



DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

Bulletin

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

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I. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ISSUES ANNUAL REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS

On 1 October, the Secretary-General's 2020 report ([A/75/376](#)), prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 74/88, was issued. The conclusions and recommendations from the report are excerpted below.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

59. The establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan amount to the transfer by Israel of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies, which is prohibited under international humanitarian law,¹¹⁵ as consistently confirmed by the competent United Nations organs, including the International Court of Justice, the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council.

60. The stated intention of the Government of Israel to annex parts of the occupied West Bank, if implemented, would constitute a most serious violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, and would have no legal validity. It would be a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and threaten efforts to advance regional peace and our broader efforts to maintain international peace and security.

61. During the reporting period, advancements of new and existing settlements increased, as did the number of tenders announced, while the rate of settlement housing construction starts decreased. The plans for settlements in East Jerusalem and surrounding areas, including in E1, are of particular concern as they would isolate East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank and threaten to fragment the contiguity of the West Bank.

62. Settlements have significant adverse effects on Palestinians' rights, including their rights to life, freedom of movement, privacy, family life, an adequate standard of living, work and education and on the exercise of their right to self-determination.

63. Settler violence remained high in the reporting period, continuing an overall upward trend since 2016. Israel largely failed to uphold its obligation as the occupying Power to ensure, as far as possible, public order and life and protect the Palestinian population against all acts or threats of violence. A large number of incidents occurred in the same locations,¹¹⁶ suggesting that much of the violence emanates from specific groups of settlers. While efforts have been made by the Israeli authorities in recent years to prevent, investigate and prosecute particular incidents of settler violence, overall, a climate of impunity continued to prevail owing to persisting deficiencies in the justice system to hold settlers accountable for violence against Palestinians and damage to their property.

64. Forced evictions resulting from demolitions in the circumstances prevailing in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are a key factor in the creation of a coercive environment. They have a negative impact on a wide range of human rights and increase the risk of

¹¹⁵ Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 49 (6).

¹¹⁶ [A/HRC/28/44](#), para. 49; [A/71/355](#), paras. 18 and 46; and [A/72/564](#), paras. 19–22.

forcible transfer.¹¹⁷ The transfer of property pursuant to the application of the Absentee Property Law and the Legal and Administrative Matters Law in East Jerusalem also facilitates the transfer of its population into the occupied territory, in violation of international humanitarian law.

65. The Secretary-General recalls Security Council resolution [497 \(1981\)](#), in which the Council decided that the decision of Israel to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights was null and void and without international legal effect.

66. On the basis of the present report, the Secretary-General recommends that Israel:

(a) Immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in compliance with relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), and halt any planned steps towards annexation of any part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in compliance with the principle of inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force.

(b) Review the application of planning laws and policies, as well as the Absentee Property Law and the Legal and Administrative Matters Law, to ensure that they are in accordance with the obligations of Israel under international humanitarian law and international human rights law;

(c) Immediately halt demolitions and forced evictions and cease any activity that would further contribute to a coercive environment and/or lead to a risk of forcible transfer;

(d) Take all measures to ensure the protection of Palestinians and their property from settler violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, including through the issuance and enforcement of clear orders to the Israeli Security Forces to protect the Palestinian population;

(e) Ensure that all incidents of settler and Israeli Security Forces' violence against Palestinians and damage to their property be systematically investigated, that perpetrators be prosecuted and, if convicted, punished with appropriate sanctions, and that victims be provided with effective remedies, including adequate compensation, in accordance with international standards;

(f) Immediately cease and reverse all settlement development and related activities in the occupied Syrian Golan, and end discriminatory land, housing and development policies, in compliance with relevant United Nations resolutions;

(g) Immediately remove all mines and minefields in the occupied Syrian Golan, which pose a risk to the local population.

¹¹⁷ [A/HRC/34/39](#), paras. 40–57.

II. UNRWA COMMISSIONER-GENERAL APPEALS FOR LONG-TERM PREDICTABLE FINANCING

On 12 October, Philippe Lazzarini, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Commissioner-General, made a [statement](#) to the General Assembly's Fourth (Special Political and Decolonization) Committee, which is replicated below.

It is a pleasure to present my Annual Report to the General Assembly on the work of UNRWA for Palestine Refugees in the Middle East. As per established practice, while the written report before you describes trends and events in 2019, my presentation will update you on the current situation.

