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PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

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relevant to the question of Palestine

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I. UNRWA ISSUES STATEMENT ON SERVICES AT QALQILYA HOSPITAL

On 2 September 2017, UNRWA issued the following [statement](#):

UNRWA remains committed to providing quality primary health care to Palestine refugees as part of the Agency's mandate. To that end, we offer services at our 42 health centres across the West Bank. In Qalqilya, we have a spacious, modern health centre we inaugurated last year where we provide excellent primary health care to the 50,000 refugees who seek treatment with UNRWA.

The decision to suspend in-take of certain cases at our hospital in Qalqilya was made with the best interests of Palestine refugees in mind. In particular, ensuring high standard maternity and natal care is of paramount importance to UNRWA and we are committed to ensuring that such services are available to Palestine refugees in accordance with our mandate, including through referral systems.

The Agency is concerned that some women in labour are waiting before presenting themselves for medical care in order to access emergency admissions at Qalqilya hospital. UNRWA strongly

recommends against this practice and implores maternity patients to seek medical care through the referral system that UNRWA has introduced at alternative hospitals, immediately upon the first signs of labour or in respect of any other maternity related issues. Patients will receive better maternity care through maternity units at other hospitals and will put themselves and their babies less at risk.

Not to do so may cause serious risks to pregnant mothers and their babies including excess bleeding during the course of delivery and complications to the babies, including fetal distress that may put at risk the life of the mother and the baby.

Accessing emergencies should always be a last resort, particularly as emergency services will deal with a number of emergency cases. The health staff at our health centre in Qalqilya remain available to assist in this process and can provide a referral to an UNRWA contracted hospital that will provide excellent health care.

II. UNICEF, UN HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR AND SAVE THE CHILDREN EXPRESS CONCERN REGARDING THE EDUCATION SECTOR

On 11 September 2017, the following [statement](#) was issued by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Coordinator for Humanitarian Aid and Development Activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Save the Children:

Scores of Palestinian children continue to struggle to realize their right to education as students return to school last week. School demolitions, confiscation of equipment, double shifts, inability to prioritise education and underfunding have complicated children's access to education.

In Area C of the West Bank, three elementary schools / kindergartens were demolished or had their equipment confiscated in the past two weeks, just days before they were set to reopen, affecting 132 children. At least 56 schools in Area C of the West Bank currently have pending

demolition or stop-work orders, creating uncertainty for vulnerable school children.

“The challenges in the education sector reflects the increasing protection risks we are seeing across the occupied Palestinian territory. Children, parents and teachers share their anxieties and fears in simply trying to reach school safely” said Jennifer Moorehead, Country Director for Save the Children.

In 2016 alone, 256 education-related violations were documented in the West Bank, affecting nearly 30,000 students. Many children have to study in schools with little protection from the heat or the cold; some face long journeys, delays at military checkpoints, harassment and violence, military activity in or around the school, or have to cross military areas and firing zones.

“It is our collective duty to protect every child on the journey to school and at school and to ensure that they can access the quality education which is the right of every child, everywhere. Not only is it a right, but children’s access to quality and safe education is central to achieving a more peaceful future.” said Genevieve Boutin, UNICEF Special Representative in State of Palestine.

In East Jerusalem, there is a shortage of about 2,000 classrooms in the municipal public education system. In 2016, only 44 new classrooms were added; over the next three years, 339 additional new classrooms are due to be constructed.

In the Gaza Strip, more than half a million children (550,000) return to school in crowded classrooms -- two-thirds of schools are forced to operate in double shifts (70% UNRWA schools, 63% public schools) and six schools on triple shifts to accommodate the growing number of children due to a shortage of schools and classrooms. Children are forced to study in darkened classrooms and sometimes do their homework by candlelight due to the unprecedented deterioration in the energy crisis. The Gaza Strip is receiving only four to six hours of electricity daily.

The ministry of education and higher education is facing a shortage of 800 teachers and administrative staff, while struggling to cover teachers’ salaries (US \$300,000 deficit per month).

“We must all stand up and be counted in defence of the right of Palestinian children to a sound education and in a safe environment. International law is unambiguous here – children and classrooms enjoy unique protections that must be respected by all” said Robert Piper, the Humanitarian Coordinator for the oPt.

All parties to the conflict and duty bearers must protect children’s access to education in line with their obligations under international law. Access restrictions must be removed; measures taken to avoid threats, violence and confrontation on the way to and at school; schools must be respected as safe and inviolable spaces for children; and investment in education made an urgent priority.

III. UNCTAD ANNUAL REPORT ON ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED TURMOIL IN THE PALESTINIAN ECONOMY

On 12 September 2017, the Secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) released a report entitled “UNCTAD Assistance to the Palestinian People: Developments in the Economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory”. The following is the Executive Summary of the report ([TD/B/64/4](#)):

Fifty years have passed since Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; five decades of de-development, suppressed human potential and denial of the right to development, with an economy incapable of employing one third of its workforce and featuring extremely high unemployment among women and youth. In 2016, the Occupied Palestinian Territory witnessed deteriorating humanitarian conditions, decreasing donor support and the continuation of the restrictive measures imposed under the occupation. Israel accelerated settlement expansion in violation of Security Council resolution 2334. The international community should

assume its responsibility to support the Palestinian people to withstand the adversities of prolonged occupation.

