



**DIVISION FOR  
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS**

**UNEDITED TEXT**

**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**

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## **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 (“the Committee”) 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 of the transformative “Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development”, its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and pledge to “leave no one behind” in 2015, the Committee was requested to organize a discussion around challenges and opportunities of implementation of the Agenda 2030 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, pillage of the natural resources of Palestine, restriction of movement of people and goods, and obstacles to production, trade, market access, job creation and the full utilization of its human potential, including of youth and women.

While noting some social successes in the Palestinian development trajectory, such as low maternal mortality rate and high literacy especially among women, speakers discussed the economic and political challenges ahead. Ending poverty, reducing inequality, particularly among women and the youth, reducing violence against women, enhancing employment were among the priorities identified by the Palestinian National Development Plan for 2017-2022 with a view to attaining the SDGs.

When discussing the lack of economic growth, the Seminar acknowledged that the 1994 Paris Protocol on economic relations between Israel and Palestine had left the Palestinian market captive for Israeli products, further weakening the Palestinian economy. The need to change the framework from one of reliance on foreign aid toward a locally-oriented, self-reliant economy was highlighted as one of the tools to attain sustainable development. The lifting of the Gaza blockade and allowing access to ports and trade was paramount to alleviate poverty, accelerate reconstruction and boost the Palestinian economy.

The Seminar heard the uplifting experience of **Ms. Hanan Al Hroub** the Palestinian “Global Teacher Prize” winner, who shared her education methodology to promote peace and dialogue among the youth. Discussions highlighted the need to invest in the youth and to break gender stereotypes 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 SDGs.

## 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 (the Committee) and in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 70/12 and 70/13 of 24 November 2015. 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 at the Seminar by a delegation headed by H.E. Mr. Rodolfo Reyes Rodriguez (Committee Vice-Chair); and comprising H.E. Mr. Sacha Sergio Llorentty Soliz (Bolivia); H.E. Mr. Raden Bagas Hapsoro (Indonesia); H.E. Ms. Morina Muuondjo (Namibia); H.E. Mr. Rafael Darío Ramírez Carreño (Venezuela); and H.E. Mr. 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 (SDGs): Challenges and constraints of 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 9 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 soon after its conclusion and is available from the website of the Division for Palestinian Rights ([www.unispal.un.org](http://www.unispal.un.org)) of the Secretariat, 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 the Kingdom of Sweden by **Mr. Mats Karlsson**, Director, Swedish Institute of International Affairs. In the statement, 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 that, for many years assistance to Palestine had been a priority for the Government of Sweden and for Swedish civil society alike. In particular, he informed that Sweden's provision of assistance enjoyed broad support in the Parliament: bilateral assistance to Palestine would be increased by 50 percent overall until 2019, for a total annual amount of approximately US\$ 100 million, including support for Palestinian refugees through 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 US\$ 40.6 million, with additional ear-marked funding 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 stated commitments by both parties to pursue that final goal were reassuring, he urged them to translate commitments into concrete 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, including a fundamental change of Israel's settlement policy, in order to increase economic opportunities, and also by strengthening of Palestinian institutions. This 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, **Mr. Ban Ki-moon** by his representative at the Seminar, **Mr. Robert Piper**, Deputy United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In the statement, the Secretary-General welcomed the fact that the Seminar focused on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which provided a universal, integrated and transformative plan of action for people, the planet and for prosperity, the three pillars of the SDGs architecture. The Agenda promised to leave no one behind but its true test rested in the capacity of all stakeholders to implement it in a spirit of true partnership. He thanked 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 the Swedish diplomat Folke Bernadotte who had been assassinated in 1948 while pursuing his duties as UN Mediator for Palestine.

9. The Secretary-General 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 Agenda in its national development plan, as well as the signing by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, as signs of the commitment toward the implementation of the Agenda. The United Nations, he added, remained firmly committed to helping Palestine build its capacity towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

10. The Secretary-General stated that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. Connecting development efforts to humanitarian action, human rights, and 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 the youth. That is why it was 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 meeting the national aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians, living and prospering side-by-side in peace and security.

11. **H.E. Mr. Rodolfo Reyes Rodriguez**, Vice-Chair of the Committee, delivered a statement on behalf of the Committee noting that the Seminar would focus on the constraints of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in Palestine under the Israeli occupation and on ways in which the Agenda 2030 could help to pave the way toward a peaceful, independent and sustainable State of Palestine. The Seminar would also focus on two key constituents of the Agenda 2030, women and youth, and how their empowerment would determine Palestine's successful and sustainable development and help realize a peaceful and inclusive society. Finally, the Seminar would explore the critical role of international solidarity and partnerships to enable Palestine to reach its development goals.

12. The Vice-Chair stressed how in the particular case of Palestine, the Agenda 2030 would need to be implemented while at the same time addressing the ongoing humanitarian needs in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. Nevertheless, development could still take place in the midst of 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, he argued.

13. This 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. **H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Alshaer**, Minister for Social Development of the State of Palestine 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. However, 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 caused economic losses worth billions of dollars. International law and relevant UN resolutions had never been respected, he noted, including in the environmental field, which allowed for environmental violations in Palestine such as the loss of fertile lands or the exploitation of oil, gas and water resources caused by illegal settlement activities.

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

16. He informed that the Government of Palestine was working on its National Policy Agenda for 2017-2022, which would take into account the objectives outlined in Agenda 2030. In that regard, the Government had formed a National Team for the Sustainable Development Goals. Within the team, the Ministry of Social Development's mandate would focus on ending poverty through a transformative social protection system, economic empowerment programmes, inclusive social services and the establishment of social protection minimum standards. Women, youth, poor farmers and the disabled would be priority groups, with more resources dedicated to mainstreaming gender and disability issues.

17. He said that 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 proceed with the SDGs regarding acceleration of economic growth and policy support. Palestine needed the support of the UN's expertise on sustainable development and governance without which it would be difficult to accomplish such goals.

18. **H.E. Mr. Said Abu Ali**, Assistant Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, stated that Arab countries supported the UN Agenda 2030 and agreed that achieving sustainable development in the State of Palestine should come in parallel with a serious effort to dismantle the Israeli occupation and achieve Palestinian independence, leading to peace and prosperity for the entire region. However, 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, 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, to no avail due to restrictions placed by the occupation including the total control of their natural resources.

