of millions of people. Freedom and

liberation brought about possibilities, such as combating poverty and creating institutions, and a level of prosperity that would have been unthinkable under colonial occupation.

35. Turning to possible ways ahead, he said that the international community should work with those in Israel who wished to see a free and liberated State of Palestine and live in peace with its neighbour; Israel was not a monolithic nation. Palestine needed to realize its full potential and, as exemplified by African countries, the day that it became a free State, it would transform itself overnight. Citing Malaysia as a success story, he noted that that one of the fundamental ways to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals was through domestic resource mobilization; foreign aid was only a small part of financing for development and there were no examples of foreign aid having single-handedly transformed the economic possibilities for growth in a country. It was crucial to tap into domestic resources, such as through access to ports, which would enable trade to succeed. Therefore, under the current circumstances of occupation, the State of Palestine could never achieve its own development. In fact, development in the country had followed a downward course for the past 50 years. Lastly, he urged the international community to live up to its responsibilities and called upon it to work with progressive forces in the world, including in Israel, to achieve a free and liberated State of Palestine.

36. The Deputy United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory said that the Sustainable Development Goals were an exciting, new, shared agenda for all 193 States Members of the United Nations. They differed from the Millennium Development Goals most fundamentally in their call to “leave no one behind”. In many ways, occupied Palestine faced, and would continue to face, similar challenges as many other middle-income countries in endeavouring to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Development under occupation was a fundamentally different situation, however, meaning that the international community needed to be honest about what could and could not be expected under the circumstances.

37. Highlighting some positive trends, he explained that, in a number of areas of the Sustainable Development Goals, occupied Palestine was ahead of other countries in the Arab region. That was particularly true for social indicators; Palestine had literacy rates of 97 per cent, vaccination rates of 95 per cent and maternal mortality rates of only 45 per 100,000 live births, all of which were remarkable achievements. He stressed that those high indicators spoke volumes first and foremost about the resilience of Palestinian families and about parents who prioritized education for their children. However, they also reflected a Government that had delivered services despite the obstacles, and the donors that had invested in the social sectors. Similar to many other countries, however, success in the social sectors was not matched on the economic side. Occupied Palestine was lagging behind in terms of most Arab region indicators on the economic front. The per capita gross national income was less than a third of the average for the Arab States, at \$4,700 compared with \$15,700. Youth unemployment was far higher than the average for Arab States, at 41 per cent compared with 29 per cent. Moreover, the trade to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio for Palestine stood at 72 per cent compared with 93 per cent for the Arab region as a whole.

38. A sustainable development process and a successful 2030 Agenda needed to balance the social dimension with the economic dimension and in that sense many challenges lay ahead for Palestine. In particular, he highlighted the divergence between social groups in Palestine and added that an analysis of the reality would form the basis of the forthcoming common country assessment. Young people, for example, were especially vulnerable; they often left the education system without adequate skills and then were faced with a dismal lack of employment opportunities. Youth unemployment had consistently been above 50 per cent over the past two and a half years. Women and girls, especially adolescent girls and women of reproductive age, were especially disadvantaged through their unequal access to productive resources, discriminatory inheritance laws and a disproportionate burden of unpaid work. Indicators showed that 40 per cent of women were unemployed compared with 22 per cent of men and that 30 per cent of households headed by women were considered poor compared with 26 per cent of households headed by men.

39. He emphasized that understanding the development experience for different groups of Palestinians was important because of the call in the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind. The new development agenda was focused around making the development process equitable, which was particularly relevant for Palestine because of the inherently different nature of development under occupation. The most striking difference was geographical in nature, because the West Bank and Gaza were on profoundly divergent development trajectories. The total real GDP of Gaza had increased by only a few percentage points in the 20 years between 1994 and 2014, while the GDP of the West Bank had increased by 245 per cent. As a result, some 39 per cent of Gazans lived in poverty, compared with the national poverty level of 25 per cent.

40. Put quite simply, Gaza was de-developing, with real per capita income 31 per cent lower than it had been 20 years previously and an unemployment rate that had risen from 17 per cent in 1999 to 43 per cent in 2014. The current energy supply in Gaza met barely 40 per cent of demand and would cover barely 20 per cent by 2020 should current trends continue. To ensure sustainable, longer-term economic recovery, expansion was needed in traditional sectors, including agriculture and industrial production. That would require Israel to enable economic development in Gaza, including by allowing the import of production equipment and raw materials and by allowing larger quantities of exports to Israel and other markets. The political division between Gaza and Ramallah had also exacerbated the precarious situation of Gaza.

41. Nevertheless, the effects of occupation went well beyond the Gaza blockade. In attempting to balance progress in the social sphere with that in the economic sphere, the Palestinian Government was highly constrained in cases like that of Area C, where the World Bank had documented how improved access by Palestinians to agriculture, minerals, stone mining and tourism could enable the economy to grow by 23 per cent of GDP and produce \$2.2 billion in direct economic outputs. However, closed military areas, nature reserves, settlement, municipal and regional boundaries and the path of the security wall took up about 70 per cent of Area C, making it off-limits for Palestinians. He stressed that the Government would face profound challenges in having the economy catch up with the social indicators as

part of the 2030 Agenda, including severe import restrictions for items on the so-called “dual-use list” and lack of control over trade policy, borders, revenue collection and other factors.

42. Turning to the way in which the occupation was conducted, he stressed that that factor also made the task of attaining the Sustainable Development Goals much more difficult. Taking as an example Goal 16, with its emphasis on providing access to justice for all, he described how access to justice for Palestinians who had been victims of settler violence in the West Bank was an elusive concept. What did access to justice mean to a Palestinian who had seen his home demolished by the Israel Defense Forces, or who was being forcibly moved from his home to make way for an expanding Israeli settlement that had been deemed illegal by the Security Council and the International Court of Justice? Lastly, he stressed how vulnerable Palestinian households were, stretched to the psychological and economic limits and close to collapse in their coping capacity, having endured some 50 years of occupation. The people in Gaza would soon have experienced 10 years of a blockade. Recipients of UNRWA food aid had increased from 80,000 to 900,000 in the space of just 10 years.