I took up my function as Commissioner-General on April 1st, just after UNRWA launched a rapid and far-reaching response to prevent the spread of COVID-19 whilst at the same time maintaining the Agency's education, health and relief services to millions of Palestine refugees, including in the 58 densely populated camps in the region.

The agility and ability of UNRWA to adjust the way it operates in response to COVID-19 almost overnight truly impressed me: UNRWA staff shifted to telemedicine, to home delivery of emergency food and medicine, and to distance learning.

Today, six months into my tenure and into the pandemic, our priority is still to prevent the spread of COVID-19 while ensuring that our critical services continue uninterrupted.

This is even more important now that a second wave is aggressively spreading in all communities, host and refugee alike. Between July and today the total number of Palestine refugees infected has surged from less than 200 cases to more than 10,000 last week. Beyond the health crisis, COVID-19 is also unleashing a brutal pandemic of abject poverty that is making Palestine refugees feel hopeless.

The last few weeks have brought new political developments in the region. The Secretary-General welcomed the agreement between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain and the suspension of annexation.

These regional developments are happening while Palestine refugees in the occupied Palestinian territory suffer from the blockade and unlivable conditions in Gaza, and experience hardships and restrictions on their freedom of movement in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The devastating conflict in Syria has not ended, Lebanon is plunged in its worst crisis in decades and Jordan is slipping into an acute economic crisis. Palestine refugees live in all these places and are not spared.

For many of them, the changing regional dynamics are a source of uncertainty and distress. They need reassurance. They need a reminder that the mandate of UNRWA and the status, rights and wellbeing of Palestine refugees remain unchanged, despite the political developments that they see around them.

A deep sense of abandonment and despair has permeated many recent discussions I have had with young Palestine refugees. I hear about a renewed rush towards migration boats

across the Mediterranean that regularly end tragically. My teams also report an increased prevalence of child labour, of child marriage, and of families who say they survive on one meal or even no meal every day.

Despair and loss of hope make a dangerous cocktail in a highly volatile region, particularly for the youth, who feel increasingly disenfranchised and trapped.

Despair is a threat to peace and stability.

Addressing this requires a predictable and stable UNRWA that contributes to maintaining a sense of normality, if only through the consistent delivery of critical services. Health and education are fundamental human rights and basic pillars of living a dignified life. These are amongst UNRWA's flagship programmes.

But rising poverty is leading a growing number of refugees to rely solely on UNRWA services. They ask us to do more at a time when we do not know whether we will be able to sustain our core services from one month to another.

Maintaining quality services requires adequate resources. It gives me no pleasure to turn now to UNRWA's finances and inform you that they are still not in good shape.

I will focus first on our core Programme Budget, which is the backbone of the Agency. UNRWA's funding gap today is \$130 million dollars.

In addition to our core Programme Budget we are also appealing for support for our COVID-19 response. This support is critical to adequately protect our health staff during the pandemic, so that they can maintain lifesaving primary health care, including vaccinations, and maternal and child health care. Additional funds are also urgently needed to sustain a blended approach to education and to address the severe socioeconomic impact of COVID-19. We recently launched an appeal for 95 million USD and I hereby call on UN Member States to make funding available as generously as they did to our earlier COVID-19 appeal.

UNRWA also needs 40 million USD to sustain its humanitarian operations, including food and cash assistance to over 1.4 million conflict affected refugees coming from Syria or living in the occupied Palestinian territory. Today, 15 million USD of this amount is urgently required to sustain the food pipeline in Gaza for over 1 million refugees.

My priority now is to raise the necessary funds to sustain all our essential services. Failing to raise the necessary funds will impact both the salaries of 28,000 staff and the delivery of critical services, including the schooling of more than half a million girls and boys. Such a situation will force me to revert back to you for advice on which parts of the UNRWA mandate to prioritize.

Together, we can avoid this.

One of my objectives in this briefing today is to engage you, as Members of the General Assembly, and seek your full support to make resources for our Programme Budget more

predictable and at a level that matches the responsibilities you entrusted to UNRWA through its Mandate, which was extended in December 2019.

UNRWA Programme Budget expenditures are predictable. But funding has constantly been unpredictable, with no visibility beyond a few weeks. This is unsustainable.

