



DIVISION FOR  
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

# Bulletin

on action by the United Nations system and  
intergovernmental organizations  
relevant to the question of Palestine

May 2020  
Volume XLIII, Bulletin No. 5

	<i>Contents</i>	<i>Page</i>
I.	Israeli annexation plans would lead to “cascade of bad human rights consequences” says UN Special Rapporteur	1
II.	Israel’s planned annexation of occupied territory threatens two-State solution, Palestinian Rights Committee warns, urges global community to counter threat	2
III.	COVID-19 risks creating and exacerbating women’s vulnerabilities and gender inequalities in Palestine, warns UN Women	3
IV.	UNRWA launches new Coronavirus US\$ 93.4 million emergency appeal for Palestine refugees	5
V.	UNRWA and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) inaugurate a medical isolation centre in Lebanon	6
VI.	In light of COVID-19 crisis, UN Humanitarian Coordinator, UNICEF and OHCHR call for immediate release of all children in detention, including Palestinian children	8
VII.	Palestinian Prime Minister calls upon the UN and the international community to save the two-State solution in conversation with Palestinian Rights Committee	8

	<i>Contents</i>	<i>Page</i>
VIII.	UN facilitates 16 tonnes of urgent medical supplies from the UAE to support COVID-19 response in the OPT	11
IX.	Israel's threat of partial West Bank annexation will deal "devastating blow" to two-State solution, Special Coordinator warns Security Council	12
X.	UNSCO Report to Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) calls for action to avert Palestinian economic collapse	17
XI	Office of the Quartet signals progress on water and energy, draws attention to financial deficit of State of Palestine in report to AHLC	18

*The Bulletin can be found in the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) on the Internet at:  
<https://www.un.org/unispal/data-collection/monthly-bulletin/>*

*Disclaimer: The texts cited in this Monthly Bulletin have been reproduced in their original form. The Division for Palestinian Rights is consequently not responsible for the views, positions or discrepancies contained in these texts.*



<http://www.facebook.com/UN.palestinianrights>



<http://www.twitter.com/UNISPAL>



<http://www.youtube.com/UNpalestinianrights>

## **I. ISRAELI ANNEXATION PLANS WOULD LEAD TO “CASCADE OF BAD HUMAN RIGHTS CONSEQUENCES” SAYS UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR**

*On 1 May 2020, Michael Lynk, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, issued a statement reflected in the following [press release](#):*

An independent UN human rights expert warned today that the new Israeli coalition government’s plan to proceed with annexing significant parts of the occupied West Bank, including the Jordan Valley, will create “a cascade of bad human rights consequences”.

“Israel’s decision to unilaterally march ahead with the planned annexation on July 1 undermines human rights in the region, and would be a severe body blow to the rules-based international order,” said Michael Lynk, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967. It would also further undermine any remaining prospect for a just and negotiated settlement, he said.

“If Israel’s annexation plans proceed, what would be left of the West Bank would become a Palestinian Bantustan, an archipelago of disconnected islands of territory, completely surrounded and divided up by Israel and unconnected to the outside world,” the Special Rapporteur said.

“The plan would crystalize a 21st century apartheid, leaving in its wake the demise of the Palestinians’ right to self-determination. Legally, morally, politically, this is entirely unacceptable.”

Human rights violations arising from Israeli occupation would only intensify after the annexation, Lynk said. “Already, we are witnessing forced evictions and displacement, land confiscation and alienation, settler violence, the appropriation of natural resources, and the imposition of a two-tiered system of unequal political, social and economic rights based on ethnicity.”

Annexation has been strictly prohibited under international law since the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations in 1945. Drawing from the bitter lessons of two world wars fought within a generation, the international community outlawed annexation because it generates conflict, vast human suffering, political instability, economic ruin and systemic discrimination. Since 1967, the UN Security Council has affirmed the principle of “the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory” by force or war on numerous occasions with specific reference to Israel’s occupation.

The Special Rapporteur expressed deep alarm that Israel’s annexation plans are being supported and facilitated by the United States. “On many fronts, the US was a positive force in the post-war years for the creation of our modern system of international law. It understood that a strong network of rights and responsibilities was the best path to global peace and prosperity. Now, it is actively endorsing, and participating in, a flagrant violation of international law. Its legal duty is to isolate perpetrators of human rights violations, not abet them.”

Lynk said the United Nations and its member states could no longer just offer criticism without consequences. “The looming annexation is a political litmus test for the international community.

This annexation will not be reversed through rebukes, nor will the 53-year-old occupation die of old age,” the Special Rapporteur said.

“As I stated in March, the international community should review its extensive menu of sanctions and countermeasures to stem this march towards further illegality. Settlement products should not enter the international marketplace. Agreements, existing and proposed, with Israel should be reviewed. The current investigations at the International Criminal Court should be supported,” the UN human rights expert underscored.

“There has to be a cost to the defiance of international law,” the Special Rapporteur said. “Only this can compel the Israeli political leadership to do the right thing.”

## **II. ISRAEL’S PLANNED ANNEXATION OF OCCUPIED TERRITORY THREATENS TWO-STATE SOLUTION, PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE WARNS, URGES GLOBAL COMMUNITY TO COUNTER THREAT**

*On 5 May, the General Assembly Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People issued the following [statement](#):*

As the world’s attention is turned to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, the Palestinian people under occupation face an additional crisis — the threat of annexation.

Even during the unprecedented health emergency, Israel, the occupying Power, has continued to entrench the illegal occupation and openly announced its intention to annex large areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, while continuing the blockade of the Gaza Strip.

It falls on the international community to rally our support and solidarity behind the Palestinian people to prevent annexation, which constitutes a grave breach of international law and flagrant violation of UN resolutions, including resolution [2334](#) (2016), which calls for an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and the fulfilment of the rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence. The prohibition on acquisition of territory by force is absolute in the UN Charter.

The expansion of Israel’s control over the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, is eroding the internationally agreed two-State solution. The goal of Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security along the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian State, remains unchanged, yet unattained and at great risk.