43. While Palestine had committed itself to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals, the greatest help to achieve them would come from lifting the blockade on Gaza and ensuring respect for international law. Ultimately, the path to the achievement of the Goals was to end an almost 50-year occupation.

44. The Assistant Deputy Minister for Social Development of the State of Palestine, Daoud al-Deek, pointed out that his country found itself in a particularly fragmented situation under Israeli occupation; to achieve sustainable development cohesion was needed. He warned that if Palestine failed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals it would be because it had been “left behind” and he urged the international community not to do so. He highlighted country statistics, including the fact that nearly 43 per cent of the 4.8 million Palestinians were refugees. He noted that the unemployment rate in Palestine exceeded 26 per cent, while the poverty rate in Gaza was exceptionally high, at nearly 39 per cent. During the period of implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, from 2000 to 2015, no progress had been registered in ending poverty and 2.3 million people were still in need of humanitarian assistance, including 1.3 million in Gaza. In the Gaza Strip, 90,000 Palestinians continued to be displaced since the conflict of 2014. Israel controlled more than 85 per cent of water in the occupied Palestinian territory, obliging the State of Palestine to buy water from Israel in order to meet its water needs. Moreover, Israeli practices relating to the expansion of settlements continued to have a profound impact on land and housing rights. The total number of settlers in the West Bank was more than 600,000 and, in the period between January and April 2016, the number of demolitions or confiscations of Palestinian structures surpassed the total number during the entirety of 2015 (595 versus 548). Between 2012 and 2014, Palestinians had submitted 2,020 applications for building permits, of which only 33 had been approved, leaving many families in precarious situations. Israeli restrictions on movement impeded access to services and resources, disrupting family and social life and the enjoyment of the economic, social and cultural rights.

45. That bleak situation notwithstanding, the Palestinian Government had committed itself to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and had launched the National Policy Agenda for

2017–2022, which harmonized the Sustainable Development Goals with the national strategic goals and targets in the unique Palestinian context of occupation. The Government had also developed a national database that would be useful for monitoring and reporting on indicators for the Goals. In terms of partnerships, the Government planned to coordinate with the League of Arab States and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on regional goals.

46. The main priority of the National Policy Agenda for 2017–2022 was ending poverty. To achieve that goal, the Government was working on a multidimensional framework, aimed at providing basic services to the poor, such as health care, education and housing. Inclusive policies to reduce inequality were the second priority and focused on women, young people, children and persons with disabilities. Employment policies at the macro level were the third goal, in particular policies to enhance women’s participation in the workforce through interventions such as vocational training, microcredit and promotion of entrepreneurship. Pro-poor taxation and monetary policies, such as tax exemptions and promoting credits and investment, had been identified as means to alleviate the vulnerability of the poorest sectors of the population. Lastly, the fifth area of the national plan was focused on population policies, including reproductive health, fertility rates, violence against women and early marriage, and job creation, especially for women and young people. In closing, he stressed that Palestine needed the support of the international community and the United Nations because ending the Israeli occupation was a prerequisite for the realization of the ambitious 2030 Agenda.

47. A policy fellow at Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network, Nur Arafah, delivered remarks via videoconference, stating that all issues addressed by the Sustainable Development Goals, including ending poverty and ensuring food security, education, inequality, health and energy sufficiency, were inherently political in nature. In Palestine, the Israeli occupation was the primary cause of de-development. The physical and political fragmentation of the Palestinian territory, compounded by the movement restrictions placed on people and goods, had created separate isolated economies: the isolation of Gaza had placed it in state of de-development; the marginalization and isolation of East Jerusalem had caused a rate poverty of 75 per cent; and the West Bank had become a fragmented archipelago with a neo-liberal economy in Ramallah, while the rest of Area C was off-limits to Palestinian development.

48. The stifled Palestinian economy suffered from structural weaknesses preventing it from creating sufficient employment or investment opportunities and the country lived in a state of dependence on both Israel and international aid for trade, finance, energy and water. For those reasons, Israel was profiting from both the occupation and international aid. To support that claim, she quoted a study by Shir Hever from the Alternative Information Center, which had found that 78 per cent of donor aid to Palestine was used to import goods from Israel to Palestine, thus contributing to the dependence of the Palestinian economy on Israel and effectively subsidizing the occupation. Thence, one could assert that some aid was helping to sustain the occupation. On the basis of that overview, she invited participants to critically review the title of the present discussion to acknowledge that sustaining growth under occupation was not possible. She said that, when analysing the situation, the broader

concept of development should be used rather than the narrow concept of economic growth, which was a limited measure of GDP, namely, the amount of goods and products produced over a specific period.

49. Her definition of development in Palestine was based on an economic, social and political process of resistance to the Israeli occupation. Development needed to be embedded in the Palestinian struggle and should be seen as a strategy to build a productive, self-reliant Palestinian economy that was less dependent on the Israeli economy and foreign aid. In taking that approach, development would become the means and not the end. The areas on which Palestine should focus in order to implement such a strategy included agricultural production and food sovereignty (versus the narrow concept of food security) as a first priority. Small-scale agricultural production, geared towards the local market, and control over land and water should be the main priority, accompanied by the expansion of the industrial sector and foreign trade. In her view, limiting the flow of goods between Israel and Palestine should include a boycott of all Israeli goods, not only those produced in the settlements. External trade could be reoriented towards Arab economies. After production, the second priority should be education, as outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 4. Education was not an accidental casualty of Israeli occupation, but part of an intentional strategy by the occupier, resulting in a poor-quality education system, which limited the human resources available to the Palestinian society as a whole.