UNCTAD successfully delivered technical cooperation, training and advisory services to the Palestinian people, and completed a project on developing Palestinian trade facilitation capacity. Additional resources are required for UNCTAD to assess and report on the economic costs of the Israeli occupation, as requested in General Assembly resolutions 69/20, 70/12 and 71/20, and to upgrade Palestinian capacities for public financial management.

IV. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR WELCOMES THE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO PALESTINIAN UNITY

On 13 September 2017, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nikolay Mladenov, issued the following [statement](#):

I welcome the recent developments related to Palestinian unity in Cairo. Reconciliation is critical to addressing the grave humanitarian crisis in Gaza, preventing the continuing militant buildup and restoring hope for the future.

I urge all parties to seize the current positive momentum and reach an agreement

that would allow the Palestinian Government to immediately take up its responsibilities in Gaza.

Gaza is and must be an integral part of any future Palestinian state. Unity is an essential step towards the peaceful realization of the Palestinian national aspirations.”

V. UNSCO ISSUES ITS REPORT TO THE AD HOC LIAISON COMMITTEE

On 15 September 2017, the Office of the United Nations Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process issued a report presented to a meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee on 18 September 2017 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The following are the executive summary and the conclusions of the [report](#):

Executive Summary

Over the past five months, efforts to relaunch meaningful negotiations between Israel and Palestine did not come to fruition. Instead, the period has witnessed a marked deterioration in relations, punctuated by a temporary suspension of coordination between the sides. While violent incidents have continued at low levels during the reporting period, the drivers of conflict remain in place. The construction and expansion of illegal settlements, violence and the ever-deepening political split between the West Bank and Gaza, that has plunged the Strip into a humanitarian crisis, provide a challenging backdrop for these AHLC discussions.

While the relatively low level of violence is welcome, the overall picture is worrying. Persistent violations of human rights by all sides continue. The biggest indication of the volatility of the situation was on display during the second half of July in occupied East Jerusalem. Following the killing of two Israeli policemen by two Arab citizens of Israel at the entrance to the Holy Esplanade, and Israel's subsequent security measures some six Palestinians were killed, raising concerns about the use of force by Israel's security forces. Three Israelis were murdered in their home in a settlement in the occupied West Bank by a 19-year-old Palestinian. The violence served as a poignant reminder of the sensitivities surrounding Jerusalem, and its holy sites. The early condemnation of the killing of the Israeli policemen by President Abbas was welcome, but the overwhelming sense of mistrust between the parties proved

to be too pervasive. Following the clashes, President Abbas decided to suspend contacts and coordination with the Israeli authorities in several key areas of mutual concern.

Over the course of the last seven months, the internal divide among Palestinian factions, and specifically between the Palestinian government and the Hamas de facto authorities in Gaza, has solidified with increasingly profound consequences on the population of Gaza. Measures taken by the PA since April are aimed at pressuring Hamas to abolish the controversial Administrative Committee that they established in March, seen by many as an attempt to undermine the Palestinian Government. While it remains crucial to restore unity and to return the legitimate Palestinian Authority to Gaza, the recent measures against Gaza are profoundly affecting the population and aggravating an already severe humanitarian crisis. President Abbas decided to reduce payments to the Israel Electricity Corporation for Gaza's electricity, which resulted in the dramatic decrease by 30 per cent of electricity provision. Other measures taken include cuts to salary benefits and allowances, and the early retirement of thousands of civil servants that will likely have a significant impact on Gaza. This comes at a time when the deterioration of Gaza's infrastructure, detailed in the UN's previous submission to the AHLC last May, has continued at an accelerated pace. UNRWA services and other UN assistance in the form of emergency fuel for critical infrastructure, as well as fuel purchased from Egypt, is all that stands in the way of a much deeper humanitarian

emergency. While the last AHLC warned of the consequences of Gaza's de-development and urged urgent remedial action, in just five months our concerns have returned to the exclusively humanitarian. Attempts to negotiate an agreement between Hamas and the PA which would provide the PA full control of the energy sector in Gaza, stabilize the supply of electricity and guarantee the transparency of revenue collection, did not bear fruit.

Meanwhile, and despite the impact of the internal political crisis on Gaza, nearly all schools, hospitals, water and energy facilities that were damaged or destroyed in 2014 have now been repaired. The reconstruction and repair of destroyed and damaged houses also continues to progress: out of the 17,800 houses which were either totally destroyed or so severely damaged as to be uninhabitable, more than 65% have now been completed and work is ongoing on another 6.5%. While the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM) has played a key role in facilitating increased imports of construction materials, it has been less successful in facilitating the import of "dual use" materials beyond cement and rebar, also critical for public works projects. As we reach three years since the end of the escalation of hostilities in Gaza, it is regrettable that a lack of funding is today the primary obstacle to completing the last remaining residential reconstruction projects, despite the existence of un-disbursed Cairo conference pledges (see World Bank AHLC report).