Unpredictable funding results in constant cash flow crises and structural under-funding. This is happening despite major efforts by UNRWA to keep expenditure under control by introducing efficiency and, at times, austerity measures. So far, UNRWA has minimized the adverse effects of austerity on the quality of its services to a remarkable extent, but there is a limit to what the Agency can do.

The constant cash flow crisis and structural underfunding are unsettling for Palestine refugees, for UNRWA staff and for host governments. This adds a layer of insecurity in an already volatile region.

The Agency and its partners are spending far too much time and energy on managing the financial crisis. The good news is: it is avoidable.

Over the last few months, I have engaged hosts and donors at high levels and encouraged a forward-looking and strategic approach that places the Agency on a reasonably sound footing to deliver effectively on its mandate.

To achieve this, there should be an agreement by Member States to provide the level of resources required to support the implementation of the UNRWA mandate in full and to increase the predictability of resources through multi-year financing. In turn, I am committed to developing and submitting a longer-term strategy for UNRWA, with a multi-year budget. I will also continue efforts to broaden the Agency's donor base, and to explore partnerships and innovative funding avenues, in line with the UN Secretary-General's 2017 report on UNRWA financing.

At the same time, the Agency will continue to strive for the highest standards of effectiveness, transparency and accountability, including through the management initiatives being rolled out. We have already reinforced the role of the Advisory Commission, the Agency's internal oversight functions, the management decision making and the Agency's regulatory framework, in particular in the area of recruitment and selection processes. Observing the humanitarian principles will equally remain a priority and we have already stepped up our efforts to uphold neutrality across our fields of operations.

Last year, the resolution of the General Assembly on the Assistance to Palestine refugees affirmed the necessity for the continuation of the work of UNRWA and – I quote – “the importance of its unimpeded operation and its provision of services, including emergency assistance, for the well-being, protection and human development of the Palestine refugees and for the stability of the region, pending the just resolution of the question of the Palestine refugees.”

Your diplomatic engagement is indispensable to guarantee a predictable UNRWA, to ensure that no Palestine refugee is left behind and to advance the development and stability of the region.

We owe this to the Palestine refugees. We owe it to the region.

III. PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE ISSUES ANNUAL REPORT TO THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On 13 October, the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People issued its 2020 report ([A/75/35](#)). The conclusions and recommendations of the report are included below.

Chapter VII

Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee

95. On the basis of its deliberations at Committee and Bureau meetings, briefings, visits of delegations, international conferences and events involving Member States, civil society organizations and regional organizations, the Committee has developed the recommendations set out below.

A. Immediate action by the Committee in response to annexation

96. As affirmed in its statement of 5 May,¹⁹ the Committee rejects the stated intention of the Government of Israel to annex parts of the occupied West Bank, which would constitute a most serious violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and the 1949 Geneva Conventions and would undermine the contiguity of the Palestinian territory and the physical viability of the two-State solution based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine, in accordance with international law, relevant United Nations resolutions, internationally agreed parameters, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative.

97. The Committee supports the Secretary-General's clear position on the question of Palestine, based on international law, countless United Nations resolutions and the search for a just solution.

98. The Committee will continue to advocate the resolution of the question of Palestine on the basis of an international framework and against annexation and in support of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence.

99. The Committee notes the concerns expressed by the Palestinian leadership, and the response of the international community, with regard to the agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, which suspended, but did not commit Israel to halting, plans to further extend its sovereignty over Palestinian territory and its people. The agreement neither bound Israel to negotiations with the Palestinians, guided by the internationally

¹⁹ United Nations, "Israel's planned annexation of occupied territory threatens two-State solution".

agreed parameters, nor included the Palestinian people. To that end, the Committee reiterates that annexation of any part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory is illegal. Any initiative aimed at a just solution to the question of Palestine must, foremost, consider the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, engage the Palestinian leadership and be based on the two-State solution, according to international law, United Nations resolutions and agreements between the parties.

B. Action taken with the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council

100. The Committee urges the Security Council and the General Assembly to ensure the implementation of the long-standing parameters for peace affirmed in relevant United Nations resolutions, including Council resolution 2334 (2016) and Assembly resolution 74/11. The Committee requests the Secretary-General to continue to submit his reports to the Council on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) in written format and, pursuant to paragraph 5 of the resolution, to include references to implementation of the provision by Member States. Pursuant to paragraph 11 of the resolution, the Committee also calls upon the Council to examine practical ways and means to secure the full implementation of relevant Council resolutions, including the use of sanctions on States and private entities violating Council resolutions.