50. To achieve those outcomes, Palestine needed control over its natural resources and the international community had a responsibility to put pressure on Israel for its violations of its obligations as an occupying Power, such as ensuring the welfare of the occupied population, based on international humanitarian law. The European Union should stop all direct and indirect economic and financial investment and academic and business activities in illegal settlements. Turning to partnerships (Sustainable Development Goal 17), she questioned the morality and impact of foreign aid in the context of the occupation. A staggering \$24 billion in aid had been poured into Palestine over the 20 years since the Oslo Accords, but it had proved ineffective for peacebuilding, the achievement of sustainable development and institution-building. The approach taken by the international community and the Government of Palestine alike was that economic prosperity and higher standards of living would pave the way for freedom and peace. However, economic deprivation, which was a symptom of the occupation, had been mistaken for the cause. Aid should not be seen as a substitute for an end to the occupation or a lifting of the blockade.

51. In conclusion, while the international community should help Palestine to cope with the oppression of the occupation, what the country really needed was freedom, dignity and justice.

52. The Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations, speaking in his national capacity, described his frustration with the difficulty of discussing the issue of Palestine in the Security Council. In February 2016, when his country had held the presidency of the Council, he had requested on eight occasions that Palestine should be included on the agenda, with very little success. It was important for all supporters of Palestine, including Member States, to continue to raise the issue lest it disappear from the

international radar. The status quo in Palestine was unsustainable, and he promised that his country would continue to support the Palestinian struggle. He said that he believed that one day the independence of the State of Palestine would be celebrated.

53. In response to a question about the future of the two-State solution, Ms. Arafah said that she believed that it was dead at the current time. Rather than focusing on that framework, she advocated a principled approach enabling the Palestinian people to achieve freedom, dignity and justice. Regarding questions about the developmental approach to be taken, she said that Palestine should take a more proactive stance rather than react to the action and initiatives taken by Israel. That approach should also include a more forceful media strategy aimed at explaining the context of occupation, especially to foreign media outlets. Regarding aid, it should be used as a tool to support Palestinian development in a comprehensive manner, instead of the traditional project-oriented approach with occupation-circumventing projects that were aimed at meeting specific humanitarian needs of the population for a limited period, with a cyclical lifespan, but that did not address the root cause of the occupation.

54. The representative of the Palestine Solidarity Association of Sweden expressed serious concern that Swedish diplomats were not even able to visit Gaza owing to their Government's recognition of the State of Palestine and regarding other Israeli travel restrictions on European civil society organizations supporting the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement. She emphasized that insufficient pressure was being put on Israel by the international community to end the occupation.

55. An academic from Drew University, Jennifer Olmsted, emphasized that about 50 per cent of Palestinians were not actually living in Palestine, meaning that policy decisions had no impact on their well-being. For that reason, there was a need to have better data on the entirety of the population, which could better inform decision-making.

56. Following a question on the framework of the provision of foreign aid, the Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory said that aid was, in fact, primarily political in nature and a moral dilemma for international donors and United Nations agencies, given the previously discussed unintended economic support to the occupation. Official development assistance to the State of Palestine had dropped by 30 to 40 per cent over the previous five years, primarily owing to the lack of a peace process and the political horizon. Donors had found themselves at a loss after the progress achieved in 2011 towards State-building had not been followed by a similar advancement in the negotiations. With regard to the diversion of aid to the Israeli economy, he noted that the issue was not due to how aid was being distributed, but rather to the structure of the Palestinian economy, which needed to create a local market for local products, thereby promoting self-reliance. In that sense, the World Food Programme (WFP) had launched initiatives to replace aid in kind with credit towards Palestinian products.

57. Mr. al-Deek said that the international community, in coordination with the State of Palestine, needed to revise the overall approach to aid, as it was clearly not having the desired

impact on the ground. For example, the excellent WFP initiative mentioned previously was about to be suspended owing to a lack of funding. Focusing on the situation of women in Palestine, he expressed concern that some past approaches had actually disempowered women because they had become too burdened with household tasks, which had prevented them from joining the workforce. For that reason, the mainstreaming of gender issues would be a critical priority in the State's future development planning model.

58. The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations said that he was proud of his Government's transparency with regard to its development planning for the period 2017–2022 and of the courage and critical thinking of young Palestinians, including Ms. Arafeh, who were the hope for the future of the State of Palestine and the source of its resilience. As studies had shown, under occupation the Palestinian economy was losing some \$8 billion dollars annually. Therefore, ending the occupation was the main objective, not just for the liberation of the Palestinian people, but also for the rebirth of its economy, which would overnight double its GDP and would see per capita income rise from \$5,000 to \$15,000. The end of the occupation would enable the Palestinian people to realize their full potential and the Sustainable Development Goals.

B. Plenary session II

Enabling sustainable solutions for a dignified future

59. Participants in the plenary session examined sub-themes including investing in young people as torchbearers of 2030 Agenda, women as key to a peaceful and inclusive society and breaking down stereotypes and traditional roles in society. The session was chaired by the Ambassador of Indonesia to Sweden, Raden Bagas Hapsoro.

60. A Palestinian teacher and winner of the 2016 Global Teacher Prize, Hanan al-Hroub, speaking via an Internet connection from Ramallah, said that she was filled with mixed feelings of pain and hope for the future of Palestinian children. She expressed thanks to the Varkey Foundation, which had initiated the Global Teacher Prize, and saluted it for recognizing the importance of the role played by teachers in moulding future generations.

61. She pointed out that the daily reality in Palestine was full of violence because of the repressive policies and activities of the occupation, which had an impact on all aspects of life, including freedom of movement, especially for young people, and the ability to attend school. Despite the limitations in the physical capacity of universities, Palestine had produced a great number of graduates, only for them to be left with limited job opportunities. In the context of the occupation, students lacked a stable and safe environment in which to blossom.