Over the past five months, the majority of West Bank land continued to remain off-limits to Palestinian development. Israel's control over Area C largely prevents Palestinian access to some of the West Bank's most fertile land and rich natural resources. The restrictive zoning and planning regime, continued settlement expansion, and designation of land for

exclusive Israeli use, continues to constrain Palestinian development and further erodes the viability of Palestinian statehood. In addition, serious concerns persist around the heavily restricted access to water supplies, significant levels of food insecurity and limited access to essential services, including education and health care.

With less than 1% of Area C being covered by approved outline plans' that allow Palestinians to apply for building permits, many Palestinians remain left with little choice but to build without permits. Demolitions of such structures continued during the reporting period, resulting in displacement. In this context, the importance of approving community-driven outline plans is critical to advancing Palestinian spatial planning, use and ownership of land and natural resources. Also of note, some 7,500 persons belonging to 46 Bedouin communities continue to face the threat of relocation.

It is also critical that the international community continue and strengthen its support to Palestinian communities in Area C. The UN demonstrated its determination to do its part in this regard by continued humanitarian and development interventions, including in the areas of agriculture, support to small businesses, water, sanitation and hygiene, education, health, women's empowerment and the rule of law.

Efforts to facilitate the implementation of agreements on energy and water in particular are critical to help change the reality on the ground and move the parties closer together. The full potential of these agreements, arrangements, and projects will be realized in a changed environment, one that we hope these efforts can help to usher in. The international community remains committed. Last June, the UN signed with the PA a new UNDAF, which will guide UN development

interventions for the coming five years (2018-2022). The UNDAF is fully aligned with the PA's National Policy Agenda (2017-2022) and firmly rooted in the vision of bringing about an independent and sovereign Palestine in the context of the two-state solution.

Conclusions

The absence of a political process for achieving the two-state solution remains a serious impediment to Palestine's development. Fifty years have passed since the 1967 war which resulted in Israel's occupation of Gaza and the West Bank including East Jerusalem and 24 years since the signing of the Oslo Accords, yet we are no closer to a sustainable solution that meets the needs and aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis alike.

The events of late July in East Jerusalem are a clear indication of the dangers of turning the national Palestinian-Israeli conflict into a religious one. That these events have resulted in decreased coordination between the parties is lamentable, if not dangerous.

Renewed international engagement will be needed to help the parties overcome key obstacles. But they also have responsibilities themselves. Israel is urged to immediately cease settlement expansion and activities. It must commit itself to implement previously signed agreements including increasing Palestinian authority over parts of the West Bank that will foster economic growth, reduce dependency and preserve the viability of the two-state solution.

At the same time, the deepening of the internal Palestinian divide undermines the Palestinian cause and is a further impediment to development and economic growth. The negative humanitarian effects of Israeli closures that already severely restrict the

access of people and goods into the Strip are compounded by the Palestinian Government's recent measures on Gaza. While realizing the goal of reuniting Gaza and the West Bank under a single, legitimate Palestinian authority is essential, the severe humanitarian crisis caused by these measures is driving Gaza further away from the West Bank. The population in the Strip is experiencing unprecedentedly low levels of electricity, deteriorating infrastructure, and an almost total lack of sewage treatment while still recovering from the impact of the last round of conflict and destruction. Humanitarian intervention is urgently required at a time when our attention should be focused on pursuing economic development.

The obligations of Israel, the Palestinian Government and the *de facto* Hamas authorities to ensure the well-being of Gaza's population notwithstanding, a sustainable solution to Gaza's problems requires an urgent political solution that is in line with the PLO principles.

Despite the dire circumstances, the GRM remains a positive example of coordination between the parties concerning the effort to respond to the devastation of the 2014 conflict. The degree of reconstruction and repair that it has facilitated is a laudable achievement. Yet, the mechanism is limited as a tool for reinvigorating the economy. Prolonged waiting times and lack of clarity on procedures for the import of "dual use" materials beyond cement and re-bar remain critical impediments. Ultimately, nothing short of a full lifting of the closures in line with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) will do. Looking forward, any discussion on the mechanism's future must come as the result of a clearly articulated and joint Israeli-PA commitment both to finalize the reconstruction phase and take measures to revitalize Gaza's economy. However, a

significant funding gap remains with some \$150 million still required for the reconstruction of fully destroyed houses. It is crucial that those who made pledges to fund Gaza's reconstruction, follow through.

Efforts to positively alter the reality on the ground through the implementation of Israeli-Palestinian water, energy and other agreements and projects are a welcome start, but not an end in and of themselves. Increased Palestinian control over its resources and economy are imperatives that we must work towards. To this end, expanding Palestinian access to and authority in Area C and the realization of its economic, social and cultural potential is critical. Since the last AHLC meeting, there has been no discernible change in Israeli policies concerning planning restrictions, the permit

regime or extending Palestinian civilian control in the West Bank.