19. In this context, the implementation of the sustainable development agenda carried a particular significance for Palestine and constituted a challenge for the international community, who should not consider itself relieved of its responsibilities. To 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, through providing protection for the Palestinian people, reaffirming the framework of the peace process based on UN Security Council principles and stopping the illegal settlement activities which undermine the prospects for the two-State solution. For this reason, his organization extended their full support to the French Initiative. In closing, he reiterated the League of Arab States membership support for the Agenda 2030 and expressed their commitment to actively and effectively contribute to its implementation.

20. The representative of **Indonesia** said that it was important that other countries consider 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 informed that it had decided to establish a Consulate in Ramallah,

which would open later in 2016. Moreover, in 2015 Indonesia had hosted a conference of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the Question of Jerusalem. Finally, he informed that Indonesia also provided about US\$100 million annually in assistance to the State of Palestine.

21. The representative of **Tunisia** said that her country had firmly stood 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 the youth.

22. The representative of **Morocco** expressed concern that despite negotiations since the 1990's, the Israeli occupation was ongoing, including confiscation of Palestinian land while 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 would bring about a Palestinian State within 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. Morocco had adopted a policy that included diplomatic support to end Israeli occupation as well as contributing to the implementation of projects in the Palestinian territory to improve living conditions, 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 UN Environment Programme to send a delegation of environmental experts to the Gaza Strip to assess the environmental situation there and the impacts of the wars of 2012 and 2014.

23. The representative of **Malaysia** noted that through the adoption of the Agenda 2030, the international community had put forward a vision of a world where all nations would

attain the Sustainable Development Goals and no one would be left behind. It was therefore crucial that Palestinians 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 these 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. He called for capacity building initiatives as 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 on the international community to encourage the parties to return to the negotiating table. Palestine's social and economic development were key for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals as well as peace and security in the entire region.

25. The representative of **South Africa** noted that the adoption of the Agenda 2030 held out 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 Palestine's socio-economic development did not get the attention it deserved. Referring to the 2015 report by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), he pointed out that the expansion of settlements

diminished access to economic resources and compromised the ability to achieve sustainable development. Furthermore, Gaza's ongoing blockade had slowed down reconstruction and increased unemployment while the limitations on import of cement and other "dual-use" materials, as well as ongoing delays in the construction of a sea port, had left the Strip de facto landlocked. South Africa had assisted with infrastructure development in the West Bank and Gaza and funding to UNRWA, but more pressure was needed to ensure Israel did not hold the right to development hostage as a political tool. People under occupation should not be left behind, he concluded.

26. The representative of **Lebanon** emphasized that for almost 70 years Israel had ignored UN Security Council resolutions therefore he was pessimistic that things would change. Lebanon had a long experience with Israeli occupation and aggression and Lebanon succeeded in liberating itself, not through UN resolutions but through fighting for its freedom. Lebanon supported the two-State solution, but it 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 hopes for the early resumption of direct talks. Mexico was concerned about the dire situation in Gaza and had pledged US\$ 250,000 as a financial contribution to UNRWA.

28. The representative of **China** noted how the Agenda 2030 adopted in 2015 provided a holistic vision of development, which should be focused on the economic, social and



environmental aspects. The State of Palestine faced constraints to achieving of sustainable development and needed support from the international community through financing, capacity building and trade. However, development needed a peaceful environment to flourish which China believed could only be achieved through direct peace negotiations. The immediate priorities were to put a halt to settlement activities, cease 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 **Venezuela** stated that the illegal Israeli occupation was directly responsible for Palestine's limited social and economic development. 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. All those activities not only contravened the right of Palestinian people to self-determination, but 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, particularly for women. Despite the gravity of the situation, the Security Council had not taken action, he lamented. Venezuela, during its presidency of the Council in February 2016 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, he concluded.

### **III. Plenary sessions**

#### **A. Plenary session I**

##### **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Challenges and constraints of implementation under occupation**

30. Participants in the plenary session examined sub-themes such as: post-2015 agenda: challenges and opportunities; synergies with the United Nations system; the Palestinian national plan to achieve SDGs; and building resilient and sustainable economic growth in conflict situations. The session was chaired by Rafael Darío Ramírez Carreño the Permanent Representative of Venezuela to the United Nations in New York.

31. **H.E. Mr. Macharia Kamau**, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations, acknowledged Venezuela's recent leadership in the Security Council. Noting that the UN had spent a lot of time and efforts in peacekeeping in the world, he stressed that militaristic solutions were not a sustainable way to maintain international peace and security. He emphasized that this fact was the premise for the Member States to agree on 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. That's why it was crucial that Palestinians keep hope alive, he declared.

33. The intergovernmental process leading to the adoption of the SDGs, which he had the honour to co-Chair, was built on the belief in a better world for all people with greater security, prosperity and peace, where also our planet would be protected. At the outset, many didn't believe 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 agreed that no one, and no country, should be left behind and this would apply to Palestine as well.

34. Referring to his own experience and to African history, he stressed that it was simply unconceivable that Palestine, or any other country, could achieve any of the Sustainable Development Goals in the context of occupation or foreign domination. Many thought Africa nowadays was facing a very difficult economic and social situation, but he assured the audience that current conditions in African countries would have been a million times worse had they been still under colonial occupation. He described how, since the de-colonization 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 fighting poverty, creating institutions, and a level of prosperity that would have been unconceivable under colonial occupation.

35. Turning to possible ways ahead, he opined that the international community must work with those in Israel who wanted to see a free and liberated Palestine and live in peace with its neighbour, stressing that Israel was not a monolithic nation. Palestine needed to realize its full potential and, as exemplified by African countries, the day Palestine is a free State, it would transform itself overnight, he emphasized. Citing Malaysia as a success story, he noted that that one of the fundamental ways to achieve the SDGs was through domestic resource mobilization, stressing that foreign aid was a small part of financing for development and there were no examples where foreign aid had 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 allow trade to succeed. Therefore, he added, Palestine under the current circumstances of the occupation could never achieve its own development which in fact had taken a downward course for the past 50 years. In closing, he urged the international community to live up to its responsibilities and called on it to work with progressive forces in the world, including in Israel, to reach a free and liberated Palestine.