62. Her methodology was based mainly on the reduction of violence through mottos such as “No to violence” and “We play and learn”, which dealt with all the negative consequences stemming from various forms of violence of the occupation. In the classroom she taught peace, security, trust, respect and acceptance of others. Every child had a story and in Palestine they were mainly painful stories, so in class she also had to become a psychologist and a social worker to give children attention and respect. She explained that she instilled the ethics of dealing with others, teamwork, cooperation, participation and self-confidence,

together with practices of dialogue and democracy. As a Palestinian teacher, her goal was to create a peace-loving generation that renounced violence.

63. If that methodology were to spread locally, regionally and globally, it would contribute to the prevalence of the values of humanity and create a climate of dialogue that would influence the political, economic and social climate, help to solve the challenges faced by Palestinian young people and, ultimately, achieve a just and lasting peace in the region.

64. Reduction of violence in societies was the only alternative. For that reason, she called upon States Members of the United Nations to pay close attention to the teaching profession in all societies, for teachers were the only ones capable of creating peace-loving generations for a bright future. She acknowledged that the challenges ahead were great, but stressed the importance of focusing on the children of the current day, who would become the young men and women of 2030, hoping that they would live in peace and harmony. The mantra should be “no to violence”.

65. Ms. Olmsted highlighted that economic, environmental and social issues, viewed through the lens of gender, would present serious challenges to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by the State of Palestine. Numerous issues would continue to present obstacles to development in Palestine in the post-2015 era, including rising inequality, the lack of decent work, in particular for women who carried the burden of unpaid household care and work, and the lack of recognition of the link between unpaid work and sustainable development.

66. The role of the conflict and the occupation as root causes of the economic situation was evident. Displacement and statelessness, and the political and economic vulnerability associated with it; economic distortions, such as the Gaza blockade and restrictions of movement within the West Bank and East Jerusalem; and physical and psychological health issues associated with the protracted conflict, which stretched families’ coping mechanisms, were key factors in that regard. Such economic hardships increased the prevalence of child marriage and violence against women. At the same time, because of the conflict, women were often forced to take on the role of breadwinner or, because of the prevalence of conservative gender norms, retreat into household and caring roles. As a result of those dynamics, in public life, political changes caused by the conflict might either enable women to take more leadership roles or be surpassed by male leaders.

67. Regarding employment, the rising wage gap between men and women and the level of women’s participation in the labour force, which in Palestine was at 19.4 per cent, the lowest in the Arab world, was of great concern. Deindustrialization was also negatively affecting the link between gender and occupation as the resulting drop in manufacturing was moving women towards the agricultural sector. There were also elements of reverse feminization, in which increasing numbers of men were entering occupational fields traditionally the purview of women. The cycle of poverty and violence was of great concern, as were the lasting effects of child marriage and post-traumatic stress disorder, which often made it difficult for people to effectively parent their children, especially in a context where the fertility rate remained high. Psychosocial support needed to be among the priorities of the Government.

The long-term effects of the aforementioned and other dynamics were profound and could not be overstated. Nevertheless, there were some notable success stories, including low child mortality rates, improved maternal health and a high literacy rate, with a closing education gap between men and women. There were more women graduating from Palestinian universities than men.

68. Looking ahead, and building on previous speakers' presentations, she recommended that the policy priority of the Palestinian Government in view of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals should be, first and foremost, ending the occupation, including securing compensation for economic losses suffered by the State of Palestine. Other priorities should include policies that would have an effect on women's empowerment, such as reducing unpaid work for women, especially in the household, through support for childcare and better designed family policies; increasing the availability of psychosocial support, which would have a positive impact on reducing violence against women; and enhancing the opportunities for decent paid work for both men and women.

69. The producer of the Palestinian documentary *Speed Sisters*, Jessica Devaney, said that she was glad that the documentary would be shown immediately after the second plenary session, followed by a discussion with one of the protagonists, Maysoun Jayyusi. Historically, documentary films had proved effective in breaking down stereotypes of life in Palestine and were traditionally aimed at promoting greater freedom, dignity and justice for Palestinians. Her work was rooted in a theory of change that sought to address gaps in mainstream media, which was largely focused on militarism and violence. In her view, that focus was flawed, given that stereotypes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict perpetuated in the media served to support problematic foreign policy strategies. For that reason, the media strategy around her film was geared towards promoting positive messages of non-violence, unity across divides and women's leadership. She believed in the power of storytelling through cinematography because seeing positive stories over time could shift the discourse about difficult issues, including gender issues. Nevertheless, one film would not be enough to bring about a dramatic change.

70. Early on, many of her cinematic efforts had centred on elevating the work of activists, but had lacked a vision of the everyday struggles of life under occupation. With the current film, she had attempted a more in-depth exploration of the extent to which the lives of the main characters, with their different stories and personalities, represented the struggle for dignity and equality as a lived experience in the State of Palestine. Although the film was focused on car racing, a particular passion shared by the female protagonists, and the angle of women's empowerment was particularly strong, it told stories that showed what daily life under occupation looked like for everyone, at military checkpoints, in encounters with Israel Defense Force soldiers and through restrictions on movement. The film was intended to portray a different reality, contrary to that shown by many media organizations, especially in the United States, which stereotyped Palestinian women as a homogenous group of oppressed women and Palestinian men as tyrants and religious extremists. While the goal of the film could be viewed as naive, she believed that it could contribute to a broader strategy to support a different perception of Palestine within the region and beyond.

71. On Ms. al-Hroub's presentation, Mr. al-Shaer expressed appreciation for the fact that she had accomplished so much as an educator and a woman, despite having grown up as a refugee. The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations shared that sentiment, saying that the State of Palestine was proud of her work; more should be done to publicize her accomplishments to the rest of the world.

72. Commenting on the presentations, Mr. al-Deek said that humanitarian aid should take into consideration the gender perspective. On employment, he noted the large participation of women in the informal economy, without any legal or social protection schemes, and expressed concern that some private sector policies continued to discriminate against women.