The Committee calls on Israel to heed to the Secretary-General’s recent call for a global ceasefire. It also calls on Israel to heed the long-standing demand for a halt to its illegal actions and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, including all measures aimed at entrenching the occupation and annexing territory. The Committee also calls on Israel, in accordance with its international law obligations, to ensure the full respect of the human rights of the Palestinian civilian population under its control and to provide humanitarian access and assistance, including to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

We in the United Nations have the tools to rein in violence and injustice, and seek peace, justice and security for all. We are committed to leaving no one behind. Not unlike the fight against the pandemic, each of us — individually, and collectively — must do our part and prevent the gross injustice of occupation and annexation. The Committee calls on the international community, particularly the Security Council, to shoulder its responsibilities and take urgent action to counteract the threat of annexation.

### **III. COVID-19 RISKS CREATING AND EXACERBATING WOMEN'S VULNERABILITIES AND GENDER INEQUALITIES IN PALESTINE, WARNS UN WOMEN**

*On 6 May, UN Women released the following [press release](#):*

Unless gender is integrated into national and institutional efforts to combat COVID-19 in Palestine, the pandemic's socio-economic impact would aggravate gender inequalities and women's vulnerabilities, according to a new gender analysis by UN Women.

As of today, there are 538 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip, according to World Health Organization (WHO). On March 5, an emergency state was announced and lockdown measures have followed across the Palestinian Territory. This comes at a time when Palestinian capacity for emergency response is significantly reduced by the Israeli occupation, intra-Palestinian strife and a dire economic situation.

To increase understanding of the gender-specific impact of COVID-19 and ensure that the needs and priorities of all Palestinians are fairly and effectively addressed in response plans, [UN Women conducted a rapid gender analysis](#). Based on preliminary data collection, surveys and meetings that UN Women had with more than 30 women-led organizations and woman leaders in the West Bank and Gaza, the report warns that the pandemic is expected to disproportionately affect women, create and exacerbate pre-existing gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities and widen inequalities.

Women represent nearly 60 per cent of workers in the care sector in Palestine and 70 per cent of frontline health workers, making them more exposed to the virus. Yet, men enjoy much higher levels of political and community participation and engagement in the fight against COVID-19. For example, 52 per cent of men said that they volunteered in their community, compared to 24 per cent for women. This makes Palestinian women's voices go mostly unheard on how to respond to the pandemic.

"We must not forget that the COVID-19 pandemic affects women, girls, men and boys differently, and this important report highlights the different needs arising from this emergency." Said Mr. Jamie McGoldrick, the Humanitarian Coordinator and United Nations Resident Coordinator for the OPT.

With unemployment already very high, and even more for women, the current lockdown measures can exacerbate economic insecurity. The study found that the lockdown and closures of schools has increased the burden of unpaid care work on women and girls. This is particularly stressful for women who were requested to work from home while also expected to take care of

the children and housework. According to a survey by AWRAD, whose findings informed the gender analysis, women are more concerned than men about the increasing household burdens (62 per cent and 46 per cent respectively). Sixty-eight per cent of women said that their household work has

Indeed, the crisis is expected to gravely impact women's livelihood, particularly those working in the informal sector with no work protection. According to the aforementioned survey, 76 per cent of women reported that their families lost their income, compared to 65 per cent among men. According to a UN Women flash survey of the crisis impact on women-owned businesses, 95 per cent of women owners of micro, small and medium enterprises said their work had already been impacted by COVID-19. Moreover, almost 25 per cent of females in the private sector work with no employment contract or pay protection.

Domestic and gender-based violence (GBV) against women has also worsened since lockdown measures were put in place. Women's organizations are reporting increase in GBV incidence. The Palestinian Working Women Society alone reported more than 510 GBV calls in the span of less than two weeks. Similarly, SAWA, another women's organisation, has reported a 10 per cent increase in calls and three cases of suicide attempts. At the same time, restrictions on movements and services prevent women and girls from accessing essential services, including health, protection, security and justice. Restrictions on movement also risk normalizing prevalent patriarchal conceptions that "women's place is at home". Moreover, women's unequal access to information and connectivity is likely to make them more vulnerable to the negative impacts of confinement.

"The way we respond to COVID-19 will have consequences for women, men, boys and girls in Palestine." Said Ms. Maryse Guimond, UN Women Special Representative for the OPT. "The only way to effectively support them is to ensure that the response takes into account their gender, age and vulnerability."

To mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on all Palestinians and prevent it from further weakening women and worsening gender inequalities, the Palestinian Government, international partners and humanitarian actors should:

- Collect sex- and age-disaggregated data and analysis to inform and guide planning and response to the pandemic;
- Ensure that humanitarian actions are gender responsive and address the needs of women, girls, boys and men equally;
- Actively increase the representation and participation of women in decision making and response planning at all levels;
- Include vulnerable women and female-headed households as well as GBV survivors in economic mitigation plans, including in cash transfer programmes and support small women-run businesses during crisis;

- Enhance protection and accountability for GBV and provide safe and adapted sheltering solutions for women survivors of GBV and alternative psycho-social support mechanisms during lockdown;
- Officially encourage and promote the role of men at home and in childcare as well as practices that show equitable and non-stereotypical roles for female and male caregivers;
- Confront COVID-19 stigma, particularly for women, through awareness campaigns and messaging on avoiding social rejection and encouraging embracing and supporting survivors.

#### **IV. UNRWA LAUNCHES NEW CORONAVIRUS US\$ 93.4 MILLION EMERGENCY APPEAL FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES**

*On 8 May 2020, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees issued the following [press release](#):*

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is urgently seeking US\$ 93.4 million for its response to COVID-19 in the areas of health care, sanitation and hygiene and education over the next three months. The required amount is an update from the Agency’s earlier [appeal](#), with a large portion of the funding aimed at covering cash and food assistance to this particularly vulnerable population, as the socio-economic consequences of the public health crisis continue to weigh heavily on households.

Since the start of the crisis, the Agency has worked diligently to deliver essential, lifesaving services to Palestine refugees throughout the Middle East. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has been distributed to thousands of front line health staff, triage systems have been introduced in all health centres to screen patients with respiratory symptoms and minimize contact with other patients, non-critical health services have been suspended and telemedicine and door-to-door delivery of medicine and food were introduced to reduce foot traffic at health clinics and food distribution centres.