The United Nations continues to demonstrate its commitment by its actions on the ground. The agreement on a new UNDAF with the Office of the Prime Minister, stands as a testament to the UN's commitment to Palestine, its goal of achieving independence and the two-state solution. The UN stands ready to support the parties and the international community in achieving progress wherever possible. The overarching goal of the \$1.3 billion UNDAF strategy is to enhance development prospects of the people of Palestine by advancing Palestinian statehood, transparent and effective institutions, and by addressing key drivers of vulnerability.¹⁴

VI. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR WELCOMES AGREEMENT TO ALLOW THE GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CONSENSUS TO ASSUME ITS RESPONSIBILITIES IN GAZA

The following [statement](#) was issued on 17 September 2017 by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov:

I welcome the recent statement by Hamas announcing the dissolving of the Administrative Committee in Gaza and agreement to allow the Government of National Consensus to assume its responsibilities in Gaza.

I commend the Egyptian authorities for their tireless efforts in creating this positive

momentum. All parties must seize this opportunity to restore unity and open a new page for the Palestinian people.

The United Nations stands ready to assist all efforts in this respect. It is critical that the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza, most notably the crippling electricity crisis, be addressed as a priority.

¹⁴ The UNDAF (available at https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/palestine_undaf_2018-2022.pdf) is configured around four core programming areas: (i) supporting Palestine's path to independence; (ii) supporting access

to accountable, effective and responsive democratic governance; (iii) supporting sustainable and inclusive economic development; and (iv) promoting social development and protection.

VII. OFFICE OF THE QUARTET ISSUES ITS REPORT TO THE AD HOC LIAISON COMMITTEE

On 17 September 2017, the Office of the Quartet released its report, which was presented to a meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee on 18 September 2017 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The following is the executive summary of the [report](#):

A negotiated final status agreement is the only way to end the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Realizing progress on the ground now will benefit Palestinians (and Israelis), and carries with it the potential to support (but never supplant) final status negotiations which aim to achieve an enduring two-state solution.

While the situation on the ground has remained challenging, some areas have seen progress. As with the Office of the Quartet's (OQ) two previous reports to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, the focus of this report remains largely on energy and water, both of which are central to improving the lives of those most in need and to creating the conditions under which economic growth can be realized. Progress in these sectors (and indeed telecommunications, movement and trade as well as the rule of law) therefore has a multiplier effect in that the outcome would extend beyond the narrow output of any single policy or project. The OQ report therefore complements that of the United Nations which focuses on the situation on the ground and context, as well as the macroeconomically focused reports of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

Achieving improvements in the energy sector requires a holistic approach that includes short, medium and long-term measures. These measures should ensure the commercial viability of the sector, develop enabling infrastructure, expand power supply and electricity generation and help move towards a unified, sustainable sector.

The full implementation of the electricity agreement reached by the parties in

September 2016 is paving the way for the establishment of a new Palestinian electricity market. This has the potential to reduce reliance on the donor community, improve commercial viability, and increase Palestinian Authority (PA) control over the sector, by addressing cost-recovery challenges, ensuring the predictability and reliability of electricity supply, and making cost-efficient power generation possible. The parties have already made progress towards this goal, including reaching a mini Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) which resulted in the Jenin substation being energized. This has facilitated negotiations on the full PPA. A recent meeting convened by the US Government with the parties, and hosted by the OQ, demonstrates further positive momentum. The parties are encouraged to conclude a sustainable PPA in a timely manner. Donors are encouraged to support the PA to implement the electricity agreement in full by providing the remaining financing required to meet costs. Implementation of longer-term initiatives is essential for the energy sector's development, and key milestones should be met in the run up to their completion. This includes the 161 kV line, upgrade and expansion of electricity networks, and increasing the electricity generating capacity in the West Bank and Gaza, through connection to natural gas.

A holistic approach is also required in the water sector. The Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) estimates that 97 percent of the groundwater in Gaza is not potable. The energy shortfall exacerbates the water crisis there, limiting the treatment of sewage with the result that raw sewage is leaked into the

environment including the Mediterranean Sea. Though less acute than in Gaza, the West Bank faces serious water challenges as well, with an estimated supply gap in potable water of minimum 20 MCM by 2022 and with increasing amounts of wastewater polluting the environment. Further effort is required in three interrelated areas: increasing water supply, developing water and wastewater infrastructure, and advancing regulatory reform in a manner that will ensure the sector is commercially viable.

It is of note that there has been some progress since the convening of the AHLC meeting in May 2017. This includes: advancing the implementation of the 2013 MoU on the Red Sea—Dead Sea project (RSDS); setting the priority agenda items for the Joint Technical Committee (JTC) of the Joint Water Committee (JWC); and progress in the preparations for Gaza Central Desalination Plant (GCDP). As is the case in energy, ensuring the commercial viability of the sector is essential.

To ensure continued and accelerated progress on these files, the two parties are encouraged to advance their discussions in the JWC and its JTC. Donors are encouraged to provide technical and financial support for the water sector overall. The PWA is encouraged to advance its regulatory reform, and the Government of Israel (Gol) is encouraged to provide the approvals needed for construction in Area C and for entry of materials to Gaza.