36. **Mr. Robert Piper**, Deputy United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory said that the SDGs were an exciting new, shared agenda for all 193 Member States of the UN. They differed from the MDGs most fundamentally in their call to ‘leave no one behind’. In many ways, he added, occupied Palestine faced, and would still face, similar challenges as many other middle income countries in trying to reach the SDGs. However, he noted, ‘development’ under occupation was a fundamentally different situation hence 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 SDGs areas, occupied Palestine was ahead of other countries in the Arab region. This was true especially in regard to social indicators, such as literacy rates of 97 per cent, or vaccination rates of 95 per cent, or maternal mortality rates of only 45 per 100,000 live births, which were all remarkable achievements. He stressed that these high indicators spoke volumes first and foremost about the resilience of Palestinian families, and about parents who prioritized education for their children. But they reflected also a government that delivered services despite the obstacles and donors that have invested in the social sectors. However, similarly to many other countries, success in the social sectors was not matched in the economic side, he lamented. Occupied Palestine was behind most Arab region indicators on the economic front. The per capita gross national income in Palestine was less than a third of the average for Arab States, i.e. US\$4,700 vs. US\$15,700. Palestine's youth unemployment was far higher than the average for Arab States, at 41 per cent compared to 29 per cent. The trade to GDP ratio for Palestine stood at 72 per cent compared to 93 per cent for the Arab region as a whole, he said.

38. A sustainable development process and a successful 2030 Agenda needed to balance the social with the economic and in this sense many challenges lay ahead for Palestine. In particular, he highlighted the divergence among different social groups in Palestine and added that an analysis of this reality would form the basis of the forthcoming UN Common Country

Assessment for Palestine. Youth in Palestine, for instance, were especially vulnerable; they often left the education system without adequate skills and then were faced with a dismal lack of employment opportunities with youth unemployment consistently above 50 per cent over the last 2.5 years. Women, especially adolescent girls and women of reproductive age, were especially disadvantaged due to 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 to 22 per cent of men; and 30 per cent of women-headed households were considered poor compared to 26 per cent of male-headed households.

39. He emphasized that understanding the development experience for different groups of Palestinians was important because of the SDGs' call to 'leave no one behind'. This new development agenda was focused around making the development process equitable and this was particularly true for Palestine, because of the inherently different nature of development under occupation. The most striking difference was a geographic one, because the West Bank and Gaza were on profoundly divergent development trajectories. Gaza's total real GDP increased only a by a few percentage points in the 20 years between 1994 and 2014, while West Bank GDP increased by 245 percent during the same period. As a result, some 39 per cent of Gazans live in poverty, compared to the national poverty level of 25 per cent.

40. Put quite simply, he said, Gaza was de-developing in front of our eyes with real per capita income today 31 per cent lower than it had been 20 years ago and with unemployment rate which had risen from 17 per cent in 1999 to 43 per cent in 2014. Gaza's current energy

supply met barely 40 per cent of today's demand and would cover barely 20 per cent of demand by 2020 in current trends continued. To ensure sustainable, longer term economic recovery, Gaza's traditional sectors needed to expand, including agriculture and industrial production. This required that Israel enabled economic development in Gaza, including by allowing the import of production equipment and raw materials, as well as by allowing larger quantities of exports to Israeli and other markets. He added that the political division between Gaza and Ramallah had also exacerbated the precarious situation of Gaza.

41. However, the effects of occupation went well beyond the Gaza blockade, he noted. In trying to balance progress in the social sphere with 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 allow the Palestinian economy to grow by 23 per cent of the Palestinian GDP and produce US\$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. Summing up, he stressed that the Government would be profoundly challenged in getting the economy to catch up with the social indicators as part of the SDG agenda from severe import restrictions for items on the so-called 'dual-use list' to 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 this factor also made the task of attaining the SDGs much more difficult. Taking as an example SDG

16, with its emphasis on providing “access to justice for all”, he described how access to justice for Palestinians who have 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 (IDF), or who was being forcibly moved from his home to make way for an expanding Israeli settlement that has been deemed illegal by the Security Council and the International Court of Justice, he asked. Finally, he stressed how vulnerable Palestinian households were, stretched to the psychological and economic limits and close to collapse in their coping capacity, having endured nearly 50 years of occupation. For Gazans, it would be 10 years of a blockade. UNRWA food aid recipients had increased from 80,000 to 900,000 in the space of just 10 years.

43. While Palestine had committed to the SDGs, the greatest help to achieve them would come from lifting the blockade on Gaza and ensure respect for international law. Ultimately, he concluded, the path to the SDGs was to end an almost 50-year old occupation.

44. Assistant Deputy Minister for Social Development **H.E. Mr. Daoud Al Deek** pointed out how the State of Palestine found itself in a particularly fragmented situation under Israeli occupation, while in order to achieve sustainable development it needed cohesion. He warned that if Palestine failed to achieve the SDGs it would be because it had been “left behind” and urged the international community not to do so. He highlighted a number of country statistics, including the one showing that of the 4.8 million Palestinians, nearly 43 per cent were refugees. He noted that the unemployment rate in Palestine was over 26 per cent, while the poverty rate in Gaza was exceptionally high, at nearly 39 per cent. He informed that



during the period of implementation of the MDGs in 2000-2015 no progress had been registered on ending poverty and 2.3 million people were still in need humanitarian assistance, including 1.3 million in Gaza. In the Strip, 90,000 Palestinians were still displaced since the 2014 conflict. 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 related 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 over 600,000 and in the period between January and April of 2016, the number of demolitions or confiscations of Palestinian structures surpassed the total number during the whole of 2015 (595 versus 548). Between 2012 and 2014, Palestinians had submitted 2,020 applications for building permits, of which only 33 were approved leaving many Palestinian families in precarious situations. Israeli restrictions of movement impeded access to services and resources, disrupting family and social life and the enjoyment of the economic, social and cultural rights.

45. Despite this bleak situation, he continued, the Palestinian Government committed itself to the Agenda 2030 and launched the National Policy Agenda for 2016-2022 which harmonized the SDGs within the National strategic goals and targets in the unique Palestinian context of occupation. The Government also developed a national database useful for monitoring and reporting on SDGs indicators. In terms of partnerships, he elaborated, the Government planned to coordinate with the League of Arab States (LAS) and with ESCWA on regional goals.