In order to ensure the continuity of education to over 530,000 students enrolled in UNRWA schools and 8,270 young people in vocational centres, the [Agency Education in Emergencies \(EiE\)](#) approach, developed in response to conflicts in Syria and Gaza, has been adjusted to the COVID-19 crisis and implemented. To avoid any additional public health hazard, sanitation works and solid waste collection have continued in all camps, and protective measures for sanitation workers have increased. The Agency is continuing its vital food and cash assistance programs for the most vulnerable.

“We have seen how the crisis is disproportionately hitting the poorest and most destitute communities around the world. This is sadly also true for Palestine refugees who are amongst the most vulnerable populations in the Middle East,” said UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini. “Most refugees UNRWA serves live under the poverty line and lack the safety net needed to absorb the financial and medical shocks created by the COVID-19 pandemic. They are now facing devastating consequences to their physical, social and economic wellbeing.”



The UNRWA emergency appeal will work to prevent a disastrous situation that could leave thousands of lives in the balance and will protect against the most severe impacts of the pandemic by providing basic needs such as food, water and lifesaving health care and preventing against further deterioration to refugees' health and socio-economic safety.

“As long as the global crisis persists, UNRWA will continue to adapt the way it works so that it responds to the needs and expectations of Palestine refugees. I count on the solidarity of the international community to help us ensure Palestine refugees remain safe and able to weather the economic storm that could push this vulnerable community to the brink of disaster. This could trigger more instability in an already volatile region,” said Lazzarini.

Read the full Updated UNRWA Flash Appeal for the COVID-19 response [here](#).

## **V. UNRWA AND MÉDECINS SANS FRONTIÈRES (MSF) INAUGURATE A MEDICAL ISOLATION CENTRE IN LEBANON**

*On 6 May, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, in partnership with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), issued the following [press release](#):*

On 6 May, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), in partnership with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) announced the opening of a medical isolation centre in the UNRWA Sibliin Training Centre (STC) near Saida, Lebanon.

The opening took place after UNRWA received clearance to operate the centre from the Lebanese Council of Ministers on 4 May.

The opening ceremony was attended by the Minister of Public Health, Dr. Hamad Hassan, the Minister of Information Dr. Manal Abdel Samad, the Director of UNRWA Affairs in Lebanon, Claudio Cordone, the Head of the MSF Mission in Lebanon, Amaury Gregoire, the Members of the Lebanese Parliament, Dr. Mohammad Al-Hajjar and Dr. Bilal Abdallah, the Palestinian Ambassador to Lebanon, Ashraf Dabbour, the representative of the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee, Abdel Nasser Al-Ayi, Mayor of Sibliin, Mohammad Yonis, the Secretary of the PLO factions in Lebanon, Fathi Abu Al-Ardat, and a number of Lebanese and Palestinian officials.

The STC isolation centre has a capacity approximately 100 beds and is ready to receive people showing symptoms of COVID-19 who require isolation, as well as people who have tested positive for the virus, are asymptomatic or exhibit mild-moderate symptoms and cannot self-isolation their homes due to overcrowding, among other reasons.

The transformation of STC was undertaken in full compliance with World Health Organization and the Ministry of Public Health of Lebanon guidelines. MSF provided medical expertise and guidance throughout modification of the site's layout, as well as logistics, to ensure that the centre met the requirements for use as a fully functioning isolation site. MSF also provided comprehensive training to UNRWA staff on infection prevention and control measures.

The Centre's trained UNRWA staff will provide necessary logistical support, including all laundry, food and cleaning, while MSF will support the management of the facility with the



permanent presence of its medical staff on site, in order to ensure the proper monitoring of patients and timely referral of complex cases.

Dr. Hassan said: “The process of raising readiness is ongoing. Today we are seeing the strengthening of cooperation with international organizations, including UNRWA and MSF, who have equipped a quarantine centre for Covid-19 patients among Palestinian refugees. We are working with determination to raise the level of preparedness. Today we witness the result of good cooperation that followed several meetings. We hope to improve this relationship to a level that enables us to protect our Palestinian brothers”.

“We hope that the work we have done to transform the Sibliin Training Centre into an isolation site will help the ongoing effort to tackle COVID-19 in Lebanon and we are ready to share our experience with actors preparing new isolation sites around the country, if needed,” says Mr. Gregoire, “The staff we trained on managing the isolation site are also ready to be deployed in other sites,” Mr. Gregoire added.

Mr. Cordone thanked MSF and the Ministry of Public Health for their support. “UNRWA has responded to the needs created by the COVID-19 crisis by adopting a series of measures, including the transformation of Sibliin into an isolation centre. This will offer a safe space for those who need it and cannot find it at home due to overcrowded living conditions. No one who needs treatment or other assistance related to COVID-19 will be let down,” said Mr. Cordone.

He added, “UNRWA welcomes the solidarity and support of all those who made this centre possible. The Agency is working on other installations that can be turned into isolation centres in camps, in close coordination with the Lebanese authorities, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, the Lebanese Red Cross Society and other local and international partners.”

MSF is also supporting the different communities in Lebanon, including in Palestinian camps, in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the beginning of the pandemic in Lebanon, MSF has worked on a large-scale awareness campaign about COVID-19 in its areas of operations and in camps.

**VI. IN LIGHT OF COVID-19 CRISIS, UN HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR,  
UNICEF AND OHCHR CALL FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
OF ALL CHILDREN IN DETENTION, INCLUDING PALESTINIAN CHILDREN**

*On 11 May, Jamie McGoldrick, United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in the occupied Palestinian territory, Genevieve Boutin, United Nations Childrens Fund (UNICEF) Special Representative in State of Palestine, and James Heenan, Head of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, issued the following [joint press statement](#):*

We are seriously concerned over the continued detention of Palestinian children by Israeli authorities. At the end of March, 194 Palestinian children were detained by the Israeli authorities in prisons and detention centres, mainly in Israel, according to data released by the Israeli Prison Service. This is higher than the monthly average number of children detained in 2019. Of the total, the vast majority of these children have not been convicted of any offence but are being held in pre-trial detention.

The rights of children to protection, safety and wellbeing must be upheld at all times. In normal times, the arrest or detention of a child should be a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time. This is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which both Israel and State of Palestine have ratified.