101. The Committee deplores the use of excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate force by Israeli occupying forces against Palestinian civilians, including during the protests in the Gaza Strip in 2018 and 2019, and reiterates its call for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (A/HRC/40/74). The Commission was mandated by the Human Rights Council to investigate violations committed in the proximity of the fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip during those protests.

C. Advocacy and outreach activities with the international community and civil society

102. The Committee will continue to mobilize the international community to stop Israel's annexation plan and exert efforts to achieve the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders. As the United Nations marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations, the Committee reiterates that the question of Palestine, whose fate is inherently bound to the history and existence of the Organization, should prompt the Member States to act on their commitment to the ideals and shared values of democracy, accountability and prosperity for everyone. The international community must redouble its efforts to advance the long-overdue realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and regional peace in the Middle East and maintain international peace and security.

103. Any resolution of the conflict requires a comprehensive regional solution, such as that offered by the Arab Peace Initiative. The Committee calls upon regional organizations, such as the European Union, LAS and OIC, to take on a more politically active role in mediating an end to the conflict.

104. The Committee calls upon the international community to shift from a humanitarian to a human rights framework in addressing the plight of the Palestinian people. It demands

an end to the 13-year Israeli air, land and sea blockade of Gaza and the lifting of all closures within the framework of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). It calls upon international donors to fulfil without delay all pledges to expedite the provision of humanitarian assistance, the reconstruction process and economic recovery, which are essential to alleviate the distress of Palestinians, including women and children, who face additional and gender-specific challenges that need to be addressed through targeted actions. It stresses the urgency of providing funding to UNRWA to ensure its vital humanitarian and development assistance to the Palestine refugees.

D. Action by Member States and regional organizations

105. The Committee urges Member States and the Organization to call upon Israel to respect its obligations under international law to protect civilians. Further to the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution ES-10/20, the Committee emphasizes the need for the implementation of an international protection mechanism that can credibly ensure the safety and welfare of Palestinian civilians.

106. The Committee emphasizes the importance of the acknowledgement by Israel of the Nakba and its impact upon the Palestinian people as a necessary requirement for a viable and lasting peace. Palestine refugees should be treated as dispossessed nationals of a country – the State of Palestine – rather than as stateless refugees. It strongly advocates the right to return as well as just compensation for Palestine refugees, as provided for in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

107. The Committee deems unilateral decisions by Member States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the transfer of embassies in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem as null and void, as they are in violation of Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980). The Committee calls upon Member States to rescind those decisions and reiterates that the historic status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem must be respected and that the international community shares the responsibility to preserve the legal, demographic and historical multicultural and multireligious character and status of the city.

108. The Committee underscores the responsibility of States and private entities not to contribute to grave Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights, including with respect to settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It welcomes efforts by Governments, parliamentarians and civil society actors to sanction support, including economic, for illegal Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

109. The Committee welcomes the release of the database of all business enterprises involved in certain activities relating to Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank (A/HRC/43/71), prepared by OHCHR pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 31/36 and calls upon Member States to implement the relevant obligations under international law, including as set out in paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), in which the Council called upon Member States to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967.

110. The Committee looks forward to the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the effects of annexation, as requested by the Human Rights Council in paragraph 16 of its resolution 43/31. The Committee expresses appreciation for the work of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and his reports submitted to the Human Rights Council.

111. The Committee underscores the importance of preventing the annexation of any part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and is encouraged by the numerous statements in support of international legality by members of the international community, including international civil society. Such a collective position, including in the Arab world, will be paramount to prevent annexation and to bring an end to the occupation in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

E. Support action in response to the coronavirus disease pandemic

112. The Committee expresses concern about the unprecedented spread of COVID-19 throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory and commends the stringent measures adopted by the Government of the State of Palestine to contain the spread in the region. The Committee urges the international community to direct its attention to the dire socioeconomic situation, the deteriorating living conditions of Palestinians in the occupied territory and the predicament of the Palestinian Government, which is on the verge of “total collapse” owing to the twin combination of the adverse impact of COVID-19 and the ongoing Israeli occupation and pending annexation plans, and provide support and assistance.

F. Action by the Secretariat and other United Nations entities

113. The Committee notes with appreciation the contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights in support of its mandate and requests the Division to continue its substantive and secretariat support for all aspects of its mandate and highlights the growing importance of cooperation among developing countries and regional and subregional organizations within the framework of South-South and triangular cooperation for sharing replicable experiences towards the achievement of self-determination and independence.