46. Mr. Al Deek then listed the policy priorities as formulated in the National Policy Agenda. The main priority was ending poverty and to reach this goal, the Government was working on a multi-dimensional framework, aimed at providing basic services to the poor, such as health, education and housing. Inclusive policies to reduce inequality were the second priority, focused on women, youth, children and the disabled. Employment policies at the macro-level, were the third goal, he explained, in particular policies to enhance women participation in the workforce such as vocational training, micro-credit and promotion of entrepreneurship. Fourth, he said, pro-poor taxation and monetary policies such as tax exemptions, promoting credits and investments were identified as means to alleviate the vulnerability of poor portions of the population. Finally, the fifth leg of the national plan focused on population policies including reproductive health, fertility rates, violence against women and early marriage, and job creation, especially for women and the youth. In closing, he stressed how Palestine needed the support of the international community and the UN because ending the Israeli occupation was a pre-requisite to realize the ambitious development agenda 2030.

47. **Ms. Nur Arafah**, Policy Fellow at “Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network”, delivered remarks via videoconference and at the outset stated that all issues addressed by the Sustainable Development Goals, ending poverty, ensuring food security, education, inequality, health, 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 movement restrictions of people and goods, had created separate isolated economies: the isolation of Gaza placed it in state of

de-development; the marginalization and isolation of East Jerusalem caused a rate poverty of 75 per cent; the West Bank became a fragmented archipelago with a neo liberal economy in Ramallah while the rest of Area C was off-limits to the Palestinian development.

48. The stifled Palestinian economy suffered from structural weaknesses preventing it from creating enough employment or investment opportunities and it lived in a state of dependence both on Israel for trade, finance, energy, water supply as well as dependency on international aid. For these reasons, she stated, Israel was profiting from both the occupation and international aid. To support this claim she quoted a study by Shir Hever from the Alternative Information Center which found that 78 per cent of donor aid to Palestine was used to import goods from Israel to Palestine, thus contributing to Palestinian economy's dependence on Israel and was *de facto* subsidizing the occupation. Hence, she continued, one could assert that some aid was helping to sustain the occupation. Based on this overview, she invited the audience to critically review the title of this discussion to acknowledge that sustaining growth under occupation was not possible. At the same time she opined that when analyzing the situation we should use the broader concept of development rather the narrow concept of economic growth, which is a limited measure of the Gross Domestic Product, i.e. the amount of goods and products produced over a specific period of time.

49. Ms. Arafah declared that her definition of development in Palestine was based on an economic, social and political process of resistance to Israel's 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 less dependent on the Israeli economy and

foreign aid. When taking this approach, she added, development became the means and not the end. She then elaborated on the areas Palestine should focus on to implement such a strategy, such as agricultural production and food sovereignty (versus the narrow concept of food security), as a first priority. Small scale agricultural production, geared toward 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 just those produced in settlements. She also suggested that external trade be re-oriented toward Arab economies. After production, she continued, the second priority should be education as outlined in SDG 4. Education was not an accidental casualty of Israeli occupation, she said, but an intentional strategy by the occupier, resulting in a poor quality education system which limited human resources available to the Palestinian society as a whole.

50. In order to achieve these 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, i.e. to ensure the welfare of the occupied population, based on International Humanitarian Law. According to Ms. Arafeh, the EU should stop all direct and indirect economical and financial investments as well as academic and business activities in illegal settlements. Turning to partnerships, (SDG 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 past 20 years since the Oslo Accords but it had proved ineffective to build peace, or achieve sustainable development and institution building. The approach the international community and the Government of

Palestine alike took was that economic prosperity and higher standards of living would pave the way for freedom and peace. However, economic deprivation, which was the symptom, was mistaken with the cause, the occupation. Aid should not be seen as a substitute for ending the occupation or lifting the blockade, she said.

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

52. **H.E. Mr Rafael Ramírez**, Permanent Representative 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 held the Council's presidency, he had requested on eight different occasions that Palestine be included on the agenda, with very little success. It was important for all supporters of Palestine, including Member States, to continue raising this issue, which otherwise would disappear from the international radar. The status quo in Palestine was unsustainable, he stressed, and he promised Venezuela would continue to support the Palestinian struggle. He believed one day we would all celebrate the independence of the State of Palestine.

53. In response to a question about the future of the two-State solution, **Ms. Arafah** responded that she believed it was "dead at the moment" but rather than focusing on that framework, she advocated for a "principled" approach enabling Palestinian people to achieve freedom, dignity and justice. Regarding questions about the developmental approach to be

taken, she said Palestine should take a more proactive stance rather than react to Israel's actions and initiatives. This approach should also include a more forceful media strategy aimed at explaining the context of occupation, especially to foreign media outlets. Regarding aid, she opined that it should be used as a tool to support Palestine 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 of time, with a cyclical lifespan, but which did not address the root cause of the occupation.

54. The representative of the **Palestine Solidarity Association** in Sweden expressed serious concern that Swedish diplomats were not even able to visit Gaza due to Sweden's recognition of the State of Palestine and other Israeli travel restrictions on European civil society organizations supporting the Boycott, Divest and Sanctions (BDS) campaign. She emphasized that not enough pressure was being put on Israel by the international community to end the occupation.

55. **Ms. Jennifer Olmsted**, an academic from Drew University and speaker at the conference, emphasized that about 50 per cent of Palestinians were not actually living in Palestine, and therefore, policy decisions had no impact on their well-being. For this reason, she stressed the 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, **Mr. Piper** said that aid was in fact primarily political in nature and a moral dilemma for international donors and UN agencies, given the previously discussed unintended economic support to the occupation. He noted that Official Development Aid to the State of Palestine had dropped by 30 to 40 per cent over the previous five years, primarily due to the lack of a peace process and a political horizon. Donors found themselves at a loss after the progress achieved in 2011 towards state-building was not 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 promoting self-reliance. In this sense, WFP had started 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, clearly, it was not having the desired impact on the ground. For example, the excellent initiative by WFP mentioned earlier was about to be suspended due to a lack of funding. Focusing on the situation of women in Palestine, he expressed concern that some past approaches had actually dis-empowered women because they became too burdened with household tasks that 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. **H.E. Mr. Riyad Mansour**, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, said he was proud of his Government's transparency with regard to its development planning for 2017-

2022. He was also proud of the courage and critical thinking of young Palestinians like Ms. Arafeh who were the hope for the future of the State of Palestine and the source of its resilience. He pointed out that, as studies showed, under occupation the Palestinian economy was losing about US\$8 billion dollars annually, hence 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 the per-capita income rise from US\$5,000 to US\$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 such as: investing in youth. as torchbearers of Agenda 2030; women as key to peaceful and inclusive society; breaking down stereotypes and traditional roles in society. The session was chaired by H.E. Mr. Raden Bagas Hapsoro, Ambassador of Indonesia to the Kingdom of Sweden.