During a pandemic, States should pay increased attention to children's protection needs and children's rights, and the best interests of children should be a primary consideration in all actions taken by Governments.

Children in detention face heightened risk of contracting COVID-19, with physical distancing and other preventive measures often absent or difficult to achieve. Moreover, since the start of the COVID-19 crisis in Israel, legal proceedings are on hold, almost all prison visits are cancelled, and children are denied in-person access to their families and their lawyers. This creates additional hardship, psychological suffering, and prevents the child from receiving the legal advice to which they are entitled. For children awaiting trial, these pressures could put them under increased pressure to incriminate themselves, pleading guilty to be released faster.

The best way to uphold the rights of detained children amidst a dangerous pandemic, in any country, is to release them from detention and to put a moratorium on new admissions into detention facilities. We call on the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to do so immediately.

## VII. PALESTINIAN PRIME MINISTER CALLS UPON THE UN AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO SAVE THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION IN CONVERSATION WITH PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

*On 18 May, the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), issued the [following summary](#) of the Committee's [virtual meeting](#) with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh:*

On 18 May, the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), at its 400th meeting, engaged in an interactive conversation with the Prime Minister of the State of the Palestine, Mr. Mohammed Shtayyeh, on Israel's plans to annex large areas of the West Bank. An initial presentation by the Prime Minister was followed by comments and questions from Committee Bureau Members. Members and Observers of the Committee and other Member States participated virtually in the meeting, as did a wide audience of United Nations funds and programmes, intergovernmental and civil society organizations. The event was livestreamed on UN Web TV, the UN YouTube channel, Facebook and Twitter, reaching a viewership of nearly 15,000.

At the opening, the **Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Cheikh Niang (Senegal)**, noted that as the world's attention turned to preventing loss of life and limiting the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, Israel, the occupying Power, continued to entrench the occupation and declared its intention to annex, as early as in July 2020, large areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. These measures, if implemented, would be in grave breach of international law, and violate the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people including the right to self-determination and independence. The Chair recalled that on 5 May, the Committee had issued a statement affirming that Israel's annexation plans posed a threat to the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders and calling on the international community to take urgent action to counter annexation. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's 17 May statement to his newly sworn-in government, that Israel would seek swift approval for the annexation of West Bank settlements, had generated an additional sense of urgency for action.

At the outset, **Ambassador Riyad Mansour (State of Palestine)** thanked the Committee for organizing the event and the Prime Minister for his availability to participate from Ramallah in the interactive meeting, allowing the Committee to have a direct exchange on the latest developments. He appreciated the Committee's engagement over the years and its work advocating for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

In his remarks, **Prime Minister Shtayyeh** provided an update on recent developments and outlined the steps the Palestinian Government was taking to counter annexation and salvage the two-State solution. He also updated the meeting on the impact of COVID-19 in the State of Palestine. Lastly, he outlined options for Member States to counter the threat of annexation.

The Prime Minister referred to Israel's "systematic strategy to destroy the pillars of the Palestinian State" through the annexation of East Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley, the use of Area C, which constitutes 62 per cent of the West Bank, as a "geographic reservoir" for the expansion of illegal Jewish settlements, as well as the continuation of the Gaza blockade.

He further elaborated on “four wars” waged against Palestine by which that strategy had been implemented: financial, geographic, demographic and narrative. Israel had violated the economic agreements with Palestine and exerted financial control via withholding of tax revenues, keeping Palestine in constant need of financial assistance, including through the lack of access to its natural resources, an annual loss of US\$ 4.3 billion according to the World Bank. Israel has further shrunk the territory of the State of Palestine by preventing it to control its borders and airports, through land expropriations, confiscations, and annexation.

Demographically, Israel had been pushing Palestinians out of East Jerusalem and the Area C and allowed the expansion of illegal Jewish settlements. Finally, the “falsification” of the

Palestinians’ narrative and history, including through attacks on its religious heritage and the Al-Aqsa mosque, went to the heart of eliminating Palestinians’ rights and links to their occupied territory. The Prime Minister reiterated that the conflict was not about narratives nor religion but about political rights, self-determination and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

The Prime Minister underscored that Israel had violated several agreements, especially the **Oslo Accords**, which called for the Palestinian zone of jurisdiction to be gradually enlarged until 4 May 1999, when the Palestinian Authority (PA) was to take full control over the entire Palestinian Territory. According to the Oslo Accords, he added, the “Palestinian Interim Self-Governing Authority” was by definition temporary and it should have been replaced by Palestinian institutions governing the nascent State of Palestine.

As of late, the US Peace Plan had emboldened Israel, by signaling to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a green light to annex more than 35 per cent of the Occupied Palestinian

Territory. This had been preceded by the move of the US embassy to Jerusalem, on 17 December 2018, and the de-funding of UNRWA. In fact, the discourse in Israel was not whether to annex - but rather “what” to annex.

The Prime Minister called upon the UN and the international community to make their economic and political weight felt and save the internationally supported two-State solution, by taking four concrete steps: imposing sanctions on Israel, as the European Union was considering; upholding international law and holding Israel accountable; recognizing the State of Palestine within the 1967 borders; and convening an international conference by the “Quartet Plus” (including Arab countries, China and other partners); and continuing to support UNRWA.

Turning to the impact of Covid-19 pandemic in the State of Palestine, the Prime Minister informed that so far there have been 107 cases (61 in East Jerusalem, 6 in Gaza, and 40 in the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory) and 2 deaths. Palestine was the first country that imposed serious measures with limited means: it closed schools, universities, mosques and churches, imposed movement restrictions and it converted hotels into hospitals. The Palestinian Authority sent medical teams to East Jerusalem, medical supplies to Gaza and it increased its testing capacity from 300 to 6,000 a day. The Prime Minister expressed gratitude to the countries that gave medical assistance: China, Egypt, the European Union, Kuwait, Qatar, South Africa, and Turkey. He noted the socio-economic repercussions of Covid-19 pandemic: an increase in violence against women (by 47 per cent) and children. To face the economic impact of the pandemic, the Palestinian

Government established a special fund of US\$ 5 million for the recovery plan and intended to provide loans at 1.5 per cent rate to SMEs and the tourism industry.