114. The Committee encourages the Division for Palestinian Rights to continue with efforts to disseminate information on the question of Palestine by broadening outreach and promoting multilingualism, with a special emphasis on Arabic, on its website and social media platforms. It also requests the Division to continue to implement projects aimed at further promoting the Committee’s mandate.

115. The Committee requests the continuation of the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Global Communications, which has made an important contribution to informing the media and the public.

116. The Committee intends to continue to work closely with other United Nations actors and entities, including the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and UNRWA, to synergize efforts in fields of common concern and uphold the permanent responsibility of the Organization towards the question of Palestine until it is justly resolved

in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner and in accordance with international law. The Committee wishes to express its deep appreciation to OIC and other partners for the contribution of extrabudgetary resources and their active participation in its conferences and events.

117. The Committee further encourages all Member States to work collectively to sufficiently and predictably fund UNRWA.

118. The Committee will continue to promote inclusivity and gender balance in all its activities, including its capacity-building programme for the civil servants of the State of Palestine, and encourages a full utilization of online capacity-building opportunities, especially in the context of COVID-related travel restrictions.

IV. PALESTINIANS AND EUROPEANS DISCUSS THE PROGRESS OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN COVID-19 TIMES

On 15 October, the Office of the European Union Representative (West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA) issued the following [press release](#).

On 14 and 15 October, line ministries and institutions of the Palestinian Authority met representatives of the European Development Partners to discuss progress towards state-building objectives and development goals.

The meeting was chaired by the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, Amjed Ghanem, and the European Union Head of Cooperation Gerhard Krause. Officials from 17 Palestinian ministries and institutions, including the Office of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Secretariat, together with 9 European countries and the Office of the EU Representative, discussed progress and challenges relating to programmes implemented in Palestine to build the State and improve the well-being of Palestinians.

At the meeting, the Palestinian ministries and institutions reviewed the progress towards reforms to achieve development goals in the framework of the 2030 transformative agenda. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic obliges to recalibrate programmes and re-define targets as COVID-19 threatens to reverse the progress towards all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in particular SDG 3, which aims to ensure healthy lives and wellbeing for all and puts Palestine off track to end poverty by 2030 under SDG 1.

The discussion focused on how to realign national priorities toward long-term, cooperative, and drastically accelerated action to ensure to leave no citizen behind. International partnership promoted by the European Joint Strategy is instrumental to overcome these new challenges. The discussions confirmed that the Result Oriented Framework is a necessary step to make development cooperation more transparent and to provide a mutual accountability mechanism at country level.

“This meeting represents a great step forward in the Palestinian-European partnership, which we hope will lead to the Palestinian Authority delivering better results for the Palestinian people. The united efforts of our European partners will enable us to better serve

citizens across the whole of Palestine,” said Amjed Ghanem, Secretary General of the Council of Ministers.

Gerhard Krause, EU Head of Cooperation, quoted António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, who said “Everything we do during and after this crisis must be with a strong focus on building more equal, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change, and the many other global challenges we face.” He continued by saying that “the European Joint Strategy in support to Palestine provides the proper umbrella to face these difficulties”.

V. STATEMENT BY UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR ON ADVANCEMENT OF SETTLEMENT UNITS IN THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK

On 15 October, Nickolay Mladenov, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, issued the following [statement](#) on advancement of settlement units in the occupied West Bank.

On 14 and 15 October, the Israeli authorities advanced nearly 5,000 housing units, most of which are in outlying locations deep inside the occupied West Bank. Settlement construction is illegal under international law and is one of the major obstacles to peace.

This significant number and location of advancements is of great concern to all those who remain committed to advancing Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Such moves undermine the prospect of achieving a viable two-State solution by systematically eroding the possibility of establishing a contiguous and independent Palestinian State living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel.

I call on the authorities to cease immediately all settlement-related activities.

VI. EU HIGH REPRESENTATIVE/VICE-PRESIDENT CONFIRMS CONTINUED EU SUPPORT TO PALESTINE

On 15 October, Josep Borrell, European Union High Representative/Vice-President, issued the following [press release](#).

High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell participated today by videoconference in the third Ministerial Strategic Dialogue on UNRWA co-organised by the Swedish and Jordanian Foreign Ministers.