The annex to this report provides a brief update on other key sectors and areas. The section on telecommunications outlines progress made up to date and the remaining challenges leading up to the launch of commercial operations for 2G in Gaza and 3G in the West Bank. This includes the need to release the remaining 3G equipment from the ports as well as the need to conclude the required commercial agreements before the

end of September 2017. This is essential for enabling the 3G commercial launch by the end of the year, and concluding the building of the 2G network in Gaza in order to launch in the fourth quarter of 2017.

The rule of law section focuses on three inter-related challenges of strengthening the institutions of the justice and security sectors, including the improved implementation of the trade arrangements between the Palestinian territory and the Gol, and supporting the discussion on Customs Transfer. The following Ministry of Finance to Ministry of Finance (MoF-to-MoF) section covers the ongoing engagement which has the potential to improve robustness, sustainability and predictability of the PA's fiscal situation.

The section on movement and trade focuses on four areas, including further enhancing the crossings between the West Bank and Israel; door-to-door and trade facilitation; the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge (A/KHB); and identifying new export markets. The expanded operating hours at A/KHB during the summer of 2017, and plans to put this in place permanently next summer are welcome steps to minimize travel delays. Additional measures to streamline passenger processing are needed. The parties are encouraged to pursue the recommendations identified in order to meet the ever-increasing demands placed upon the crossing. Finally, the report presents the economic mapping tool currently being developed by the OQ, in close collaboration with several PA partners.

The OQ's work is supported by a core group of donors which have been able to align behind shared strategic goals. These include the United States of America and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, in addition to contributions from the United Kingdom and the European Union.

VIII. UN UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS ADDRESSES THE AD HOC LIAISON COMMITTEE

On 18 September 2017, Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman made the following remarks at a [meeting](#) of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee at United Nations Headquarters in New York:

We are grateful to Norway for convening and chairing this important forum.

Last month, I accompanied the Secretary-General in his first visit to Israel and Palestine in his new capacity. In the visit, he had the chance to speak with Palestinians and Israelis and with their leadership about their concerns, hopes and aspirations. The Secretary-General came away more convinced than ever that there is no alternative to the two-state solution that can bring an end to the conflict and meet the legitimate national aspirations and security needs of both sides.

The evolving situation in the occupied Palestinian territory these past few months is deeply worrying. A man-made humanitarian crisis in Gaza is rapidly deteriorating, somewhat slowed by the United Nations delivery of fuel to key infrastructure facilities. The situation also remains volatile in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, with little hope for a political breakthrough on the horizon.

The development needs of the Palestinian people, however, cannot be held hostage to the political stalemate. Israel, the Palestinian Leadership and the international community must each take tangible steps to improve socio-economic conditions on the ground and to protect human rights.

However, economic development, critical as it is, is no substitute for sovereignty and statehood. Efforts aimed at achieving both must proceed in parallel. We must simultaneously pursue a three track approach — a political process with the clear

objectives of two states living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition; a substantial effort to improve the socio-economic conditions of Palestinians that would reduce the vast discrepancies between the two societies; and an active engagement with the region to support the process.

This approach also requires dealing with the obstacles to meaningful engagement.

Settlement activity remains a substantial impediment to the implementation of the two-state solution. It is illegal under international law and needs to stop. Violence and incitement, as well as the political divisions between Gaza and the West Bank also present substantial challenges to peace.

Let me address also the situation in Gaza which is rapidly deteriorating and remains of grave concern for all of us. Hamas' rule and militant buildup have continued for ten years.

Israel's restrictive closures also remains a key impediment to Gaza's development. This long-standing reality is further exacerbated by the internal political divide between Fatah and Hamas.

In this regard, I welcome the recent statement by Hamas announcing the dissolution of the Administrative Committee in Gaza and agreement to allow the Government of National Consensus to assume its responsibilities in the Strip.

I commend the Egyptian authorities for their tireless efforts in creating this positive momentum and I encourage all parties to seize this opportunity to restore unity and open a new page for the Palestinian people.

This should facilitate the removal of Israeli closures on Gaza, in line with Security Council Resolution 1860.

The United Nations stands ready to assist all efforts in this respect, most notably to address the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza and crippling electricity crisis.

When I visited Gaza with the Secretary-General, I saw firsthand the deep sense of isolation within the population.

Let me be clear — the risk of a major humanitarian breakdown is very high today as essential services are largely operating on back-up generators and with fuel provided by the UN.

Today, our first priority should be to urgently stabilize the electricity supply by restoring the electricity coming from Israel to at least to pre-crisis levels. Once this is done we can seize the momentum and create a facility to finance the necessary infrastructure upgrades and increase electricity supply without a negative effect on the already strained Palestinian budget.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, on the occasion of this AHLC, as we renew our commitment to

support the development of the State of Palestine, we must take stock of the progress achieved to date. The formidable challenges notwithstanding, the Palestinian Authority has made tremendous strides in its ability to deliver services and expand its economy. These are laudable achievements, absolutely, but not an end goal. For more than 20 years, we have told Palestinians that they need to focus on institution building and socio-economic development. We have encouraged and supported them in preparing for statehood. The time has come for us to deliver on that promise.