60. **Ms. Hanan Al Hroub**, Palestinian teacher, winner of the 2016 “Global Teacher Prize”, speaking via Skype from Ramallah, said that she was filled with mixed feelings of pain and hope for the future of Palestinian children. She thanked the Varkey Foundation who initiated the “Global Teacher Prize” and saluted it for realizing the importance of the role played by teachers in moulding future generations.



61. Ms. Al Hroub pointed out that the daily reality in Palestine was full of violence because of the repressive policies and activities of the occupation which impacted all aspects of life, like freedom of movement, especially for the youth, and ability to go to school. Despite the limitations in the physical capacity of universities, Palestine produced a great number of graduates, only to be left with limited job opportunities. In the context of the occupation, students lacked a stable and safe environment where to blossom.

62. Her methodology, she explained, was based mainly on the reduction of violence through “No to violence” and "We play and learn" mottos, 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 had to become also 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, as well as practices of dialogue and democracy. As a Palestinian teacher her goal was to create a a peace-loving generation who renounced violence.

63. If this methodology were to spread locally, regionally and globally, she opined, 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, and help solving the challenges faced by Palestinian youth, and ultimately achieving a just and lasting peace in the region.

64. Reduction of violence in societies was the only alternative, she stated. For this reason, she called on UN Member States 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 tomorrow. She acknowledged that the challenges ahead were great, but stressed the importance of focusing on the children of today who will become the young men and women of 2030, hoping they would live in peace and harmony. “No to violence, no to violence, no to violence”, she repeated.

65. **Ms. Jennifer Olmsted**, Professor from Drew University in the United States, highlighted that economic, environmental and social issues, viewed through the lens of gender, would present serious challenges to the State of Palestine’s implementation of the sustainable development goals. She focused on a number of issues that would continue to present obstacles to the development in Palestine in the post-2015 era, including rising inequality; the lack of decent work, particularly 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. She highlighted 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; physical and psychological health issues associated with the protracted conflict which stretched families’ coping mechanisms. These 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 bread-winner role or, because of the prevalence of conservative gender norms, retreated into household and caring roles. Because of these dynamics, in public life, political changes caused by the conflict might either allow women to take more leadership roles or be surpassed by male leaders.

67. Regarding employment, the rising wage gap between men and women, as well as 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, she stressed. Other trends negatively affecting the link between gender and occupation were de-industrialization, which, creating a drop in manufacturing, was moving women more toward the agricultural sector. There were also elements of "reverse feminization", seeing increasing numbers of men entering occupational fields traditionally occupied by 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 fertility rate was still high. Psycho-social support needed to be among the priorities of the Government. The long-term effects of these, and other dynamics, were profound and could not be overstated, she emphasized. Nevertheless, there were some notable success stories, including low child mortality rates, improved maternal health and a high literacy rates, with a closing education gap between men and women given that female graduates in Palestinian universities had surpassed the number of their male counterparts.

68. Looking ahead, and building on previous speakers' presentations, she recommended that policy priorities of the Palestinian Government in view of achieving the SDGs should be first and foremost ending the occupation, including securing compensation for economic losses suffered by the State of Palestine, followed by policy goals that had an effect on women empowerment, such as the need to focus on reducing unpaid work for women, especially in the household, through support for child care and better designed family policies; increasing the availability of psycho-social 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. **Ms. Jessica Deveney**, producer of the Palestinian documentary *Speed Sisters* said she was glad the documentary would be shown immediately after Plenary II, followed by a Q&A discussion with a protagonist, Ms. Maysson Jayyusi. Ms. Deveney said that historically, documentary films had proven 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 this focus was flawed as stereotypes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict perpetuated in the media served to support “problematic” foreign policy strategies. For this reason, the media strategy around her film was geared toward promoting positive messages of nonviolence, unity across divides and women’s leadership. She believed in the power of story-telling through cinematography because seeing positive stories over time could shift the discourse about difficult issues,

including gender issues, although one film would not be enough to bring about a dramatic change, she admitted.

70. Early on, many of her cinematic efforts had centred on elevating the work of activists, but lacked a vision of the everyday struggles of life under occupation. With this film, she attempted to explore more in-depth the extent to which the lives of the main characters in *Speed Sisters*, with their different stories and personalities, represented the struggle for dignity and equality as a “lived experience” in the State of Palestine. Although the focus of the film was on car-racing, a particular passion shared by the female protagonists, and the angle of women empowerment was particularly strong, it told stories which showed what daily life under occupation looked like for everyone, at military checkpoints, at encounters with IDF soldiers, and through restrictions of movement. She added that the film tried to portray a different reality, contrary to what many media organizations showed, particularly in the United States, stereotyping Palestinian women as a homogenous group of oppressed women and men as tyrants and religious extremists. While the goal of the film could be viewed as naïve, she believed 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, **H.E. Mr. Alshaer**, Minister for Social Development for the State of Palestine, expressed appreciation for the fact that she had accomplished so much as an educator and a woman, despite having grown up as a refugee. **H.E. Mr. Mansour**, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, shared that sentiment, saying that the

State of Palestine was proud of her work and more should be done to publicize her accomplishments to the rest of the world.

72. Commenting on the presentations, H.E. **Mr. Al Deek**, the Assistant Deputy Minister for Social Development for the State of Palestine, 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 employment like Palestine, labour force participation would not be a “magic bullet” to solve women’s empowerment issues. She went on to say that since in conflict situations violence and militarism were often reproduced in the home, addressing the problem of violence required a larger strategy addressing all gender issues in the society including those affecting family life. Ms. Olmsted asked Ms. Al Hroub what type of support teachers received with regard to social work training. **Ms. Al Hroub** responded that she had pursued social work training on her own without a formal process, although she believed that such training for teachers should be institutionalized across the education system.