73. In response, Ms. Olmsted stressed that, even in a relatively open environment vis-à-vis women's employment, as was the case in Palestine, labour force participation would not be a magic bullet to solve women's empowerment issues. Since in conflict situations violence and militarism were often reproduced in the home, addressing the problem of violence required a larger strategy tackling all gender issues in the society, including those affecting family life. In response to a question as to what type of support teachers received with regard to social work training, Ms. al-Hroub said that she had pursued social work training on her own without a formal process, although she believed that such training should be institutionalized throughout the education system.

74. Responding to a question from the representative of the Palestine Solidarity Association in Sweden about the prevalence of child labour in Palestine, Mr. al-Deek said that the Government was working to address that issue, noting that work for children under the age of 15 years was forbidden by law.

75. On the presentation about *Speed Sisters*, the representative of the League of Arab States asked about the type of impact that mainstream films had versus documentaries and asked for more information on how the documentary was being distributed worldwide. Ms. Devaney responded that documentary films could effect cultural change, but it often took quite a long time. The goal should be to create a movement that would generate political will and encourage leaders and influencers to speak about Palestinian issues. She stressed that one film would not be enough to dismantle the occupation; an entire movement based on cumulative efforts would be needed. Steps were being taken to distribute the documentary widely, even though it had not yet been shown in the State of Palestine.

C. Plenary session III Strengthening global partnerships for reconstruction and sustainable development

76. Participants in the plenary session examined sub-themes including mobilizing international solidarity for development, the State of Palestine as partner for development, cooperation with international organizations and the role of civil society. The session was chaired by the Ambassador of Namibia to Sweden, Morina Muuondjo.

77. The Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations, Peter Thomson, said that from the discussions that had taken place over the course of the Seminar it was clear that the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 16, on access to justice, would not be possible under occupation. However, he pointed to progress in health, education and gender equality as testament to the efforts of the Government of Palestine and other actors. That and many other examples showed clearly that the situation in the State of Palestine needed to change; unfortunately, under the current circumstances, one could not take for granted that any change would be for the better. He believed that the question of Palestine could be fixed rather swiftly, and all that was needed was greater political will and commitment by the international community. In contrast, climate change, a challenge affecting every country and addressed by the Sustainable Development Goals, required a great deal of effort by all Member States over a prolonged period to be solved effectively. He acknowledged the work of the Committee in keeping the question of Palestine on the agenda, which was an example of the dogged persistence that would be needed to improve the lives of the Palestinian people.

78. The Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations, Sacha Sergio Llorentty Solíz, said that there could be no status quo in Palestine; things would either worsen or improve. In his view, the situation was worsening. Israeli aggression against Palestinian territory was nothing short of terrorism and its illegal actions were met with impunity. In that sense, the international community had failed the Palestinian people, as the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and human rights were not being upheld in their defence.

79. He said that the Group of 77 and China, which his country had chaired in 2014, was a powerful actor within the United Nations and continued to support the Palestinian cause. Nevertheless, the Group was disappointed that the question of Palestine had not figured more prominently in the negotiations on the 2030 Agenda, particularly given that it was not possible to talk about the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals or the fulfilment of human rights in that country while it continued to be under occupation. He lamented that Israel violated the economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people on a daily basis and had done so for almost the previous 50 years. That situation was compounded by unacceptable double standards whereby the international community ignored the plight of the Palestinians while expressing concern about other situations of injustice around the world. With limited international support and commitment to that cause, the crucial question that remained was what could be done to mobilize international solidarity to enable sustainable development. The response of the international community, short of true political support, had traditionally been to provide economic assistance in the form of foreign aid. Nevertheless, while aid was much appreciated and needed, in his opinion, it should not be used as a substitute for a clear stance against the Israeli occupation and determined action aimed at ending it.

80. The representative of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Tove Myhrman, said that the long-standing cooperation between Sweden and Palestine was centred around the commitment to the establishment of a democratic, independent, contiguous and viable Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security, based on

1967 borders with Jerusalem as the capital of the two States. It was also aimed at ensuring that the rights and needs of Palestinians were met so that they could live a normal life in all parts of Palestine, regardless of the political dispensation. Stressing that the greatest impediment to development was the Israeli occupation, she added that it was an obstacle that could not be overcome through development cooperation. She outlined that key priority areas for cooperation of Sweden were centred on support for peace and reconciliation, support for women as political and economic actors, support for State-building in Area C, East Jerusalem and Gaza and ensuring respect for international humanitarian law.

81. She explained that the technical support provided by Sweden to Palestine was focused on three main areas: strengthening democracy, improving gender equality and ensuring greater respect for human rights; improving the environment and creating greater resilience to environmental change, including the impacts of climate change and natural disasters; and strengthening the development of the private sector. Expected results of the support in the first area included greater freedom of expression, including a free and independent media; more effective accountability mechanisms, including a more viable and pluralistic civil society; increased women's political participation; and greater enjoyment of human rights for women and children. Support in the environmental sphere was aimed at improvements in basic health services and increased access to clean water and sanitation. Lastly, it was hoped that the support of Sweden for the Palestinian private sector would result in an increased number of small business start-ups and a greater number of women as business owners and managers. Increased knowledge and better service capacity at trade organizations and financial institutions and improved conditions for local economic development were other key expected results.

82. The principles guiding Swedish humanitarian support in the State of Palestine were focused primarily on the protection and promotion of human dignity. Lastly, she explained that her country's support for Palestine amounted to \$32 million in development funds, \$13 million in humanitarian support, \$36 million in support to UNRWA and \$6 million in support to Swedish civil society organizations as implementing partners, for a total of \$87 million.

83. The Director of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights in Gaza, Raji Sourani, calling the occupation both criminal and belligerent, noted that 2017 would mark 50 years since the beginning of the illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory. The naked reality on the ground was a state of siege in Gaza and unprecedented social and economic suffering for millions of people. The vast majority of people in Gaza lived far below the poverty line and were dependent on international aid, effectively turning them into a nation of beggars. He declared that the Israeli actions had perpetuated the biggest human-caused disaster in modern history and recalled that the occupation was a crime of aggression.