During the interactive segment, **Bureau Members** reaffirmed their unwavering support for the Palestinian people and solidarity with their just cause. Responding to their questions about what the UN and the CEIRPP could do to better support Palestine in this time of crisis, the Prime Minister responded that political statements were no longer enough, and that Palestine needed stronger measures, such as sanctions against Israel.

During the Q&A session, which included **questions from civil society, academics and media** from throughout the world, the Prime Minister touched upon a wide range of issues. On holding of elections, as announced by President Mahmoud Abbas at the UN General Assembly on 26 September 2019, the main obstacle remained Israel's preventing Palestinians in East Jerusalem to vote. The Prime Minister also spoke about concrete steps to advance reconciliation among Palestinian factions with Egypt's help, and about the fact that Palestinians were living in "one-State-reality". In reference to recent attacks by Israel on the International Criminal Court, he asked the international community to defend its international mechanisms. Politicizing the International Criminal Court was a diversion attempt to avoid accountability. He also referred to the need to implement UN resolutions protecting Palestinians under occupation, with the engagement of the UN Secretary-General. In conclusion, the Prime Minister announced that on Tuesday, 19 May a meeting of the Palestinian Authority leadership would discuss the implementation of existing resolutions to stop annexation.

The virtual Event was closed by the Chair.

*Note: This Summary attempts to provide an overall picture of the deliberations of the Committee meeting. A video of the event can be found on the [webpage](#) of the CEIRPP as well as in its official [Facebook page](#) and [YouTube channel](#).*

## **VIII. UN FACILITATES 16 TONNES OF URGENT MEDICAL SUPPLIES FROM THE UAE TO SUPPORT COVID-19 RESPONSE IN THE OPT**

*On 19 May, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) issued the following [press release](#):*

The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) expresses its gratitude to the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for the delivery of sixteen tonnes of urgent medical supplies. The supplies will support the efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19 pandemic and its impact in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). The aid includes personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical equipment. Most notably, it includes 10 ventilators that are acutely needed.

This aid is in line with the United Nations COVID-19 Response Plan for the occupied Palestinian territory. The plan supports the efforts led by the Government of Palestine to contain the pandemic and mitigate its impact.

Commenting on the delivery of aid, Ambassador Lana Zaki Nusseibeh, the UAE's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, said: "This is an international crisis that requires an international response. The UAE is grateful to UNSCO for facilitating the UAE's support for the Palestinian people, and for the UN's tireless efforts to coordinate and assist the global fight against the pandemic."

Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, thanked the Government and people of the UAE for their continued support to the Palestinian people.

"The UAE is an important partner, whose continued support for peace and for the Palestinian people at this critical time is highly valued. Global solidarity is in the interest of everyone. Today we are facing the most challenging crisis since the Second World War. We can get through it only by working together.

In addition to being one of the largest donors to UNRWA, the UAE has contributed more than USD 828.2 million from 2013 to April 2020 to fund various sectors in the oPt. The UAE has been one of the world's leading contributors of COVID-19 aid, delivering more than 500 metric tonnes of aid to 47 countries.

### **IX. ISRAEL'S THREAT OF PARTIAL WEST BANK ANNEXATION WILL DEAL "DEVASTATING BLOW" TO TWO-STATE SOLUTION, SPECIAL COORDINATOR WARNS SECURITY COUNCIL**

*On 20 May, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), Nickolay Mladenov, briefed the Security Council. Excerpts from his [briefing](#) appear below:*

I brief you today three days after a new coalition government was sworn into office in Israel following a year of political uncertainty. I look forward to working with the new ministers on the challenges that lie ahead. The pandemic is not behind us. Managing its socio-economic impact, affects both for the Israeli and Palestinian people, and it will remain a serious challenge. Beyond the health aspects of the crisis we need to ensure that cooperation among all sides continues in the interest of peace. To this end the UN will work with the Israeli and Palestinian leadership, as well as with our regional and international partners to create the conditions for returning to meaningful Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

Our unfaltering commitment to achieving a negotiated two-state solution remains resolute. The Secretary-General has warned on many occasions of the danger of unilateral action.

The continuing threat of annexation by Israel of parts of the West Bank would constitute a most serious violation of international law, deal a devastating blow to the two-State solution, close the door to a renewal of negotiations, and threaten efforts to advance regional peace and our broader efforts to maintain international peace and security.

Recent polls show that the Israeli public is also divided on the issue.

Countries in the region and many in the international community clearly stated their positions regarding annexation.

The Palestinian leadership announced yesterday evening that it sees itself absolved “as of today, of all the agreements and understandings with the American and Israeli governments and of all the obligations based on these understandings and agreements, including the security ones” and calls on Israel to assume its obligations as the occupying power. The statement by President Mahmoud Abbas also calls for negotiations under international auspices, including by the Quartet, to advance a negotiated two-state solution.

Tomorrow I will be meeting with the Palestinian Prime Minister in order to better understand the practical side of the decision by the leadership and its implications on the ground.

If there is one concern that we all share, that is the need for all to work together to prevent escalation and radicalization.

However, Mr. President,

If I may speak openly and very frankly on the issue, whatever our individual assessments of the Palestinian reaction to the Israeli threat of annexation may be, it is certainly one thing – it is a desperate cry for help. It is a call for immediate action.

It is a cry for help from a generation of a leadership that has invested its life in building institutions and preparing for statehood for over a quarter of a century.

The Palestinian leadership is not threatening, it is calling for urgent action to preserve the prospect peace.

It is doing so at a time in which a new, younger generation comes forward, with its own aspirations for the future, many feel betrayed and increasingly cynical. This new generation, born in the aftermath of the Oslo Accords, disillusioned that for over a quarter of a century statehood has not been achieved, we don't know what future they will carve out for themselves, but whatever future young Palestinians and Israelis decide to build, we have an obligation to prevent violence, and protect the chance for peace.

Therefore, I ask you today, to join the Secretary-General in his call against unilateral steps that will hinder current diplomatic efforts to create the conditions for bringing Israelis and Palestinians back to the table.

We owe this to all the young Palestinians and Israelis out there.

I call on my colleagues in the Middle East Quartet – the United States, the Russian Federation and the European Union -- to work with the United Nations and quickly come forward with a proposal that will enable the Quartet to take up its mediation role and work jointly with countries in the region to advance the prospect of peace.