74. Responding to a question by 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, and noted that work for children under 15 years was forbidden by law.

75. On the presentation about *Speed Sisters*, the representative of the **League of Arab States** asked about the different types of impact mainstream movies had versus documentaries and asked for more information about how the documentary was being distributed worldwide. **Ms. Devaney** responded that documentary films could affect 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, but an entire “movement” based on cumulative efforts would be needed. She also informed that 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 such as: mobilizing international solidarity for development; the State of Palestine as partner for development; cooperation with international organizations; the role of civil society. The session was chaired by H.E. Ms. Morina Muuondjo, Ambassador of Namibia to the Kingdom of Sweden.

77. **H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson**, Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations said that from the discussions that had taken place over the course of the Seminar, it was clear that attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals would not be possible under

occupation, most strikingly on Goal 16 related to access to justice. However, he pointed to progress in health, education and gender, a testament to the efforts of the Government of Palestine and other actors. This and many other examples showed clearly that the situation in the State of Palestine obviously needed to change, but unfortunately, under the current circumstances, one could not take for granted that change would be for the better. He believed that the question of Palestine could be “fixed” rather quickly, 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 SDGs, required a great deal of effort by all Member States over a prolonged period of time to be effectively solved. In closing, he acknowledged the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for keeping the question of Palestine on the agenda, as an example of the dogged persistence that would be needed to improve the lives of Palestinians.

78. **H.E. Mr. Sacha Sergio Llorentty Soliz**, Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations, said there could be no status quo in Palestine – things would either get worse, or get better. In his view, the situation in Palestine was in fact getting worse. Israel’s aggression against Palestinian territory was nothing short of terrorism and its illegal actions were met with impunity. In this sense, the international community had failed the Palestinian people as the principles of the United Nations Charter and human rights were not being upheld in their defence.



79. He informed the Seminar that the UN Group of 77 Developing States and China, which Bolivia 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 for the 2030 Agenda, as a case in point where one could not talk about the achievement of the SDGs or the fulfilment of human rights while under occupation. He lamented the fact that Israel violated the economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people on a daily basis and it had been so for the past almost 50 years. This 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 this cause, the crucial question that was left was what could be done to mobilize international solidarity to enable sustainable development, he pondered. The response of the international community, short of true political support, had traditionally been to provide economic assistance in the form of foreign aid. However, while aid was much appreciated and needed, in his opinion aid should not be used as a substitute for a clear stance against the Israeli occupation and determined actions aimed at ending it.

80. **Ms. Tove Myhrman** of the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency said that Sweden's long-standing cooperation with Palestine was centred around the committed 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 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 Sweden's key priority areas for cooperation 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. Ms. Myhrman informed that Sweden's technical support for Palestine was focused around three main areas: strengthening democracy, improved gender equality and greater respect for human rights; improved environment and greater resilience vis-à-vis environmental change, including climate impacts 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. Finally, it was hoped that Sweden's support for the Palestinian private sector would result in an increased number of small business start-ups as well as a greater number of women as business-owners and managers. Increased knowledge and better service capacity at trade organizations and financial institutions as well as improved conditions for local economic development were other key expected results.

82. The principles guiding Sweden's humanitarian support in the State of Palestine focused primarily on the protection and promotion of human dignity, Ms. Myhram pointed out. Finally, she detailed that Sweden's support for Palestine amounted to US\$ 32million in development funds, US\$13million in humanitarian support, US\$36million in support to UNRWA and US\$6million to Swedish civil society organizations as implementing partners, for a total of US\$87million.

83. **Mr. Raji Sourani**, Director of the Palestinian Center for Human Rights in Gaza, calling the occupation both "criminal and belligerent", noted that 2017 would mark 50 years since the start 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 Israel's actions had perpetuated the biggest man-made disaster in modern history and reminded that the occupation was a crime of aggression.

84. Recounting examples from the last Israeli offensive during the summer of 2014, he said that more than 80 families had been completely wiped out and entire parts of Gaza were completely destroyed. Contrary to International Humanitarian Law, hospitals were not spared, but rather, were targeted by Israel. Family members were cut off from one another and civilians had become targets of Israeli military aggression. Many schools, including those operated by UNRWA were targeted over the 51-day offensive, which had left not one single safe haven for the people of Gaza. Moreover, he added that at the conclusion of the

hostilities, Israel struck a deal whereby it controlled every aspect of Gaza reconstruction and the provision of even the most basic commodities, including control over materials needed for the reconstruction efforts. He told the audience that Israel's 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 informed that more than 7,000 Palestinians were held in Israeli prisons, including many under the so called "administrative detention", without being charged with any crime. This was the fate 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, he declared.

85. Looking at the role of the international community, he stated that the Israeli occupation was a crime of aggression perpetrated with impunity. Mr. Sourani denounced the hypocrisy of some positions and called on 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 this principle would threaten a great loss in trade revenues for Israel, hence 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 Sweden's aid model and whether it actually supported the occupation, **Ms. Myhrman** said that Sweden had thoroughly analysed that dynamic and had concluded the best position would be to continue 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 to not only provide aid, but to work in partnership with Palestinian recipients.

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

88. The representative of **Indonesia** asked for more information about the Group of 77 Developing Countries' position on the question of Palestine. In response, **Mr. Soliz** said that the Group was now extremely diverse, consisting of more than 130 Member States. There was not always agreement within the Group, yet, when it came to this issue, the Group's position was very clear and united.

89. The representative of **Spain** took the floor to stress 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 take place later in the year.

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

#### IV. Closing session

91. **H.E. Mr. Alshaer**, Minister for Social Development for the State of Palestine, said that after two days of intensive discussions it was reassuring that there was almost universal international agreement that Israel's continued occupation was the major obstacle to Palestine's quest for sustainable development. He called for concrete, 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 just for his country, but for the whole international community. Robust, effective and transparent follow up support was needed to ensure that no one was left behind.