84. Recounting examples from the previous Israeli offensive, in the middle of 2014, he said that more than 80 families had been completely wiped out and entire parts of Gaza entirely destroyed. Contrary to international humanitarian law, hospitals had not been spared, but in fact targeted by Israel. Family members had been cut off from one another and civilians had become targets of Israeli military aggression. Many schools, including those operated by UNRWA, had been targeted over the 51-day offensive, which had left not one

single safe haven for the people of Gaza. Moreover, at the conclusion of the hostilities, Israel had struck a deal whereby it controlled every aspect of the reconstruction of Gaza and the provision of even the most basic commodities, including control over materials needed for the reconstruction efforts. The Israeli message to the people of Gaza was clear: “You have no tomorrow. You have nothing to live for.” Citing what he described as another crime committed under Israeli occupation, he reported that more than 7,000 Palestinians had been held in Israeli prisons, including many in so-called “administrative detention”, without being charged with any crime. That was the fate that had been endured by 800,000 Palestinians since the beginning of the occupation. Palestinians would not forgive or forget the crimes that had been committed against them.

85. Looking at the role of the international community, he stated that the Israeli occupation was a crime of aggression perpetrated with impunity. He denounced the hypocrisy of some positions and called upon certain actors to take a moral and principled stand on the question of Palestine. In particular, he urged the European Union to uphold the principles of international law and respect for human rights contained in its cooperation agreement with Israel, which was a great source of revenue for Israel. Leveraging that principle would threaten a great loss in trade revenue for Israel, thence it would have the potential to make Israel accountable for its illegal acts in the context of the occupation and possibly lead to its reversal.

86. Responding to a question about the Swedish aid model and whether it actually supported the occupation, Ms. Myhrman said that Sweden had thoroughly analysed that dynamic and had concluded that the best position would be to continue its support. The greatest challenge to development in the Palestinian territory was the occupation, which would not be remedied by development cooperation. She emphasized that Sweden was striving not only to provide aid, but also to work in partnership with Palestinian recipients.

87. Responding to a question from the representative of the Palestine Solidarity Association in Sweden regarding the role of civil society, Mr. Sourani highlighted the important role of non-governmental actors in keeping attention on the question of Palestine.

88. The representative of Indonesia asked for more information about the position of the Group of 77 on the question of Palestine. In response, the Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia said that the Group was extremely diverse, consisting of more than 130 Member States. There was not always agreement within the Group, yet, when it came to the present issue, the position was very clear and united.

89. The representative of Spain stressed that the Middle East peace process was a priority for his country and that Spain supported the French initiative and the peace conference planned to be held later in 2016.

90. The representative of Cyprus said that he shared a similar view, noting that his country had recognized the State of Palestine in 1988.

IV. Closing session

91. Mr. al-Shaer said that after two days of intensive discussions it was reassuring that there was almost universal international agreement that the continued Israeli occupation was the major obstacle to the quest for sustainable development by Palestine. He called for specific, action-oriented measures that would deliver confidence and trust in the sustainable development process in Palestine. The Palestinian Government was committed to the Sustainable Development Goals, which presented huge challenges not only for his country, but also for the entire international community. Robust, effective and transparent follow-up support was needed to ensure that no one was left behind.

92. The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations reiterated that it would be impossible for the State of Palestine to achieve sustainable development while under occupation. Several of the participants were shining examples of the spirit of the Palestinian people, in particularly the women who had taken part. Nevertheless, the discussions had also reflected the high degree of frustration that was being felt by the Palestinian people. He warned that the situation in Palestine was on the verge of a very critical phase. He declared that Palestine was a serious, responsible State that was participating in shaping issues of worldwide concern, including the global development agenda, and he called upon the international community to deal with the Palestinian issue in a very practical and realistic manner that would lead to a just and lasting solution.

Annex I

Summary of the Chair

1. The United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, entitled “Agenda 2030: paving the way toward a peaceful, independent and sustainable State of Palestine”, was organized in Stockholm on 19 and 20 May by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The participants examined the challenges and constraints to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the State of Palestine under occupation, including how Palestinian decision makers and partners could use the Sustainable Development Goals as accelerators for making the transition from dependence on humanitarian assistance to a sustainable, peaceful and independent State.
2. During the Seminar, representatives of Member States, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations system entities and civil society organizations, together with expert speakers from Palestine, other countries and the United Nations, explored ways of building resilient and sustainable economic growth in Palestine within the larger political context of the occupation and struggle for liberation. The proceedings of the Seminar were open to the public and covered by the media.
3. At the opening session, the Secretary-General, in his message to the Seminar delivered by the United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, underscored that connecting development efforts to humanitarian action, human rights and the advancement of the peace process was critical for progress. It was incumbent upon the international community to do everything possible to re-establish a political horizon that would lead to a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
4. The Director of the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Mats Karlsson, representing the host country, noted that Palestine had a right to self-determination and the ability to shape its future. Unfortunately, recent developments, including settlement expansion and the demolition of unprecedented numbers of Palestinian homes by Israel, had increasingly put the two-State solution – the only path to security and stability for the Middle East – at risk. The situation in Gaza remained particularly critical. He announced that the Government of Sweden planned to increase bilateral support to Palestine by 50 per cent over the coming four years, including support to Palestinian refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, to a total of \$100 million per year.
5. The Vice-Chair of the Committee, Rodolfo Reyes Rodríguez, recalling that the mandate of the Committee was to raise awareness of and garner support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people through a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, noted that the 2030 Agenda would need to be implemented while the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, in particular, continued to require humanitarian assistance. The best humanitarian assistance would be that which seamlessly segued into sustainable development and provided a bright outlook for the future.

6. The Minister for Social Development of the State of Palestine, Ibrahim al-Shaer, avowed that the Palestinian people had the will and determination to take the bold and transformative steps that were urgently needed to shift towards a sustainable and resilient path. He reported that the Government of Palestine was working on its national policy agenda for the period 2017–2022 and had formed a national team, which was committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals as a means of strengthening peace in larger freedom. He questioned, however, how the Palestinian people could holistically pursue that ambitious development agenda without sovereignty, respect for human and economic rights or the ability to control their own natural resources and land.