The High Representative recalled the European Union’s continued strong and predictable support to UNRWA, both politically and financially. This support is all the more important in light of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

The EU and its Member States are collectively the largest contributor to UNRWA’s budget, providing about 60% of the funding. The EU will continue to do its utmost to reach

out to existing and potential new donors and welcomes the initiative of Jordan and Sweden to organise an international conference at the beginning of 2021.

The High Representative further stressed that the work of UNRWA remains crucial for all Palestinian refugees, their future, as well as for the viability of the two-state solution, and for the stability and security of the region.

VII. HEADS OF MISSION OF THE EU AND LIKE-MINDED COUNTRIES VISIT PALESTINIAN COMMUNITIES THREATENED BY SETTLEMENT EXPANSION AROUND EAST JERUSALEM

On 22 October, the Office of the European Union Representative (West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA) issued the following [press release](#):

The Heads of Mission and representatives met residents, community representatives and civil society organisations active in the communities. Interlocutors presented the challenges and humanitarian hardship facing the inhabitants incurred by settlements, demolitions, and the separation barrier. A Bedouin community residing in Wadi Jimel, located just outside of the nearby jurisdictional boundaries of both Ma'ale Adumim and the E1 plan, has become increasingly vulnerable since 2005 when Israel issued a seizure order for the land and a plan to construct part of the separation barrier just north of the community. The community has since been denied the ability to cross the area designated for the barrier, which has hindered their access to grazing land and water springs resulting in a loss of livelihood and food insecurity.

“The European Union Member States and likeminded partner countries represented here today are concerned about the continued settlement expansion and the constant threat of demolition of property and eviction faced by the local communities.” said the European Union Representative Sven Kühn von Burgsdorff. “We call upon Israel to halt all settlement activity, including in and around East Jerusalem in areas such as Har Homa, Givat Hamatos and E1. These plans jeopardise the viability and territorial contiguity of a future Palestinian State with Jerusalem as the future capital of the two states, as the outcome of a negotiated two-state solution and in line with the internationally agreed parameters,” he added.

The states involved in today's visit continue to make clear their strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions, reiterating the illegality of settlements under international law and their imminent threat to ongoing efforts to rebuild trust between the parties. As stated consistently, the EU and likeminded partners will not recognise any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties.

VIII. UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR CALLS FOR ISRAEL TO END PRACTICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION AND IMMEDIATELY RELEASE HUNGER STRIKER

On 23 October, Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, issued the following [press release](#).

Israel should release a Palestinian detainee who has been on hunger strike for close to 90 days and end its practice of administrative detention, under which people can be held indefinitely without trial, sometimes for years.

Maher Al-Akhras began a hunger strike in late July after he was arrested. Israeli security forces accuse him of being a member of Islamic Jihad, a charge he denies. The Israeli Supreme Court has rejected his petitions for release three times.

“Mr. Al-Akhras is now in very frail condition, having gone without food for 89 days,” said Michael Lynk, special rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967. “Recent visits by doctors to his hospital bed in Israel indicate that he is on the verge of suffering major organ failure, and some damage might be permanent.”

Al-Akhras was arrested on 27 July in his hometown of Selit El Dahir in the West Bank. An administrative detention order was issued against him on 7 August to run until 26 November 2020. In 2009 he was administratively detained for 16 months, and again in 2018 for 11 months.

“Administrative detention is an anathema in any democratic society that follows the rule of law,” Lynk said. “When the democratic state arrests and detains someone, it is required to charge the person, present its evidence in an open trial, allow for a full defence and try to persuade an impartial judiciary of its allegations beyond a reasonable doubt.

“Administrative detention, in contrast, allows a state to arrest and detain a person without charges, without a trial, without knowing the evidence against her or him, and without a fair judicial review,” he said. “It is a penal system that is ripe for abuse and maltreatment.”

International law allows a state to use administrative detention only in emergencies, and only if a fair hearing can be provided where the detainee can challenge the allegations against her or him. In an occupation, Article 78 of the Fourth Geneva Convention only permits an occupying power to employ administrative detention “for imperative reasons of security.”

Israel has been regularly criticized by international human rights organizations for its promiscuous use of administrative detention. According to Israeli Prison Services data obtained by B’Tselem, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, there were 355 Palestinians being held in administrative detention by Israel as of 31 August 2020.

