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

Summary record of the 394th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 15 February 2019, at 10 a.m.

Temporary Chair: Mr. Guterres (Secretary-General of the United Nations)

Chair: Mr. Niang (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda (A/AC.183/2019/L.1)

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of officers

2. **The Temporary Chair** invited the Committee to consider nominations for the posts of Chair, Vice-Chairs and Rapporteur of the Committee.

3. The following nominations had been received by the secretariat of the Committee: Mr. Niang (Senegal) for re-election to the office of Chair; Ms. Raz (Afghanistan) and Ms. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba) for election, and Mr. Djani (Indonesia), Mr. Gertze (Namibia) and Mr. Hermida Castillo (Nicaragua) for re-election, as the five Vice-Chairs; and Mr. Inguanez (Malta) as Rapporteur.

4. He took it that the Committee wished to defer the election of Ms. Raz (Afghanistan) as Vice-Chair pending her assumption of her post in New York.

5. *It was so decided.*

6. *Mr. Niang (Senegal), Ms. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba), Mr. Djani (Indonesia), Mr. Gertze (Namibia), Mr. Hermida Castillo (Nicaragua) and Mr. Inguanez (Malta) were elected by acclamation.*

7. *Mr. Niang (Senegal) took the Chair.*

Statement by the Secretary-General

8. **Mr. Guterres** (Secretary-General), commending the Committee for its efforts and commitment towards a peaceful and just solution of the Palestinian question, said that such a solution could be achieved only through realization of the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, based on relevant United Nations resolutions, long-held principles, previous agreements and international law. Unfortunately, over the previous year, the situation had not moved in that direction. Protests in Gaza had resulted in hundreds dead and thousands wounded by Israeli security forces. Security incidents and provocations by Hamas and other militants in Gaza, including the launching of rockets and incendiary kites, had dangerously exacerbated the situation. Thanks to United Nations and Egyptian mediation efforts, a major escalation had been avoided.

9. He appealed to the Hamas authorities in Gaza to prevent provocations. Under international humanitarian law, Israel, too, had a responsibility to exercise maximum restraint and not to use lethal force, except,

as provided under international law, as a last resort against imminent threat of death or serious injury. The United Nations stood firmly in support of Palestinian reconciliation and the return of the legitimate Palestinian Government to Gaza. He welcomed the efforts made by Egypt in that regard. Gaza was an integral part of a future Palestinian State, and Palestinian unity was needed for a politically stable, economically viable, sovereign and independent State of Palestine.

10. The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza needed to be immediately addressed. Approximately two million Palestinians remained mired in increasing poverty and unemployment, with limited access to adequate health care, education, water and electricity. Young people saw little prospect of a better future. He urged Israel to lift restrictions on the movement of people and goods, which also hampered the efforts of the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies, without of course jeopardizing legitimate security concerns.

11. The international community also needed to significantly increase efforts to revitalize the economy of Gaza. He commended the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for its critical work in Gaza, the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem, and across the region, which it had continued to conduct despite an unprecedented financial crisis in 2018. He thanked those donors that had increased their commitments and enabled Palestinian refugees to continue to receive the essential services provided by UNRWA, and asked them to maintain their support in the following year and beyond.

12. There was also risk of further unrest in the West Bank. The construction and planning of settlements by Israel had expanded deeper into Area C in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. Settlements were illegal under international law. They deepened the sense of mistrust and undermined the two-State solution. Settler violence remained a very serious concern. He was shocked by the recent murder of an Israeli teenager, which had been categorized as a terrorist act. He regretted the decision by Israel not to renew the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron and hoped that the parties could reach an agreement to preserve that long-standing and valuable arrangement.

13. Palestinians had endured more than a half-century of occupation and denial of their legitimate right to self-determination. Israelis and Palestinians continued to suffer from deadly cycles of violence. Leaders had a responsibility to their populations, not least the youth, to reverse the negative trajectory and pave the way towards peace, stability and reconciliation.

14. He commended the Committee for keeping the focus on the ultimate objective of a just and peaceful solution with two States coexisting in peace and security. That was the only way to realize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. As he had said repeatedly, there was no Plan B.

