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

Summary record of the 379th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 15 November 2016, at 10.30 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Seck (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

2. **The Chair** said that, on 14 October 2016, the Permanent Missions of Angola, Egypt, Malaysia, Senegal and Venezuela had co-chaired a Security Council Arria-formula meeting entitled “Illegal Israeli settlements: obstacles to peace and the two-State solution”, with particularly powerful briefings by the Israeli non-governmental organizations “Americans for Peace Now” and “B’Tselem”.

3. On 19 October, the Security Council had held an open debate on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”.

4. On 27 October, he had been invited to participate, in his national capacity, in a meeting held in Paris in the context of the French initiative for the Middle East peace process. In that connection, he had been informed that a meeting of the working group on civil society, chaired by Sweden, would be held on 24 November.

5. Lastly, on 28 October, the annual report of the Committee (A/71/35) had been published as a United Nations document in all six languages, and Bureau members had attended a retreat to discuss the Committee’s programme for 2017.

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

6. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that there had been numerous recent debates at the United Nations on the critical situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as a result of the ongoing illegal policies and practices of Israel. Humanitarian, economic, social, political and security conditions remained grave as Israel continued to violate the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilians in Time of War, all human rights norms and United Nations resolutions. Furthermore, there was no viable political path to end that injustice.

7. The Security Council had provided opportunities to focus on the plight of the Palestinian people and to call for action by the international community on the basis of respect for international law. She was grateful for the Committee’s engagement in that debate and in other deliberations. That active participation should continue when the General Assembly began its consideration of the question of Palestine later in the month. The support of the Committee and all its members and observers would be needed not only to raise international awareness but also to generate the political will necessary to correct the current negative course and ultimately rectify the injustice done.

8. The current reality facing the Palestinian people, as reflected in the news bulletins of the Division for Palestinian Rights, was that Israel had proceeded with the construction of over 2,000 housing units in illegal settlements throughout the West Bank, particularly in occupied East Jerusalem and surrounding areas, thereby further damaging the contiguity and integrity of Palestinian land and the viability of the State of Palestine. The colonization campaign under way had led to the demolition of Palestinian homes; the confiscation of Palestinian land; the expansion of Israeli settlements, including so-called “outposts”; the construction of the annexation wall; the forced displacement of civilians; threats of land annexation; and violence committed by settlers against people and property. The possibility of a two-State solution was rapidly diminishing.

9. There had also been provocations and extremist incitement against holy sites; daily military raids often leading to death or injury for Palestinian civilians; and daily arrests of civilians, including children. Over 7,000 Palestinians were currently in Israeli captivity. Meanwhile, the illegal Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip subjected 2 million Palestinians to collective punishment and dehumanization. Extreme deprivation and isolation had created a humanitarian crisis and the worst socioeconomic conditions, including in terms of poverty, food insecurity and youth unemployment, since 1967.

10. There was an urgent need for Committee members to address the funding shortfalls of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which required immediate support to avoid far-reaching negative

consequences throughout the region and help it to serve all those in need. Given that Israel faced no consequences for its violations, her delegation and all concerned partners would continue to draw attention to those critical issues and call for international law and the rights of the Palestinian people to be respected. The Committee's draft resolution on illegal Israeli settlements had been strengthened by a clear condemnation of all such activities and a call for measures of accountability in the event of continued non-compliance by Israel, the occupying Power.

11. In view of the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, the call for an end to the illegal Israeli blockade and collective punishment had been accompanied by calls for a reversal of the de-development trajectory in Gaza, as underscored by the latest report of the United Nations country team in the State of Palestine dated 26 August 2016. The needs of young people and other vulnerable citizens had also been emphasized in that regard.

12. Resolutions related to UNRWA had reaffirmed the rights of Palestine refugees and had renewed that Agency's mandate for three years. Accordingly, the United Nations Secretary-General had been called upon to facilitate consultations with Member States to explore ways to ensure that the Agency's funding was sufficient and predictable for the duration of its mandate. He had also been requested to report the conclusions and recommendations arising from those consultations to the General Assembly by March 2017 for its consideration. She urged all States to support the call for sustained funding for UNRWA, which operated under very difficult circumstances.