7. In the ensuing sessions, participants reiterated support for the two-State solution and the 2030 Agenda, with its promise to leave no one behind. It was underscored that the latter placed an onus on the international community to support the nationally owned socioeconomic development of the Palestinian people and their efforts to establish a free Palestinian State.

8. Examining various models to address challenges of and constraints to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, some participants considered that it was simply inconceivable that Palestine would be able to achieve the Goals while under Israeli occupation; ending the occupation would be a prerequisite for any meaningful development. While acknowledging the resiliency of the Palestinian people and progress made in social areas, it was noted that the economic situation in Palestine lagged far behind social development achievements. Given the continued occupation, there was a real risk that even those gains would be lost. The State of Palestine was committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, but the international community had to be realistic about what could be achieved in terms of the implementation of the Goals, which were inherently political in nature. The situation on the ground demanded that development in Palestine should be based on an economic, political and social process of resistance to the Israeli occupation, which was the leading cause of the development challenges, and aimed at building a productive Palestinian State that was less reliant on Israel and foreign assistance.

9. The Seminar then considered the role of young people and women as key to enabling sustainable solutions for a dignified future. Participants observed that, although the reality of Palestine was full of violence, repressive policies, collective punishment and restrictions on movement, young Palestinians were keen to acquire knowledge in every possible way. Nevertheless, job opportunities for graduates inside and outside Palestine were limited. The percentage of women in Palestinian universities had reached about 58 per cent, but women's participation in the labour force was at 19.4 per cent, the lowest in the Arab world. It was emphasized that economic, environmental and social issues viewed through the lens of gender would present serious challenges to the country's sustainable development objectives. Concern was expressed that many media organizations, especially in the United States of America, portrayed female Palestinians as a homogenous group of oppressed women and Palestinian men as tyrants and religious extremists, possibly as part of a strategy to support problematic foreign policy interventions in the region. The stereotypes of Palestinians could be broken down through positive messaging in documentaries and other media efforts rooted in a long-term vision of the everyday struggles of life in Palestine. Moving forward, policy priorities should include ending the occupation, providing compensation for economic losses, increasing the availability of

psychosocial support and enhancing opportunities for decent work and education that emphasized non-violence and trust-building.

10. In the final plenary session, on strengthening global partnerships for reconstruction and sustainable development, participants stressed that Palestine was nearing the breaking point and the current state of affairs could not continue. The year 2017 would mark 50 years of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, which was a crime of aggression. The blockade had created a state of siege in Gaza, causing unprecedented social and economic suffering for millions of people, and dependence on international aid. Sustainable Development Goal 16 was related to access to justice and it was illogical to think that that development objective could be achieved while under occupation. The key precondition to effective partnerships and support to Palestine was political intervention to end the occupation and secure the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Furthermore, under international conventions, Israel, as the occupying Power, was obliged to ensure the welfare of the occupied population and the development of the occupied territory. Expressing concern about other situations of injustice around the world, participants stressed that there could be no double standards whereby the international community felt it acceptable to ignore the plight of the Palestinian people. It was also noted that, while it was much appreciated and needed, the provision of aid could not become a substitute for a clear stance against the Israeli occupation of Palestine. In that context, it was recalled that Sweden had committed itself to the achievement of a democratic, independent, contiguous and viable Palestinian State and ensuring that the rights and needs of Palestinians were met.

11. In closing remarks, Mr. al-Shaer said that the discussions at the Seminar had shown that there was almost universal international agreement that the continued Israeli occupation was the major obstacle to the quest for sustainable development by Palestine. He called for specific, action-oriented measures that would deliver confidence and trust in the sustainable development process in Palestine. The Government of Palestine was committed to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals, which presented huge challenges not only for Palestine, but also for the entire international community. Robust, effective and transparent follow-up support was needed to ensure that no one was left behind.

12. The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, Riyad Mansour, reiterated that it would not be possible for Palestine to achieve sustainable development while under occupation. Referring to the speakers from Palestine, he noted that they were shining examples of the spirit of the Palestinian people, in particular the women who had taken part. Nevertheless, the discussions had also reflected the high degree of frustration that was being felt by the Palestinian people. He warned that the situation in Palestine teetered on the verge of a very critical moment that could lead to a series of unpredictable consequences. Palestine was a serious, responsible State that was participating in shaping issues of worldwide concern, including the global development agenda. He carried a message and request from Palestine to the rest of the world: “Deal with our issue in a very practical and realistic manner”.

Annex II
List of participants

Speakers

Daoud al-Deek	Assistant Deputy Minister Ministry of Social Development State of Palestine
Hanan al-Hroub	(attended via Internet connection) Palestinian teacher Winner, 2016 Global Teacher Prize Ramallah
Nur Arafeh	(attended via Internet connection) Policy Fellow Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network Jerusalem
Jessica Devaney	Producer of the Palestinian Documentary, <i>Speed Sisters</i> 2016 Women at Sundance Fellow New York
Maysoon Jayyusi	Manager of the <i>Speed Sisters</i> Team Amman
Macharia Kamau	Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations New York
Mats Karlsson	Director Swedish Institute of International Affairs Stockholm
Tove Myhrman	Programme Manager Specialist, Humanitarian Unit Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency Stockholm
Jennifer Olmsted	Professor, Director of Middle East Studies Drew University New Jersey
Robert Piper	United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory Jerusalem

Raji Sourani
 Director, Palestinian Centre for Human Rights
 Recipient of the 2013 Right Livelihood Award
 Gaza

Peter Thomson
 Permanent Representative of Fiji
 to the United Nations
 New York

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

Rodolfo Reyes Rodríguez
 Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations
 Vice-Chair of the Committee