Statement by the Chair

15. **The Chair** said that although the outlines of the two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were clear to all involved, the situation on the ground increasingly gave the impression that a single State was coming into being. Despite the adoption of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), illegal settlement activity was continuing. The Committee condemned all forms of violence and incitement to hatred, irrespective of their perpetrator or motivation. The best way to reach sustainable peace and security was for the parties to renounce violence and fait accompli policies. The status quo should be maintained in Jerusalem pending the resolution of all final status issues in accordance with United Nations resolutions. Although the United Nations and Egypt had worked since 2014 to maintain the Gaza ceasefire in place, the risk of a fourth outbreak of hostilities continued to loom. The UNRWA funding crisis had also had a negative impact, and he urged Member States to support that Agency as the time for the renewal of its mandate approached, in November 2019.

16. With some 139 Member States having recognized the State of Palestine, it was time to harness international engagement in support of the two-State solution. The peace process should be restarted on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, with the issues of settlements, Jerusalem, refugees, security and Gaza squarely on the table. He called on the Quartet, the Security Council and influential States of the region to work towards that end through existing platforms, including the Quartet road map, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Oslo Accords and the Arab Peace Initiative, with a view to the creation of a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine within internationally recognized and guaranteed borders living side by side with the State of Israel in peace and security.

Statement by the Observer for the State of Palestine

17. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that he had been pleased to hear the Secretary-General reiterate his position that there was no alternative to the two-State solution, which should be based on international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions and should lead to an end to the occupation and an independent Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its

capital, living side by side with the State of Israel. Despite recent troubling developments, the Palestinian people continued to believe in achieving that objective through peaceful means. The State of Palestine remained committed to multilateralism as practised in the United Nations system, and looked forward to performing its duties as the chair of the Group of 77 for 2019.

18. He agreed with the Secretary-General that Palestinians needed to put their own house in order for the sake of national unity, and thanked Egypt for its efforts towards Palestinian reconciliation. Further efforts should be made towards creating the type of multilateral mechanism proposed by the President of the State of Palestine one year previously. The Palestinian people needed to see hope on the horizon. Sustainable resources needed to be supplied to UNRWA so that it would not continue to lurch from one funding crisis to another. He invited the Secretary-General to make another visit to Palestine.

Draft programme of work of the Committee (A/AC.183/2019/L.2)

19. **The Chair**, introducing the Committee's draft programme of work for 2019 (A/AC.183/2019/L.2), said that section I outlined the mandates of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights as contained in relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly adopted at its seventy-third session; section II enumerated priority issues in the Committee's programme of work for 2019; and section III contained a description of the planned activities of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights for 2019.

20. He took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft programme of work.

21. *It was so decided.*

22. **The Chair** drew attention to a concept paper regarding the United Nations Forum on the Question of Palestine, to be held on 4 April in New York under the theme "The threat of de facto annexation – What next for Palestine?", and a concept paper regarding the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, to be held on 27 and 28 June in Geneva under the theme "Preserving the cultural and religious character of Jerusalem".

Briefing by Amnesty International

23. **Mr. Abu Zayed** (Amnesty International), speaking via video link from East Jerusalem and introducing a recent report by Amnesty International entitled "Destination: Occupation – digital tourism and Israel's illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian

Territories”, said that the report was part of a broader campaign that had been launched in 2017 to mark 50 years of occupation by Israel of Palestinian territory and was intended to dissuade third countries from purchasing products from the settlements or companies from doing business there.

24. Companies such as Airbnb, Booking.com, Expedia and TripAdvisor listed accommodation and tourist attractions in the settlements, although they knew that the settlements were illegal under international law. By doing so, they contributed to their maintenance and expansion. Of the four million tourists who had travelled to Israel in 2018, 45 per cent had visited areas in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Government of Israel provided incentives to companies to operate in the settlements and promoted tourism in them for ideological reasons, in addition to revenue. Many settlements had been built near archaeological sites in order to drive home the idea of a link between ancient and modern Israel.