13. New elements in the package of draft resolutions for the seventy-first session of the General Assembly included a call for the Committee to work with Governments, relevant United Nations system organizations, intergovernmental organizations and civil society to end the Israeli occupation and achieve a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine. The Committee should fully endorse those partnerships, especially since no additional resources would be made available to the Committee from the United Nations budget. The draft resolutions adopted in the Second and Fourth Committees had again received the support of an overwhelming majority of Member States, and they

should receive even broader support when voted on in the plenary Assembly. Similarly, all delegations should continue to provide their strong support for the draft resolution on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, which would be voted on in the Third Committee.

14. Lastly, her delegation continued to call on the Security Council to end its silence on Palestine and uphold its Charter duties for the maintenance of international peace and security. In consultations, all members of the Security Council had been urged to take action to ensure the cessation of Israeli settlement activities, preserve the two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders, and create a viable political path that would ultimately lead to the end of the Israeli occupation and enable the Palestinian people to exercise their rights, including freedom and independence, in the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Arab Ministerial Committee for the Arab Peace Initiative was expected to decide on the next steps to be taken with regard to the Security Council. Her delegation also supported the French efforts to convene an international peace conference, and those of Egypt and the Russian Federation to facilitate dialogue and promote peace.

15 **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that it would be useful to receive an update on the status of the draft resolution concerning illegal Israeli settlements that had been put before the Security Council, and of which the Council of the League of Arab States remained seized. The situation of the illegal settlements was increasingly critical with each passing day, especially when taking into account the administrative, parliamentary and judicial measures being taken in Israel that would enable the occupying Power to legalize the Israeli settlements.

16. It was an opportune time for constructive discussion and a possible vote in favour of that draft resolution at the Security Council, barring any unfair exercise of the right to veto. The opportunity must not be ignored, especially given that the term of United States President Obama was in its final months, which could lead to discussions on the settlements with concrete results. If a vote took place at the Security Council, even if a draft resolution were not approved, the debate and vote would raise awareness about the settlements. Consequently, it would be helpful to know

the current state of debate within the League of Arab States to see if a draft resolution on the settlements could be considered by the Security Council before the end of the year.

17. He took the opportunity to congratulate the State of Palestine on the anniversary of its declaration of independence of 15 November 1988. With concrete and decisive action by all nations as a complement to formal declarations, his country stood ready to wholeheartedly make the greatest possible contribution in 2017, a year marked by several important anniversaries, to bring worldwide awareness to the situation in Palestine in order to bring about a free and unoccupied Palestine.

18. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Council of the League of Arab States had not yet set a date for a meeting to discuss the prospective draft resolution, although a request had been made by the State of Palestine for such a meeting to be convened.

Consideration of draft resolutions on the question of Palestine

Draft resolution: Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Draft resolution: Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat

Draft resolution: Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine

Draft resolution: Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat

19. **The Chair**, introducing the four draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 35, said that the draft resolutions entitled “Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat” and “Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat” were identical to those distributed at the beginning of October 2016. However, paragraph 10 of the draft resolution entitled “Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People” had been revised to focus on 2017 as the year to end the Israeli occupation. Some revisions had also been made to the draft resolution entitled “Peaceful settlement of the question of

Palestine”. The Bureau recommended the draft resolutions for approval by the Committee. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the four draft resolutions.

20. *It was so decided.*

Update from the Rapporteur on the Bureau retreat held on 2 November 2016

21. **Mr. Inguanez** (Malta), Rapporteur, providing an update on the Bureau retreat held on 2 November 2016, said that the retreat had been the second of its kind, following the first held in 2015. There was a consensus among Bureau members that such retreats were a valuable way of taking stock of lessons learned from previous activities and brainstorming how best to implement the Committee’s mandate to maximize its impact. Programme assessment, planning for 2017 activities, engagement by the Committee, and communications and outreach strategies had been the main themes of the most recent retreat.

22. The Secretariat had already distributed the list of decisions adopted by the Bureau, as well as additional ideas for further actions. The General Assembly was expected to authorize the Committee to collaborate with Member States to organize activities in 2017 to mark the fiftieth year of the start of the occupation, with a view to ending it. The Bureau supported the proposal by the State of Palestine to frame Committee activities in 2017 under the theme “International Year to End the Israeli Occupation”. That proposal would be put before the Committee for adoption at an upcoming meeting. All members and observers should plan national activities in 2017 to underscore that theme.