Rafael Darío Ramírez Carreño
 Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of
 Venezuela to the United Nations

Sacha Sergio Llorentty
 Soliz
 Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia
 to the United Nations

Morina Muuondjo
 Ambassador of Namibia to Sweden

Bagas Hapsoro
 Ambassador of Indonesia to Sweden

Riyad Mansour
 Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine
 to the United Nations

Representative of the Secretary-General

Robert Piper
 United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator
 for the Middle East Peace Process and
 Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the
 Occupied Palestinian Territory

Delegation of the Government of Sweden

Mats Karlsson
 Representative of the host country, Sweden

Governments

Albania	Genti Bendo, Minister Counsellor Deputy Head of Mission Embassy in Stockholm
Algeria	Ahcene Kerma, Ambassador Hiba Mohammed, Diplomatic Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Angola	Ezequiel Carlos Tiago, Second Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Austria	Arthur Winkler-Hermaden, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Milton René Soto Santiesteban Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Brazil	Marcos Pinta Gama, Ambassador Thiago Miranda, First Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
China	Junfeng Li, Political Counsellor Tao Fu, Third Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Colombia	Carlos Rodriguez Bocanegra, Minister Embassy in Stockholm
Cyprus	Andreas Kakouris, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Egypt	Wael Nasr, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
El Salvador	David Humberto Cruz Rodríguez, Third Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Ethiopia	Daneal Tenkir, Second Counsellor Embassy in Stockholm

Finland	Katja Ahlfors, Counsellor Elina Eloranta, Attaché Embassy in Stockholm
France	Lionel Fabre, First Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Iceland	Olof Hrefna Kristjánsdóttir Counsellor and Deputy Chief of Mission Embassy in Stockholm
India	Mukesh Kaushik, Second Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Indonesia	Raden Bagas Hapsoro, Ambassador Ahmad Mulia Karnida, Minister Counsellor Embassy in Stockholm
Iraq	Baker Fattah Hussen, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Italy	Elena Basile, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Japan	Takashi Niimura, First Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Kuwait	Meshari Aljamhour, Third Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Lebanon	Ali Ajami, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Libya	Ibrahim Grada, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Lithuania	Eitvydas Bajarūnas, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Malaysia	Norlin Binti Othman, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Mexico	Agustín Gasca Pliego, Ambassador David Ruiz Coronado, Chargé d'affaires a.i. Lorelee Arias Vázquez, Third Secretary Embassy in Stockholm

Morocco	Arnal Belcaid, Chargé d'affaires Embassy in Stockholm
Namibia	Morina Muuondjo, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Pakistan	Najeeb Durrani, Minister Embassy in Stockholm
Portugal	Jose Julio Pereira Gomes, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Qatar	Ali Mutlag al-Hajri, Second Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Saudi Arabia	Hassain al-Marshad, Chargé d'affaires Mahir Adem Hizam, Chargé d'affaires Embassy in Stockholm
South Africa	Mbulelo A.B. Mtilwa, Counsellor Embassy in Stockholm
Spain	Javier Jimenez-Ugarte, Ambassador Lourdes Sangróniz, Deputy Head of Mission Embassy in Stockholm
State of Palestine	Hala Husni Fariz, Ambassador Cindy Inglessis, Assistant to the Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Sudan	Sawsan Abdelmagied Mohamed, Deputy Head of Mission Embassy in Stockholm
Sweden	Per Thöresson, Ambassador Pia Bolte, Deputy Director Tomas Brundin, Senior Adviser Government of Sweden
Switzerland	Marisa Beier, Academic Trainee Embassy in Stockholm
Tunisia	Fatma Omrani Chergui, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Turkey	Alperen Uyar, Second Secretary Embassy in Stockholm

Ukraine	Olena Polunina, Chargé d'affaires a.i. Lillia Honcharevych, First Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Uruguay	Santiago Wins, Ambassador Valentina Fernandez Quesada, First Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Milena Santana, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Zambia	Edith Mutale, Ambassador Priscilla Silwamba, First Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Zimbabwe	Nester Kurewa, Minister Counsellor Embassy in Stockholm

**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**

Holy See	Archbishop Henryk Józef Nowacki, Apostolic Nuncio, Head of Delegation Monsignor Gian Luca Perici, Deputy Head of Mission Embassy in Stockholm
State of Palestine	Ibrahim Alshaer, Minister Ministry of Social Development State of Palestine Daoud al-Deek, Assistant Deputy Minister Ministry of Social Development State of Palestine Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, New York Hala Husni Fariz, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm

Intergovernmental organizations

League of Arab States	Said Abu Ali, Assistant Secretary General Mutassemlah MM Alshawwa, Palestine and Occupied Arab Territories Sector Cairo
-----------------------	--

International Council of Swedish Industry	Lisa Osback, Director, Market Development Tom Jirflow, Intern Stockholm
Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean	Belal Q.H. Qasem Vice-President of the 3 rd Standing Committee St. Julians, Malta
Swedish Institute of International Affairs	Cherine Hussein, Representative Stockholm

Civil society organizations

Community Focus	Nicole Breckau, Founder Stockholm
Jerusalem Kommitten Sweden	Victor Samaina, Representative Stockholm
Palestine Solidarity Association of Sweden	Yvonne Fredriksson, Project Coordinator Stockholm
PMU InterLife	Hanna Toorell, Project Coordinator Stockholm
United National Organization for Human Rights	Abdelnaim Ahmed, Chairman Saifuldeen Ali Hussein, Representative Omaima al-Rubaye, Representative Cairo
We Effect	Inga-Lill Hammer, Regional Officer Stockholm, Sweden
Uppsala Association of International Affairs	Cornelia Norman, Representative Stockholm

Media

Palestine News & Info Agency Radio International	Qais Qadri
---	------------

Public

Linn Goth
Suhail Khaled Hafez
Minna Hilderbrandt
Erik Windolf
Rebecka Brahner
Emma Dahlberg Chouri
Ahmad Qamhawi
Oskar Kivineimi

* * *