Israel must abandon the threats of annexation.

And the Palestinian leadership to re-engage with all members of the Quartet.



Everyone must do their part.

Returning to the situation on the ground, let me note that it continues to be dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite growing political tensions, Palestinian and Israeli authorities have continued their notable coordination around efforts to limit the spread of the virus and are taking careful steps to reopen their economies and lift virus-related restrictions.

Relatively successful prevention efforts in the OPT have thus far ensured that the limited capacity of the health system has not been overwhelmed. However, there remain considerable concerns regarding the ability of the Palestinian health sector to cope with a potential surge in cases, especially in Gaza. In particular, there are continuing shortages of critical supplies including testing materials, personal protective equipment, ventilators and essential Intensive Care Unit (ICU) equipment, due to funding gaps and a shortage in global supply.

The UN and its partners have continued to work to address these gaps and their ramifications. Thus far, over 50 per cent of the amount requested in the COVID-19 Inter-Agency Response Plan, some USD 23 million, has been raised. Including resources outside the Response Plan, some USD 39.5 million have been mobilized to support COVID-19 related activities in the OPT.

Following an agreement between the Palestinian and Israeli authorities, over ten thousand Palestinian labourers crossed into Israel from the West Bank on 3 May. They are part of an estimated 40,000 who were granted permits to stay in Israel until the end of Ramadan. On 4 May, Israel approved new regulations obliging employers in Israel to provide medical insurance and appropriate accommodation for Palestinian workers.

In Gaza, the health system continues to face immense challenges despite the low number of positive COVID-19 cases. As of the end of April 2020, 44 per cent of essential medicines and 30 per cent of essential medical supplies in the Strip had less than a month's stock remaining.

The Rafah Crossing with Egypt opened for three days between 12-14 May in one direction to allow for the return of 1,168 people to Gaza. Travel through the Erez Crossing has been limited largely to urgent medical cases and their companions, as well as to staff of international organizations and returning Gaza residents. Approximately 460 people were allowed to return to Gaza and some 225 others to exit through that crossing.

As elsewhere around the world, the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on Palestinians have been immense. Tens of thousands of Palestinians have lost their jobs, small and medium enterprises are unable to operate, children cannot attend school in person, and violence against women and children has increased. As always, the most vulnerable are at the greatest risk of suffering. Recent gains in Gaza on water, sanitation, electricity, and livelihoods are at extreme risk of being fully reversed.

COVID-19 has damaged Gaza's economy across sectors: around 13,000 industrial workers have temporarily lost their jobs; virtually all restaurants and hotels have ceased operations, leading to the release of over 10,000 workers; while perhaps half of all employees in the ICT sector have also been laid off.

The Palestinian people are experiencing the same shock and uncertainty as the rest of humanity; however their Government is unable to respond to the socio-economic effects with the same agency as an independent, sovereign state. It cannot avail itself of the conventional monetary and fiscal tools that sovereign countries ordinarily use in times of economic distress—it cannot influence interest rates, print money, devalue its currency, or access international capital markets to finance the deficit spending needed to compensate those who have lost jobs and to support businesses to stay afloat.

The vulnerable fiscal position of the Palestinian Authority has been further damaged by the COVID-19 pandemic. PA revenues are down sharply due to restrictions on movement and business operations, and lower demand for goods. Given the additional spending required to respond to and recover from the pandemic, estimates are that the PA's fiscal deficit could exceed USD 2 billion for this year.

Israel's announced USD 233 million soft loan for a period of four months, against future Palestinian clearance revenues. It will provide a critical fiscal lifeline for the Palestinian Authority. However, unless combined with a long-term response and reform strategy, including a resolution of the outstanding fiscal issues, this lifeline only delays difficult fiscal decisions to the future.

Working with its international partners, the Palestinian Authority must also adopt emergency budget measures to address the pandemic, along lines recently outlined by the World Bank.

An additional complicating factor as of 9 May is an amendment to an Israeli military order that purportedly holds Palestinian commercial banks liable for processing payments from the PA to Palestinian security prisoners, their families or families of those killed in attacks. This development injects more uncertainty into the already vulnerable Palestinian financial system.

On 24 April, the Jerusalem District Court issued a decision ordering the temporary confiscation of some USD 128 million from the PA as compensation to families of victims of attacks against Israelis during the Second Intifada. The Court ruled that the sum, at least in part, would be collected from PA clearance revenues withheld since March 2019 under Israeli legislation concerning payments by the PA to security prisoners or families of Palestinians killed in attacks.

Clashes between the Israeli Security Forces (ISF) and Palestinians continued during the reporting period.

Overall, in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, two Palestinians, including a teenager, and an Israel soldier were killed. Sixty-five Palestinians, including six children, and two Israelis, one child and one soldier, were injured in various incidents.

On 28 April, a Palestinian man stabbed a 62-year-old Israeli woman in the Israeli city of Kfar Saba, moderately wounding her. The perpetrator was arrested.

On 12 May, an Israeli soldier was killed by a stone thrown at his head during an ISF arrest operation in the village of Ya'bed, near Jenin.

Later that day, a Palestinian man was shot and wounded by the ISF at the Qalandiya checkpoint after reportedly attempting a stabbing attack against the ISF.

On the following day, a Palestinian teenager was shot dead by ISF during clashes in the Fawwar Refugee Camp near Hebron during an arrest operation.

On 14 May, a 19-year-old Palestinian man was shot dead by ISF after carrying out a suspected ramming attack near Hebron. An Israeli soldier was wounded in the incident.

In Gaza, the calm that has prevailed in recent months continued. On 6 May, a rocket was fired from Gaza towards Israel. In response, Israeli forces targeted Hamas facilities in the Strip. No injuries were reported in either incident. On several occasions, Israeli forces opened fire, injuring four Palestinians.

In light of the COVID-19 crisis, concerns remain over the situation of Palestinian children in Israeli custody.

On 11 May, Jamie McGoldrick, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, UNICEF and OHCHR issued a joint statement calling on Israeli and Palestinian authorities to immediately release children in detention and emphasizing that “the best way to uphold the rights of detained children amidst a dangerous pandemic in any country is to release them and put a moratorium on new admissions into detention facilities.”