In this context, I want to express the steadfast commitment of the United Nations to do everything in its power to realize the two-state solution, to protect human rights and to advance the development aspirations of the people of the occupied Palestinian territory.

Today, I hope that we can together commit to systematically easing the political constraints to Palestine's development and statehood. I hope you will all take back to your capitals the urgency of the situation and a clear vision of the way forward.

I wish you the very best in your endeavours.

IX. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL CALLS FOR URGENT STEPS TO BRIDGE UNRWA FUNDING SHORTFALL

The following are excerpts from the text of UN Secretary-General António Guterres' video message to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) high-level meeting "Giving Hope to Palestine Refugees: New Horizons for Sustainable Funding for UNRWA", held in New York on 22 September ([SG/SM/18717-PAL/2213](#)):

...

I thank the Governments of Jordan, Sweden and the Organization of Islamic

Cooperation (OIC), for bringing participants together at this important meeting.

We have a responsibility to preserve, through UNRWA [United Nations Relief and

Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East], our humanitarian support to Palestinian refugees. But, the Agency faces repeated financial crises.

At the General Assembly's request, a report has been submitted to Member States with proposals on ways to secure funding to enable UNRWA to continue its activities uninterrupted. The report reflects the call for sufficient, predictable and sustained funding. It identifies new funding mechanisms, particularly through the World Bank and

Islamic Development Bank. I welcome their participation in this meeting.

We need urgent steps to bridge UNRWA's funding shortfall. The Agency may run out of money in weeks — with severe consequences, especially in vital sectors such as health and education.

My recent visit to Gaza strengthened my conviction that UNRWA's role is critical. We must live up to our responsibility to preserve a robust UNRWA and assure Palestine refugees of our solidarity.

X. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL AND UPDATES ON IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION 2334

On 25 September 2017, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, briefed the Security Council on “the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” and reported on behalf of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334. The following are excerpts from his briefing ([S/PV.8054](#)):

Today I devote my regular briefing to the Security Council to reporting, on behalf of the Secretary-General, on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) during the period from 20 June to 20 September. In this third briefing, I will once again focus on developments on the ground in accordance with the provisions of the resolution, including on regional and international efforts to advance the peace process.

During the reporting period, Israel did not cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, or fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard, as called for by the resolution. Since 20 June, Israel's illegal settlement activities have continued at a high rate — a consistent pattern over the course of this year. Activity during this period was concentrated primarily in occupied East Jerusalem, where plans were advanced for over 2,300 housing units in July, 30 per cent

more than for the whole of 2016. That includes plans for some 1,600 units expanding a ring of settlements north of East Jerusalem, as well as in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah, adjacent to the Old City. While no plans were advanced in Area C during the reporting period, in early September construction resumed on the new settlement of Amihai, in the heart of the West Bank.

The reporting period witnessed the eviction of a Palestinian family in Sheikh Jarrah, residents for over 50 years, after a protracted legal battle. The building is located in a section of the neighbourhood in which several settlement plans were among those promoted in July. Eviction proceedings are under way for some 180 Palestinian families in East Jerusalem, over 60 of whom reside in Sheikh Jarrah.

Meanwhile, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the destruction of Palestinian-owned property across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continued, albeit at a significantly lower rate. Overall since the beginning of 2017, 344 structures have been demolished, a third of them in East Jerusalem, displacing some 500 people. In Area C of the occupied West Bank in August, three educational facilities, serving 175 children, were demolished or confiscated, citing the lack of building permits, which are virtually impossible for Palestinians to obtain.

On 25 July, in the city of Hebron, 15 Israeli settler families illegally occupied the Abu Rajab/Machpelah House, despite ongoing legal proceedings over its ownership. On 27 August, the Israeli Government notified the High Court of Justice that it would evict the settlers within one week. However, that process has been put on hold by a temporary injunction issued by the Court.

In other related developments, on 26 July an amendment to the Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel passed a first reading in the Knesset. If approved, the law would further cement Israeli control over East Jerusalem. On 17 August, the High Court of Justice issued a temporary injunction formally postponing the application of the so-called regularization law. On 31 August, a military order was issued establishing a civil services administration that upgrades the status of settlements in the H2 area of Hebron, further consolidating Israeli presence there and reinforcing the existing separation and division in this highly volatile area, where some 500 Israelis live among some 40,000 Palestinians. The United Nations considers all settlement activities to be illegal under international law and an impediment to peace. Resolution 2334 (2016) states that the

international community will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed to by the parties themselves through negotiations.

I will now turn to the issue of violence, which persists as one of the main obstacles to resolving the conflict. Resolution 2334 (2016) calls on all sides to prevent such acts and to strengthen efforts to combat terrorism, including through existing security coordination. Although the reporting period was characterized by relatively low levels of fatalities, a number of incidents occurred, particularly related to the unrest following the fatal 14 July attack against two Israeli policemen in Jerusalem's Old City.