92. **H.E. Mr. Mansour**, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, reiterated that it would be impossible for the State of Palestine to achieve sustainable development while under occupation. Several of the Seminar participants were "shining examples" of the spirit of the Palestinian people, particularly the women that had taken part. However, 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 formulating issues of worldwide concern, including the global development agenda while he called on 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 **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, Sweden, on 19-20 May, by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP). The Seminar examined the challenges and constraints of the implementation of the Agenda 2030 by the State of Palestine under occupation, including how the Palestinian decision-makers and partners could use the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as “accelerators” for transitioning from dependence on humanitarian assistance to a sustainable, peaceful and independent State.

2. During the Seminar, representatives of Member States, intergovernmental organizations, UN system entities, 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 liberation struggle. The proceedings of the Seminar were open to the public and covered by media.

3. At the opening session, the **Secretary-General of the United Nations**, in his message to the Seminar delivered by Mr. Robert Piper, Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Humanitarian and Resident 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, Mr. Mats Karlsson**, representing the host country Sweden, noted that Palestine had a right to self-determination and the ability to shape its future. Unfortunately, recent developments, including settlement expansion and demolition of unprecedented numbers of Palestinian homes by Israel, 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 Sweden’s Government planned to increase bilateral support to Palestine by 50 per cent over the next four years, including support to Palestinian refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, to total of US\$100 million per year.

5. The **Vice-Chairman of the Committee, H.E. Mr. Rodolfo Reyes Rodríguez**, recalling the mandate of the Committee to raise awareness 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 Agenda 2030 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 into the future.

6. The **Minister for Social Development of the State of Palestine, H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Alshaer**, 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 2017-2022 and had formed a National Team which was committed to achieving the SDGs as a means to strengthening ‘peace in larger freedom’. However, he questioned how the Palestinian people could holistically pursue the ambitious development agenda without sovereignty, respect for human and economic rights, or the ability to control their own natural resources and lands.

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 nationally-owned socio-economic development of the Palestinian people and their efforts to establish a free Palestinian state.

8. Examining various models to address challenges and constraints of implementation of SDGs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, some participants considered it simply “inconceivable” that Palestine would be able to achieve the SDGs 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, and given the continued occupation of the Territory, there was a real risk that even those gains would be lost. The State of Palestine was committed to Agenda 2030 but the international community had to be realistic about what could and could not be achieved in terms of the implementation of the SDGs that were inherently political in nature. The situation on the ground demanded that development in Palestine be based on an economic, political and social

process of resistance to Israel's 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 youth 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. However, job opportunities for graduates inside and outside Palestine were limited. The percentage of females 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 Palestine's sustainable development objectives. Concern was expressed that many media organizations, particularly in the United States, 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 psycho-social 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 and “crime of aggression”. The blockade had created a state of siege in Gaza, unprecedented social and economic suffering for millions of people, and dependence on international aid. **SDG Goal 16** related to access to justice and it was illogical to think that development objective could be achieved while under occupation. The key pre-condition 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 Israeli occupation of Palestine. In this context, it was recalled that Sweden had committed 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, the **Minister for Social Development of the State of Palestine, H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Alshaer**, said that the discussions at the Seminar showed that there was almost universal international agreement that Israel’s continued occupation was the major obstacle to Palestine’s quest for sustainable development. He called for concrete, action-oriented measures

that would deliver confidence and trust in the sustainable development process in Palestine. The Government of Palestine was committed to the SDGs, which presented huge challenges not just for Palestine, but for the whole of the 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, H.E. Mr. 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, particularly the women that had taken part. However, 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**

Mr. Daoud Al Deek	Assistant Deputy Minister Ministry of Social Development State of Palestine
Ms. Hanan Al Hroub	(presented via Skype) Palestinian Teacher Winner, 2016 Global Teacher Prize Ramallah
Ms. Nur Arafeh	(presented via Skype) Policy Fellow Al-Shabaka, The Palestinian Policy Network Jerusalem
Ms. Jessica Devaney	Producer of the Palestinian Documentary “Speed Sisters” 2016 Women at Sundance Fellow New York
Ms. Maysoon Jayyusi	Manager of the “Speed Sisters” Team Amman

H.E. Mr. Macharia Kamau	Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations New York
Mr. Mats Karlsson	Director Swedish Institute of International Affairs Stockholm
H.E. Mr. Sacha Sergio Llorentty Soliz	Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations New York
Ms. Tove Myhrman	Programme Manager Specialist, Humanitarian Unit Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency Stockholm
Ms. Jennifer Olmsted	Professor, Director of Middle East Studies Drew University New Jersey
Mr. Robert Piper	United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory Jerusalem

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

H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson  
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Fiji  
to the United Nations  
New York

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

H.E. Mr. Rodolfo Reyes Rodriguez  
Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations  
Vice-Chairman of the Committee

H.E. Mr. Rafael Darío Ramírez  
Permanent Representative of Venezuela to the United Nations  
Carreño

H.E. Mr. Sacha Sergio Llorentty  
Permanent Representative of Bolivia to the United Nations  
Soliz

H.E. Ms. Morina Muuondjo  
Ambassador of Namibia to Sweden

H.E. Mr. Bagas Hapsoro                      Ambassador of Indonesia to Sweden

H.E. Mr. Riyad Mansour                      Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine  
to the United Nations

**Representative of the Secretary-General**

Mr. Robert Piper                              Assistant-Secretary-General  
  
United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator  
for the Middle East Peace Process and Humanitarian and  
Resident Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory

**Delegation of the Government of Sweden**

Mr. Mats Karlsson                              Representative of the Host Country, Sweden



**Governments**

Albania	Mr. Genti Bendo, Minister Counsellor Deputy Head of Mission Embassy in Stockholm
Algeria	H.E. Mr. Ahcene Kerma, Ambassador Mr. Hiba Mohammed, Diplomatic Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Angola	Mr. Ezequiel Carlos Tiago, Second Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Austria	H.E. Mr. Arthur Winkler-Hermaden, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Bolivia	H.E. Mr. Milton Rene Soto Santiesteban Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Brazil	H.E. Mr. Marcos Pinta Gama, Ambassador Mr. Thiago Miranda, First- Secretary Embassy in Stockholm