In the reporting period OCHA recorded 20 incidents in which Israeli settlers injured Palestinians or reportedly damaged their property, with a high concentration of incidents reported in the Nablus and Ramallah Governorates. In the same period, there were reports of 23 incidents of stone and Molotov cocktail throwing in which Palestinians injured Israeli civilians in the West Bank or reportedly damaged their property.

On 18 May, Israel’s District Court in Lod convicted an Israeli man of the horrific murder of three members of the Palestinian Dawabsheh family, including a toddler, who were killed in 2015 by the burning down of their family home in the West Bank village of Duma as they slept.

As the Secretary-General noted in his report last month, “Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbated for women and girls simply by virtue of their sex.” According to recent reporting by UN Women, Palestinian women and girls are disproportionately affected by the pandemic which is creating and exacerbating pre-existing gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities and is expected to widen inequalities - especially in the economic sphere.

In this context, I remain concerned by the increase in incidents of Gender Based Violence (GBV), especially in situations where families are confined to small living spaces and exposed to increased socio-economic pressures. NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza have reported a rise in cases of life-threatening GBV incidents and have raised concerns about the ongoing lack of protection, sheltering and referral services.

In early May, the Israeli Ministry of Defense approved the seizure of municipal planning authority from the Hebron Municipality at the Ibrahimi Mosque/Tomb of the Patriarchs. This move was justified by the goal of making the site accessible to those with disabilities, while stating that the project “will not change prayer arrangements or the *status quo*.”

The order was issued on 12 May allowing 60 days for objections. The Palestinian leadership, the Hebron Municipality, the Waqf and Islamic authorities, among others, have condemned this move, with some arguing that it violates the 1997 Hebron Protocol.

Any change not agreed by the stakeholders to the delicate balance at holy sites threatens stability and must not be taken unilaterally.

Meanwhile, Israeli authorities demolished 32 Palestinian-owned structures due to lack of Israel-issued building permits.

Consequently, 16 people, including 10 children, were displaced and another 170 were otherwise affected. Of the structures demolished by Israeli authorities during the reporting period, all 32 were in Area C of the West Bank.

While there has been an overall decline in demolitions and in displacement, any such steps are contrary to Israel's obligations under international law and must stop.

...

In closing, let me return to my initial words.

I firmly believe that the time has come for all sides to do their part in the coming weeks and months in order to preserve the prospect of a negotiated two-state resolution to the conflict, in line with relevant UN resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements.

These efforts must begin immediately, there is no time to lose.

The fate of the Palestinian and Israeli people must not be determined by destructive unilateral actions that cement divisions and may put peace beyond our reach in our lifetime.

## **X. UNSCO REPORT TO AD HOC LIAISON COMMITTEE CALLS FOR ACTION TO AVERT PALESTINIAN ECONOMIC COLLAPSE**

*On 31 May, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) issued the following [press release](#):*

In a newly published [paper](#), the United Nations argues that the COVID-19 emergency underscores the inadequacy of the frameworks governing the economic and administrative relationships between Israel and Palestine. While welcoming Israeli-Palestinian cooperation to deal with the health crisis, the UN warns that, if current trends continue, the achievements of the Palestinian Government over the last quarter century will fade, the peace and security situation will worsen, and a hardened and more extremist politics on both sides will inevitably result.

The paper, issued by the office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) for the upcoming bi-annual meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) on 2 June 2019, notes that any move by Israel to annex parts of the occupied West Bank or any Palestinian withdrawal from bilateral agreements would dramatically shift local dynamics and most likely trigger conflict and instability in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, stated “All sides must do their part in the coming weeks and months in order to preserve the prospect of a negotiated two-state resolution to the conflict, in line with relevant UN resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements”.

Moreover, the paper highlights the United Nations’ swift and thorough response to the COVID-19 in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), undertaken in support of the Palestinian efforts. The paper noted the relatively successful prevention efforts in the OPT, however, there remain considerable concerns regarding the ability of the Palestinian health sector to cope with a surge in cases, especially in Gaza.

The socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on the Palestinian people is already immense. The Palestinian Authority needs increased financial and development assistance to address its public health needs, provide essential services, and respond to the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic. The Humanitarian Country Team has also identified significant funding needs for the emergency response, and the United Nations Country Team will soon announce its development system response plan. The paper urges the donor community to mobilize in response to this unprecedented emergency.

## **XI. REPORT OF OFFICE OF THE QUARTET TO THE AD HOC LIAISON COMMITTEE**

*On 15 May 2020, the Office of the Quartet issued the following [report](#) ahead of its submission to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee donors’ meeting on 2 June 2020: Following is the report’s executive summary:*

This report focuses on identifying progress achieved since the September 2019 report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) and the critical next steps required in order to achieve the short, medium and long-term objectives which, in combination, have the potential to result in the transformational change that is needed in both the West Bank and Gaza. This report covers the period up to mid-March 2020, although more recent significant developments are detailed where appropriate.

In the water sector, funding for the Gaza Central Desalination Plant and Associated Works Program (GCDP & AW) has been fully secured, and donors continue disbursing pledges. This marks an important step in the realization of the program, which will provide 55 million cubic metres (MCM) of potable water to Gaza by 2025. Construction of the Associated Works continued over this reporting period, though some delays were experienced in material entry. The procurement process for the desalination plant is underway. Further, progress was seen with the completion of construction of the Gaza and Middle Area Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) and construction has advanced in the expansion of the Southern Short-Term Low Volume Desalination Plant (STLV), albeit with an anticipated delay in completion. Operations continue at differing levels for the remaining WWTPs and STLVs in Gaza. Progress was made in the implementation of Prime Minister Shtayyeh’s decision to energize these facilities, with the conclusion of two Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) for energizing the Gaza City STLV and the Khan Younis WWTP. Nonetheless, challenges continue in securing sufficient energy supplies for these facilities and recovering costs to enable their full operation. Progress was realized in

advancing transitional governance measures in Gaza towards the establishment of a Bulk Water Supply Unit, which is an important step in ensuring a more sustainable water sector. Further governance measures are needed to ensure longer-term commercial viability of the sector. In the short-term, financial support is needed for the operation and maintenance costs for WWTPs and STLV facilities in Gaza until cost-recovery efforts reach their full potential (see Annex A). In the West Bank, while some progress was realized on a few wastewater projects, the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) delayed the timeline for implementation of their Water and Wastewater Packages due to a significant funding shortfall of 468 million USD, acquiring the needed approvals from the Government of Israel (GoI), and the PA fiscal crisis. Extensive details were provided on the required efforts in the West Bank in the [OQ's report to the AHLC in September 2019](#). Again, efforts to improve the commercial viability of the sector are essential for sustaining services in the West Bank. In this regard, the PA cabinet advanced a decision to transfer property tax and transportation fees to service providers who pay water and electricity bills. No further progress was achieved in this reporting period on Red Sea-Dead Sea discussions. The parties are commended on their commitment to participating in the Trilateral discussions and subsequent technical discussions on Palestinian groundwater utilization, water supply, infrastructure development, and transboundary wastewater management. No increases in water supply to the West Bank were realised with supply falling further behind demand.