During the reporting period, 19 Palestinians, five of whom were in Area A of the West Bank, were killed in attacks, clashes and Israeli military operations. Eight Israelis were killed in clashes and attacks, including the three Israeli-Arab perpetrators of the 14 July attack, who were killed by the security forces. Of the 19 Palestinian fatalities, five were killed during protests and subsequent clashes related to the unrest in Jerusalem. On 21 July, a Palestinian brutally murdered three members of an Israeli family in a terrorist attack in the West Bank settlement of Haramish.

In a reaction to the events at the Holy Esplanade, on 21 July Palestinian President Abbas declared a freeze of all contacts with Israel at all levels, including security coordination. After three months of quiet, on 26 June, 23 and 24 July and 8 August Palestinian militants fired rockets towards Israel, with no injuries reported. In response, the Israel Defence Forces conducted five airstrikes in Gaza, resulting in three Palestinians being injured. On 17 August, one Palestinian was killed by a suicide bomber, who was also killed, close to the

Egyptian border in Gaza. This appears to have been the first suicide bombing affecting Hamas forces in Gaza.

During the reporting period, settler-related violence also continued. Some 26 incidents were documented, the majority involving the vandalization of Palestinian agricultural property around Nablus, and assaults against Palestinians in and around Hebron. Meanwhile, at least 26 Palestinian attacks also took place against Israeli settlers, resulting in casualties or property damage. Punitive demolitions also continued during the reporting period, with Israeli authorities demolishing five homes belonging to families of Palestinian perpetrators of attacks.

The reporting period also witnessed a shrinking space for civil society and freedom of expression. On 24 June, the Palestinian President issued, by decree, the Cybercrime Law. Since then, at least six journalists, one human rights activist in Hebron and a number of others have reportedly been arrested. While most were subsequently released, these arrests raise strong concerns that the law is being used to curtail freedom of expression. In Gaza, a social media activist was arrested by Hamas on 3 July and detained for almost two weeks on charges of incitement against the de facto authorities, while a journalist was detained for more than two months on unclear allegations of collaboration with the authorities in Ramallah.

Resolution 2334 (2016) called upon both parties to refrain from acts of provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, and to condemn all acts of terrorism. At the height of the July crisis around the holy sites of Jerusalem, officials and representatives on all sides employed provocative rhetoric. In the midst of what were largely peaceful protests, Hamas and senior Palestinian Authority

officials called for an escalation and a day of rage across the occupied Palestinian territory. Hamas and others continued to openly glorify terror attacks, describing the murder of three Israelis at their home in Halamish as “heroic”. Meanwhile, President Abbas explicitly condemned the 14 July attack and, in an attempt to calm tensions at the holy sites, some Palestinian leaders and religious authorities on both sides called on protestors to avoid violence and provocation.

With regard to settlements, Israeli officials continued to use provocative rhetoric in support of expansion. On 3 August, the Israeli Prime Minister delivered an inauguration speech at the launch of the construction of 1,000 new housing units in the Beitar Illit settlement, in which he praised the achievements of his Government in promoting settlement construction. On 28 August, he said that “there will be no more uprooting of settlements in the land of Israel We will deepen our roots, build, strengthen and settle”.

Other senior Israeli politicians also made repeated calls for annexation of the West Bank, with one Member of the Knesset expressing his desire to “destroy” hopes for Palestinian statehood, and stating that “there is room to define and realize the national aspirations of one people only — the Jewish people”.

Resolution 2334 (2016) reiterated the call of the Middle East Quartet on both parties to take steps to reverse negative trends on the ground that are imperilling the two-State solution. On 10 July, an interim power-purchasing agreement was signed between the Palestinian and the Israeli electricity companies, energizing the first Palestinian-owned and operated sub-station in Jenin and allowing for an increase in electricity supply in the northern West Bank. On 13 July, the United States facilitated an agreement

between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, allowing for an increase in water supply for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza as part of the 2013 Red Sea-Dead Sea Water Conveyance project.

In Gaza, the situation remains extremely fragile. The chronic energy deficit has been substantially worsened by the decision of the Palestinian Authority to reduce electricity supply to the Strip. While Egyptian fuel has enabled the Gaza power plant to resume operations, electricity supply is still down to about four hours per day. Basic services in some 190 health, water and sanitation facilities continue to rely on back-up generators powered by United Nations-provided fuel. As part of the Gaza emergency appeal issued in July, an additional \$4 million from the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund has been released to support critical services. The appeal is now 51 per cent funded.

To end the standoff, the Palestinian Authority has remained firm in its demands for Hamas to dissolve the administrative committee it established in March and allow the Government of National Consensus to take up its responsibilities in Gaza. On 17 September, Hamas officially accepted these conditions. It now remains to be seen whether the agreement will be implemented and electricity supply to Gaza restored.

I have just returned from a trip to the Gaza Strip, and I am happy to brief the Security Council in closed session on developments related to Palestinian reconciliation and the Government returning to Gaza.

During the reporting period, there were no developments related to Member States' distinguishing, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories it occupied in 1967. Meanwhile, the international community has

continued its efforts to advance the goal of peace. The envoys of the Middle East Quartet continue to meet to discuss current efforts to advance peace, as well as the deteriorating situation in Gaza. In August, a United States delegation travelled to the region and met with regional interlocutors, with a focus on reviving the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. All parties agreed to continue working towards a sustainable peace and to promote security and stability across the region.