China	Mr. Junfeng Li, Political Counsellor Mr. Tao Fu, Third Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Colombia	Mr. Carlos Rodriguez Bocanegra, Minister Embassy in Stockholm
Cyprus	H.E. Mr. Andreas Kakouris, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Egypt	H.E. Mr. Wael Nasr, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
El Salvador	H.E. Mr. Javier Jimenez-Ugarte, Ambassador Ms. Lourdes Sangroniz, Deputy Head of Mission Mr. David Humberto Cruz Rodriguez Third Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Ethiopia	Mr. Daneal Tenkir, Second Counsellor Embassy in Stockholm

Finland	Ms. Katja Ahlfors, Counsellor Ms. Elina Eloranta, Attaché Embassy in Stockholm
France	Mr. Lionel Fabre, First Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Iceland	Mr. Olof Hrefna Kristjansdottir Counsellor and Deputy Chief of Mission Embassy in Stockholm
India	Mr. Mukesh Kaushik Second Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Indonesia	H.E. Mr. Raden Bagas Hapsoro, Ambassador Mr. Ahmad Mulia Karnida, Minister Counsellor Embassy in Stockholm
Iraq	H.E. Mr. Baker Fattah Hussen, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm

Italy	H.E. Ms. Elena Basile, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Kuwait	Mr. Meshari Aljamhour, Third Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Japan	Mr. Takashi Niimura, First Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Lebanon	H.E. Mr. Ali Ajami, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Libya	H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Grada Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Lithuania	H.E. Mr. Eitvydas Bajarunas Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm

Malaysia	H.E. Mr. Norlin Binti Othman Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Mexico	H.E. Mr. Agustin Gasca Pliego, Ambassador Mr. David Ruiz Coronado, Charge d'affaires a.i. Ms. Lorelee Arias Vazquez, Third Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Morocco	Mr. Arnal Belcaid, Chargé d'Affaire Embassy in Stockholm
Namibia	H.E. Ms. Morina Muuondjo, Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Pakistan	Mr. Najeeb Durrani, Minister, Embassy in Stockholm
Portugal	H.E. Mr. Jose Julio Pereira Gomes Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm

Qatar	Mr. Ali Mutlag Al-hajri, Second Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Saudi Arabia	Mr. Hassain Al Marshad, Charge D'Affaires Mr. Mahir Adem Hizam, Charge D'Affaires Embassy in Stockholm
South Africa	Mr. Mbulelo A.B. Mtilwa, Counsellor Embassy in Stockholm
Spain	H.E. Mr. Javier Jimenez-Ugarte, Ambassador Ms. Lourdes Sangroniz, Deputy Head of Mission Embassy in Stockholm
State of Palestine	H.E. Ms. Hala Husni Fariz, Ambassador Ms. Cindy Inglessis, Assistant to the Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Sudan	Mrs. Sawsan Abdelmagied Mohamed Deputy Head of Mission Embassy in Stockholm

Sweden	H.E. Mr. Per Thoresson, Ambassador Ms. Pia Bolte, Deputy Director Mr. Tomas Brundin, Senior Adviser Government of Sweden
Switzerland	Ms. Marisa Beier, Academic Trainee Embassy in Stockholm
Tunisia	H.E. Ms. Fatma Omrani Chergui Ambassador Embassy in Stockholm
Turkey	Mr. Alperen Uyar, Secound Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Ukraine	Ms. Olena Polunina, Charge d'affaires a.i. Ms. Lillia Honcharevych, First Secretary Embassy in Stockholm
Uruguay	H.E. Mr. Santiago Wins, Ambassador Ms. Valentina Fernandez Quesada, First Secretary Embassy in Stockholm

Venezuela  
H.E. Ms. Milena Sanata, Ambassador  
Embassy in Stockholm

Zambia  
H.E. Ms. Edith Mutale, Ambassador  
Ms. Priscilla Silwamba, First Secretary  
Embassy in Stockholm

Zimbabwe  
Ms. Nester Kurewe, 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  
H.E. Archbishop Henryk Jozef Nowacki, Apostolic Nuncio,  
Chief of the Delegation  
Monsignor Gian Luca Perici, Deputy Head of Mission  
Embassy in Stockholm

State of Palestine  
H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Alshaer, Minister  
Ministry of Social Development  
State of Palestine



H.E. Mr. Daoud Al Deek, Assistant Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Social Development

State of Palestine

H.E. Mr. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the  
State of Palestine to the United Nations, New York

H.E. Ms. Hala Husni Fariz, Ambassador to Sweden  
Embassy in Stockholm

### **Intergovernmental organizations**

League of Arab States

H.E. Mr. Said Abu Ali, Assistant Secretary General  
Mr. Mutassembeh MM Alshawwa  
Sector of Palestine and Occupied Arab Territories  
Cairo

NIR International Council  
of Swedish Industry

Ms. Lisa Osback, Director Market Development  
Mr. Tom Jirlow, Intern  
Stockholm

Parliamentary Assembly  
of the Mediterranean

H.E. Mr. Belal Q.H. Qasem  
Vice-President of PAM 3<sup>rd</sup> Standing Committee  
St. Julians, Malta

Swedish Institute of International Affairs Ms. Cherine Hussein, Representative  
Stockholm

### **Civil society organizations**

Community Focus Ms. Nicole Breckau, Founder  
Stockholm

Jerusalem Kommitten Sweden Mr. Victor Samaina, Representative  
Stockholm

PMU InterLife Ms. Hanna Toorell, Project Coordinator  
Stockholm

The Palestine Solidarity Association of Sweden Ms. Yvonne Fredriksson, Project Coordinator  
Stockholm

The United National Organization for Human Rights Mr. Abdelnaim Ahmed, Chairman  
Mr. Saifuldeen Ali Hussein, Representative  
Ms. Omaira Al-rubaye, Representative  
Cairo

We Effect

Ms. Inga-Lill Hammer, Regional Officer  
Stockholm, Sweden

Uppsala Association of  
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Ms. Cornelia Norman, Representative  
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### **Media**

Palestine News & Info Agency  
Radio International

Mr. Qais Qadri

### **Public**

Ms. Linn Goth

Mr. Suhail Khaled Hafez

Ms. Minna Hilderbrandt

Mr. Erik Windolf

Ms. Rebecka Brahner

Ms. Emma Dahlberg Chouri

Mr. Ahmad Qamhawi

Mr. Oskar Kivineimi

\* \* \*