25. Airbnb, Booking.com and Expedia all listed accommodation in settlements in the West Bank, while TripAdvisor listed more than 70 attractions, restaurants and cafes. The report contained five case studies of settlements and their neighbouring Palestinian communities. For instance, while digital tourism companies listed accommodation in the settlement of Kfar Adumim, the threat of expulsion hung over the population of neighbouring Khan al-Ahmar. In some cases, the locations for which listings appeared, such as Hebron and the settlement of Shilo, were known for settler violence and discrimination.

26. Of the four companies examined in the report, only Booking.com and Expedia had responded to queries from Amnesty International. Both had stated that they were unaware of any legal obligation to refrain from operating in the settlements. Amnesty International recommended that all four companies drop listings in the settlements and provide compensation to the neighbouring Palestinian communities. The companies should be regulated to ensure that they did not operate in the settlements or promote settler tourist services in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. At the same time, they represented just one facet of the problem; many others also profited from human rights violations in the West Bank.

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

27. **The Chair** said that civil society organizations from Palestine, Israel and the United States of America had recommended in a meeting held on 28 November 2018

that the Committee take up the plight of the Arab minority in Israel, raise Israeli public awareness of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and its cost to the Jewish Israeli population, engage with the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement on measures to address the plight of the Palestinians, and highlight cross-cutting issues affecting them, such as climate change.

28. Between 11 and 14 December 2018, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee, he had participated in a series of fruitful events in London. A roundtable discussion with a number of charities at the headquarters of Christian Aid had focused on issues affecting the Palestinians and the need to raise public awareness of their plight in the United Kingdom, work closely with the Labour Party and facilitate coordination among the many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the country. In a lecture at SOAS University of London, he had reiterated the need to insist on the implementation of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions so that Palestinians might enjoy the benefits and privileges of a sovereign State and the reinstatement of their inalienable rights. At an event held in Parliament to mark the 70th anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), he had recalled the eight-point plan that had been outlined before the Security Council by the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, in February 2018. Such events helped to counter misperceptions about the United Nations and the Committee.

29. On 22 January 2019, the Permanent Representative of Cuba, as Vice-Chair of the Committee, had made a statement on behalf of the Committee at the quarterly open debate of the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

30. On 1 and 2 March 2019, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee, he would attend the forty-sixth meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), to be held in Abu Dhabi. On 7 March, on the margins of the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee would hold a screening of the documentary film *Naila and the Uprising* followed by a panel discussion on the role of Palestinian women in the first intifada.

Updates from Member States on their activities related to the question of Palestine

31. **Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga** (Ecuador) said that 2018 had been marked by the financial rescue of the UNRWA. The year 2019 must be the year of peace, in which the

rights of the Palestinian people were reinstated and an independent Palestinian State was established and welcomed as a full member of the United Nations. The Committee must be prepared to face new challenges in an effort to relaunch a credible political process and prevent the crisis in the Middle East from worsening.

32. **Mr. Naouali** (Tunisia) said that the President of Tunisia, Béji Caïd Essebsi, had reassured President Abbas of his country's unwavering support for the just cause of the Palestinians when they had met at the thirty-second ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union, which had been held recently in Addis Ababa. President Essebsi had also recently met President Abbas's foreign policy adviser, Nabil Shaath, in Tunis. President Abbas had been invited as a guest of honour to the thirtieth summit of the League of Arab States, which would be held in Tunis in late March 2019. Tunisia would spare no effort at the regional and international levels to break the impasse regarding Palestine, return the issue to the centre of worldwide public attention and promote broader recognition of the State of Palestine.

33. The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia had told the fifth ministerial meeting of the European Union and League of Arab States, which had been held recently in Brussels, that a just and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine was a key to bringing about peace and security in the wider region. The Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations had supported all Palestinian, Arab and United Nations initiatives in favour of the Palestinian cause.

34. **Mr. Islam** (Observer for Bangladesh) said that Israel had committed flagrant violations of the rights of Palestinians throughout 2018 and continued to do so. It was important to build awareness in order to strengthen support for their cause. The United Nations, and in particular the Committee, should do more to ensure peace in the region. In its capacity as chair of the Council of Foreign Ministers of OIC, his country had been a vocal supporter in international forums of the rights of the Palestinians. Although a developing country, Bangladesh had contributed \$50,000 to UNRWA in 2018. There was no alternative to a two-State solution with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine; all parties should show pragmatism in working towards that objective.