In the energy sector, the Gaza for Gaza project (G4G), a central component of the broader structural solution for Gaza, continued to make progress and will support the planned expansion of the power plant to 600 MW, while leaving additional supply for other users. Bids for the detailed design of the pipeline in Gaza were received and a request for proposals for the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment was recently issued. Reaching commercial agreements and securing financing remain essential next steps to ensure that gas can be supplied in 2023. In the medium term, the construction of a 161 kV line from Israel to Gaza could add approximately 100 MW to Gaza's power supply. Rehabilitation of the Egyptian lines would allow the 27 MW supply to resume, while future upgrades could enable imports of up to 100 MW. In addition, an agreement was signed in January 2020 that will enable a total of 80 MW of electricity imports from Jordan to the West Bank. These initiatives will help improve the electricity sector's financial sustainability by displacing medium voltage imports with high voltage imports that have a lower tariff and lower system losses. The Office of the Quartet (OQ), in cooperation with the PA, completed a pre-feasibility study of five potential solar photovoltaic (PV) sites at three separate locations in Gaza in 2019. Based on this work, initial funding from Norway will allow the development of the first phase of a solar PV facility with a capacity of 1.3 MW at a site adjacent to the Khan Younis WWTP, supporting the plant's electricity requirements. To support progress on the remaining solar sites, the OQ has been working with the relevant PA ministries to identify and secure approval from the landowners for project development. In the West Bank, despite the January 2020 debt repayment of 670 million NIS from JDECO to the Israel Electric Corporation (IEC), the energization of three substations continues to be delayed. Once energized, this will increase the share of high voltage supply and reduce the accrual of additional electricity debt.

In telecom, the Joint Technical Committee (JTC) reconvened several times in the last quarter of 2019 and the first quarter of 2020, which is a welcome development. Progress was realized with the parties' exchange of proposals for Palestinian development of 4G and 5G spectrum and the revision and passage of Resolution 12 during the International Radiocommunications Conference in November 2019. The timely agreement between the parties on the allocation and timeline for

implementation of 4G and 5G frequencies for Palestinian operators is encouraged, considering the timeline for the shortly anticipated award of the 5G bid in Israel.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has further focused attention on the need to resolve the outstanding financial files between the parties. The PA Ministry of Finance (MoF) is projecting a budget deficit of 1.4 billion USD, which will result primarily from a 35-45 per cent projected decrease in the clearance revenue transfers that make up almost 60 per cent of the PA's total budget. We encourage the current dialogue between the PA and GoI that will, upon completion, allow the PA to ensure a fiscal floor of 500 million NIS per month for the clearance revenue budgetary portion. While the fiscal floor will add stability to the PA fiscal management (i.e. increased certainty in meeting its minimum financial obligations in the coming period), it will not solve the fiscal crisis. To maintain current levels of revenues, three elements need to be addressed in the immediate term. First, outstanding monies that are due to the PA should be released, including, *inter alia*, VAT on goods imported to Gaza and Allenby Bridge crossing exit fees. Second, the 3 per cent handling fee should be waived or at a minimum significantly reduced, and PA fuel purchases should be exempted from excise and other taxes. Third, in parallel, discussions on a number of long-standing fiscal files which including E-VAT and labour deductions should continue in accordance with an established agenda and timetable to expedite their resolution. In addition, there is a need to finalise the draft agreement on the transfer of customs authority to the PA. Following a renewed commitment by the GoI in the September 2019 AHLC meeting to the transfer of customs authority to the PA, January 2020 saw the parties renew discussions with the aim of concluding an agreement.

In the security sector, the level of security cooperation between the parties increased to face the COVID-19 pandemic, as demonstrated by faster coordination between the sides and access of PA security to areas affected by the pandemic. Further effort is now needed to improve law enforcement in areas such as the suburbs of Jerusalem outside the separation wall.

Economic growth and job creation in the Palestinian market requires the expansion and facilitation of trade, both locally and internationally. In this vein, and to improve the cost-effective movement of goods, the door-to-door (D2D) program between the West Bank and Israel has continued to expand and efforts are now underway to create a similar type of program for trade with and via Jordan. A

D2D-type procedure at Allenby/King Hussein bridge (A/KHB), especially for bulk material such as cement and plastics, has the potential to significantly increase the competitiveness of Palestinian products and with it the export potential to third markets. In addition, standards-related import impediments and associated delays at Israeli ports continue to add avoidable costs to productive inputs and outputs thereby reducing the competitiveness of Palestinian goods. The parties continue to work to address this issue, and next steps can build on the improved capacity of the Palestinian Standards Institute (PSI) to carry out relevant inspections and testing functions. The operation of A/KHB for 24-hours/five days a week is benefitting Palestinians, especially those travelling onwards via Amman Airport. Processing at A/KHB, as well as other international gateways, would be further enhanced by Israel enabling the PA to issue biometrically-enabled travel documents. While the situation in Gaza remains dire and the restoration of private sector activity challenging, the progress made in facilitating the export of processed foods from Gaza is an encouraging step that can be expanded upon. Additionally, significant progress was made



towards the funding of the Karem Abu Salem/Karem Shalom (KAS) upgrading project. The project, which is expected to reduce costs for Palestinian businesses and improve the quality of perishable goods entering and exiting Gaza, is now almost fully funded and may conceivably commence before the end of this year.

---