23. Regarding the programme of work for 2017, the Bureau had approved the following proposals: to organize a Committee delegation visit to Nicaragua, and other key Central American and Caribbean countries, in early February 2017; to hold a capacity-building seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia for Palestinian cadres in March 2017, either in Amman or Beirut; to organize a joint conference on Jerusalem with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), to be held in spring 2017 in Astana, Kazakhstan; to organize an event commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Israeli occupation, including Governments and high-level

United Nations officials, and a separate meeting with civil society, both at United Nations Headquarters in June 2017; and, finally, to organize a delegation visit to Africa. Furthermore, the Bureau had decided to continue expanding the yearly capacity-building programme for Palestinian cadres, which included training for Palestinian diplomats in New York and Geneva and training on topics related to the Sustainable Development Goals, such as water diplomacy and water conflict management. Those programmes had proven to be very valuable for Palestinian staff from various ministries.

24. The Bureau had also discussed the advantage of framing capacity-building and other events, including on human rights, within a South-South and triangular cooperation perspective. Moreover, Bureau members had discussed the need to increase participation by Member States in Committee meetings and activities, and to enhance cooperation and information-sharing. Consequently, it had been decided that henceforth Committee members would be: included in the delegation participating in international Committee activities; encouraged to participate more actively in meetings at Headquarters and to provide regular updates on their activities; asked to act as partners by co-chairing United Nations activities at Headquarters, or to host capacity-building activities in their own countries; and encouraged, alongside observers, to share their initiatives in support of the peace process and any other activities aimed at resolving the question of Palestine. In addition, the Bureau viewed favourably the request of the State of Palestine to consider a change in its status from “observer” to “member”, possibly on 29 November 2016. The Chair would correspond with all Committee members shortly to solicit their suggestions for Committee activities and their inputs on national activities planned for 2017.

25. Finally, the Bureau had discussed the need for the Committee to have a clear communications strategy with a consistent message that would enhance advocacy and outreach. To target the crucial United States audience, the Committee should accept invitations for speaking engagements at United States universities and before other audiences, in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine. Members were encouraged to share additional ideas and concrete proposals to make the

Committee an active and essential tool to advance the goal of an independent State of Palestine.

26. **Ms. Scott** (Namibia) said that one of the main purposes of the retreat was to seek ways for Committee members to engage more actively with the programme of work, which included meeting in more intimate settings to ensure a greater flow of ideas. Committee members should therefore inform the Bureau how they intended to participate in its proposed activities.

Update from the Working Group of the Committee

27. **Mr. Mansfield** (Malta), Chair of the Working Group of the Committee, said that on 18 October, the Working Group had organized a briefing by expert speakers from Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Al-Haq on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the use of excessive force. He encouraged all members of the Working Group to attend and actively participate in such events.

28. At the briefing, the Human Rights Watch Country Director for Israel-Palestine had called on Member States to ensure that businesses did not operate in, finance, service or trade with Israeli settlements in order to comply with their obligations under international and human rights law. He had also suggested that aid to Israel should be reduced by the amount that it spent on settlements. For its part, Amnesty International had called for the international community to suspend arms sales to Israel, which it used to violate Palestinian human rights. Israel had, on paper, a robust system for investigating abuses by its military, but in practice it had failed to deliver accountability. Representatives of Al-Haq at the briefing had raised concerns about the policy of house demolitions and the refusal by Israeli authorities to hand over the bodies of Palestinians killed during alleged attacks. All speakers had agreed that Israel must fully and effectively investigate unlawful killings of Palestinians by Israeli forces and that impunity must end.

29. The strategy for cooperation between the Working Group and civil society organizations had been drawn up on the basis of input from the Working Group, particularly the recommendations that had emerged from the brainstorming session earlier in the year. The four pillars of the strategy were as follows:

action by civil society organizations to influence States Members of the United Nations through film screenings, briefings at Headquarters, side events at major summits, and engagement with the media; the promotion of stronger domestic action by civil society; enhanced coordination with civil society organizations at periodic conferences and through an online platform; and awareness-raising among civil society organizations and the Palestinian public regarding the work of the Committee and the Working Group.