35. **Mr. Koba** (Indonesia) said that his country remained committed to the implementation of a two-State solution. In the wake of the recent decision by Israel to terminate the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron, a Security Council

press statement on the matter proposed by Indonesia and Kuwait had regrettably been vetoed by one member of the Council. The occupying Power was exploiting the Council's inability to shoulder its responsibilities in that regard. The Council must respond to the decision, which was a violation of Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#). His delegation also regretted that, yet again, proposals for a visit to Palestine by the Council had been rejected. Along with other delegations, it would continue to press for such a visit.

36. **Mr. Molefe** (South Africa) said that his country urged all Member States to support the Committee's work in the coming session. South Africa had contributed \$1 million to UNRWA in 2018 in support of humanitarian aid to women and children in Gaza. Such aid created the conditions that might one day contribute to self-determination and prosperity for the Palestinian people. South Africa supported a two-State solution. The primary responsibility for peace rested with the Palestinians and Israelis who, for generations, had known only conflict and violence. Dialogue and negotiations were the only way forward, and should be based on the established international legal framework, including the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map.

37. **Ms. Rodríguez Abascal** (Cuba) said that the situation in the Middle East and, in particular, the conflict between Palestine and Israel, was deteriorating. The decision by the United States to consider Jerusalem the capital of Israel and relocate its embassy there was a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and United Nations resolutions. Its decision to withdraw funding from UNRWA had had serious consequences for the Palestinian people. Her country would continue to call on the Security Council to fulfil its responsibilities under the Charter; it was regrettable that the Council, owing to obstruction by the delegation of the United States, had failed even to condemn the escalation of violence that had taken place in Gaza since 30 March 2018. Cuba rejected the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force by Israel against Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories, particularly Gaza. It supported a two-State solution that would allow the Palestinians to exercise their right to self-determination in a sovereign and independent State, within the borders of 4 June 1967 and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

38. **Ms. Imene** (Namibia) said that her country welcomed the Committee's programme of work and activities planned for the coming year, which would keep Palestine in the forefront of international attention. Her delegation was especially concerned by the failure

of Israel to implement Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), the expansion of settlements and demolition and seizure of Palestinian properties, the issue of the final status of Jerusalem and the need to secure stable funding for UNRWA. The only viable option was a two-State solution, whereby Palestine would take its rightful place as a member of the United Nations.

39. **Mr. Awawdeh** (Observer for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation) said that his Organization had held a seminar in Saudi Arabia on the Basic Law entitled “Israel – the Nation State of the Jewish People, which had been attended by diplomats and legal experts. The theme of a recent cultural festival that OIC had organized in Cairo had been “Palestine in our hearts”; the festival had placed particular emphasis on Jerusalem. It was hoped that the statute of a new fund for Palestinian refugees would be approved shortly at an OIC ministerial meeting. The Islamic Development Bank would take charge of raising finance for the fund. In January 2019, the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development had approved assistance to several Palestinian NGOs, ranging from organizations serving young people and advocacy groups to education institutions. The Secretary-General of OIC had sent letters to States that had declared their intention to relocate their embassies in Israel to Jerusalem. The Organization would join the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in organizing the annual International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem in Geneva on 27 and 28 June 2019.

40. **Mr. Jiménez** (Nicaragua) said that the unbreakable bonds of solidarity uniting the peoples of Nicaragua and Palestine transcended economic considerations. His country would continue to work for the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinians and the establishment of a State of Palestine within the borders of 4 June 1967 and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

41. **Mr. Atlassi** (Observer for Morocco) said that there was no alternative to a two-State solution, and his country stood with the Palestinians in their endeavour to establish a State within the borders of 4 June 1967. Morocco supported the people of East Jerusalem by funding ongoing programmes there through the Bayt Mal al-Quds al-Sharif Agency. In June 2018, Morocco had hosted the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of his country had met President Abbas at the seventy-third session of the General Assembly in New York.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.