Shortly thereafter, on 27 August the Secretary-General arrived in the region for his first official visit to Israel and Palestine. He strongly reaffirmed the United Nations position that there is no alternative to the two-State solution and suggested a three-track approach to end the occupation and advance the prospects for peace: first, a serious political process with a clear end goal of two States living side by side in peace and mutual recognition; secondly, a simultaneous effort to improve the socioeconomic conditions of Palestinians; and thirdly, active engagement with regional partners. He conveyed his personal commitment to helping the parties return to meaningful negotiations, based on relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and prior agreements.

In September, Egypt hosted delegations from Hamas and Fatah in an effort to advance Palestinian unity, which led to the breakthrough decision by the de facto Gaza leadership to dissolve the administrative committee and invite the Government to return to the Strip.

On 18 September, Norway convened the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians in New York with Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Ziad Abu Amr; Palestinian Authority Minister of Finance and Planning, Mr. Shukri Bishara; and Israeli

Minister of Regional Cooperation, Mr. Tzachi Hanegbi, in attendance. Those at the meeting agreed that additional concerted action was needed to make progress on fiscal sustainability, economic development and Gaza's reconstruction and recovery. It was also noted that socioeconomic conditions cannot be adequately addressed without progress in the peace process.

In conclusion, I would like to share some broad observations on the reporting period.

Continuing settlement expansion, most notably during this period in occupied East Jerusalem, is making the two-State solution increasingly unattainable and undermining Palestinian belief in international peace efforts. In addition to illegal settlements, the practice of demolishing Palestinian structures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and displacing Palestinians undermines the prospects of peace. Continued violence against civilians and incitement perpetuate mutual fear and suspicion, while impeding any effort to bridge the gaps between the two sides. I once again urge both parties to demonstrate their commitment to rejecting violence, inflammatory rhetoric and provocative actions.

The Jenin agreement was an important first step towards a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian power-sharing agreement that would lead to greater Palestinian energy autonomy. I encourage the parties to fully implement the Red Sea-Dead Sea agreement to enable the delivery of much-needed water to the West Bank and Gaza.

While all initiatives to improve the Palestinian economy are welcome, much more needs to be done as part of a political process aimed at establishing a Palestinian State. Economic development, as critical as it is, is no substitute for sovereignty and statehood. As the Secretary-General has called for, efforts aimed at achieving both

sovereignty and statehood must proceed in parallel.

Intra-Palestinian reconciliation remains critical to preventing the continuing militant buildup and restoring hope for the future. In that regard, I welcome the recent statement by Hamas announcing the dissolution of the administrative committee in Gaza and agreement to allow the Government of National Consensus to assume its responsibilities in Gaza.

I commend the Egyptian authorities for their tireless efforts in creating such positive momentum. All parties must seize the opportunity to restore unity and open a new page for the Palestinian people. That should facilitate the removal of Israeli closures on Gaza, in line with resolution 1860 (2009). The United Nations stands ready to assist all efforts in that respect. It is critical that the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza, most notably the crippling electricity crisis, be addressed as a priority.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that collective and determined action on the part of the parties, the region and the international community is needed in order to initiate a serious political process, drawing upon all relevant United Nations resolutions, that will realize a two-State solution and end the occupation and resolve all final status issues. As the Secretary-General said on his recent visit,

“the international community cannot simply turn away and allow the situation to deteriorate. We have a role and a responsibility to support the parties in resolving this conflict”.

With that responsibility comes an obligation to do what is necessary in order to establish a peaceful, prosperous and secure future for Palestinians, Israelis and the entire region.

XI. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR CONDEMNS ATTACK IN A SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK

On 26 September 2017, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov issued the following [statement](#):

I condemn this morning's shooting attack by a Palestinian perpetrator in the Har Adar settlement in which one Israeli policeman and two security guards were killed, and another was seriously injured. My thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of all victims and I hope for a full and speedy recovery of the wounded.

It is deplorable that Hamas and others continue to glorify such attacks, which undermine the possibility of a peaceful future for both Palestinians and Israelis. I urge all to condemn violence and stand up to terror.

XII. QUARTET ENVOYS WELCOME EFFORTS TO CREATE CONDITIONS FOR THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY TO ASSUME ITS RESPONSIBILITIES IN GAZA

The following joint [statement](#) was issued on 28 September 2017 by the Quartet envoys:

The Envoys of the Middle East Quartet from the Russian Federation, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations welcome efforts, including those of Egypt, to create the conditions for the Palestinian Authority to assume its responsibilities in Gaza.

They urge the parties to take concrete steps to reunite Gaza and the West Bank under the legitimate Palestinian Authority. This will facilitate lifting the closures of the crossings, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns, and unlock

international support for Gaza's growth, stability and prosperity, which is critical for efforts to reach lasting peace. The Quartet envoys stand ready to engage with Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the region in support of this process.

The Envoys emphasize that the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza, most notably the crippling electricity crisis and its impact on health, social and economic well-being of the population, must be addressed. The Quartet encourages the international community to act accordingly.