30. For those goals to be achieved, all members of the Working Group should participate actively in its work. However, on two occasions, a quorum had not been reached and informal discussions had been held instead. During those discussions, several speakers had noted that statements made by civil society organizations at the recent Arria-formula meeting had underlined the importance of cooperation with them. It had also been suggested that the Working Group should engage more with Israeli civil society organizations and facilitate increased dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian civil society. Such cooperation should be based on points of convergence rather than complete agreement on all issues. The Working Group should also do more to provide a platform for Palestinian women and youth to share their perspectives, and raise awareness in countries where public knowledge of the reality on the ground was particularly low.

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

31. **The Chair** recalled that, on 27 October, he had been invited to attend a brainstorming meeting, organized by the French authorities in Paris, in the context of the initiative on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The meeting had been attended by States Members of the United Nations, members of other international and regional bodies, such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the European Union and the League of Arab States, and members of civil society. The goal had been to ascertain to what degree they all, working together for the rights of the Palestinian people, could explore economic means to encourage both parties, in particular Israel, to make a greater commitment to negotiations to salvage the two-State solution. Expert presentations had been made to show that, through economic and investment measures

in line with sustainable development, the two-State solution could still be salvaged. Both parties, especially the occupying Power, would benefit from a free and independent Palestinian State that truly cooperated in a productive manner with its Israeli neighbour.

32. Members of civil society participating at the meeting had called for the application of boycotts, divestment and sanctions. It was noted that special sections of significant agreements signed and events held over the previous year had been devoted to the situation in Palestine. Those included the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, and the recently held United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III). If the dual goals of achieving peaceful societies and leaving no one behind were to be achieved, the State of Palestine must enjoy full exercise of its rights within safe and recognized borders.

33. There had also been proposals to label multinational corporations and private companies working in the Occupied Territory as illegal and also immoral in the context of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Such aspects could be incorporated into the French initiative to convene an international peace conference before the end of the year. The organizers of that conference were seeking ideas and proposals that would bolster their own initiative. In that context, special mention had been made of the initiative of Egypt and the efforts of the Russian Federation. The Chair had not yet received a summary of the brainstorming meeting.

34. **Mr. Awawdeh** (Observer for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)) said that he wished to brief the Committee on three important OIC contributions. On 19 October, a ministerial meeting had been held in Uzbekistan, where four important draft resolutions in support of Palestine had been adopted. Those draft resolutions had been dedicated to Jerusalem, the peace

process, different aspects of the Palestinian cause and economic support for the State of Palestine. While those draft resolutions were adopted on an annual basis, the language had been different and had reflected different kinds of support for the State of Palestine at all levels.

35. Staff from the new OIC office in Ramallah, State of Palestine, had recently engaged in different partnerships with civil society, mainly in Jerusalem, with a special focus on priority sectors, including youth, housing and education. Funds had also been raised for the Al Quds fund through the Ramallah office, whose staff had visited at least four OIC member States. Those funds would be used for the aforementioned sectors, with a good portion going to education.

36. Finally, OIC representatives would shortly be discussing with the Division for Palestine Rights their forthcoming meeting on Jerusalem, which would be held in either April or May 2017 in Astana, Kazakhstan.

37. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his country had carried out a number of activities in conjunction with the newly inaugurated Embassy of the State of Palestine in Caracas: on International Women's Day, the State of Palestine had participated in a fair on women and production; on Land Day, a wreath-laying ceremony had been held with the participation of government organizations and civil society groups that supported the cause of Palestine; and a public event had been held in July to commemorate International Quds Day.

38. Ministers from both countries had met to explore possibilities for cooperation in the pharmaceutical and mining industries. Moreover, at the XVII Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on 17-18 September, his country had put forward its national position and had promoted an active discussion on supporting the cause of Palestine. Other events held in his country included a world poetry festival in which Palestinian representatives had participated and a Palestinian film festival.

Other matters

39. **The Chair** said that the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Government was being conducted by the Division for Palestinian Rights for two trainees who were both Third Secretaries in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine. The programme included three weeks of training at the United Nations Office at Geneva; attendance at the sixty-third session of the Trade and Development Board; and briefings by various United Nations offices and agencies in Geneva.

40. Another training programme conducted by the Division, on water conflict management, was being organized in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Ramallah, State of Palestine, from 20 to 23 November. Those and other programmes were being organized as part of the Division's efforts to expand the capacity-building programme for staff of the Palestinian Government, as mandated by numerous General Assembly resolutions.

41. The special meeting in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People would be held on 29 November 2016. He requested delegations to be represented at the ambassadorial level.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.