While Israeli courts allow for a form of judicial review for administrative detainees, the Israeli Supreme Court (sitting as the High Court) has regularly approved the practice and refused Mr. Al-Akhras's request for release in a ruling in mid-October. Two previous petitions for his release had been rejected by the Israeli Supreme Court.

Israel also regularly incarcerates its Palestinian administrative detainees in Israeli prisons, a violation of Article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which says protected people under occupation should be detained in the occupied territory

"The Israeli security forces who arrested and detained Mr. Al-Akhras have not provided any persuasive evidence in an open hearing to justify its allegations that he is a genuine security threat," Lynk said. He called upon Israel to release Al-Akhras immediately if it could not provide persuasive evidence on a high standard that he has broken laws that would be acceptable in any democratic state.

"I also call upon Israel to abolish its practice of administrative detention, release those detainees it presently holds, and strictly follow international law in the application of its security operations" Lynk said.

IX. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL EXPRESSES HOPE THAT ISRAEL – SUDAN ACCORD ADVANCES PEACE, ECONOMIC GROWTH IN AFRICA, MIDDLE EAST

On 24 October, the following statement ([SG/SM/20361](#)) was issued by the Spokesperson for António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General takes note of the announcement by the Governments of the United States, Israel and Sudan informing of an agreement to normalize relations between the Republic of the Sudan and Israel.

The Secretary-General hopes the agreement will further cooperation, enhance economic and trade relations and bring about new opportunities to advance peace and economic prosperity in the wider Horn of Africa and Middle East regions.

The United Nations remains fully committed to supporting the Republic of the Sudan's efforts to achieve socioeconomic recovery, stability and prosperity for all people in the Sudan and the wider region.

X. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL

On 26 October, Nickolay Mladenov, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, made the following [remarks](#) to the Security Council. Excerpts from his briefing follow:

We meet this month as the COVID-19 pandemic continues across the Middle East threatening local health systems and fraying the social and economic fabric of societies as we struggle to meet the challenges ahead.

As the pandemic stretches on and its consequences accumulate, Palestinians and Israelis alike are feeling the effects. I remain particularly concerned about the spread of the virus in Gaza and the long-term damage to the Palestinian economy and social cohesion, including the effects on education, for the next generation.

Last month at the UN General Assembly, the Secretary-General renewed his appeal for a global ceasefire in response to COVID-19, calling for a major push to make this happen by the end of the year.

In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this means focusing on preventive diplomacy to avoid escalation and war in Gaza, working with all to alleviate the health and socio-economic consequences of the pandemic, modernising the economic relationship between both sides and working towards re-establishing credible negotiations with the goal of a two-State solution in line with relevant UN resolutions. The commitment of the international community to support both sides in this process remains unwavering. What is required, however, is leadership from both Israelis and Palestinians to work together and advance the cause of peace.

During the reporting period, the resurgence of COVID-19 has seriously compounded the humanitarian and economic challenges on the ground, with a significant tightening of restrictions in Israel and Gaza, and an extension of the state of emergency throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) for 30 days from 2 October.

The humanitarian community has continued its efforts to address the pandemic, including by addressing critical gaps in medical supplies and equipment.

Responding to a severe shortage of equipment, including COVID-19 testing kits, across the OPT,

UN Agencies, NGOs and international organizations have delivered materials for more than 100,000 tests, dozens of ventilators and oxygen therapy machines. These new supplies, along with millions of Personal Protective Equipment items, are crucial to efforts to contain the spread of the virus.

Arrangements brokered by the UN continue to allow the transfer of patients from Gaza for medical treatment outside the Strip and for importing humanitarian supplies into the Occupied

Palestinian Territory, even as the PA's decision to halt coordination with Israel remains in place.

I wish to reiterate, however, that the UN cannot replace the roles and responsibilities of the Palestinian Authority or the Government of Israel. Any increased responsibilities for the UN in this regard should be limited and timebound.

I welcome the ongoing support from the donor community to the UN COVID-19 response efforts and urge increased assistance as this crisis extends into the foreseeable future.

As we remain focused on urgent health concerns, the viability of the Palestinian Authority (PA) is being severely undermined by an economic and fiscal crisis that has been exacerbated by the Palestinian decision to end civilian and security coordination with Israel.

The fiscal crisis derives primarily from a collapse in domestic tax revenues during the COVID19 emergency and from the Government's refusal to receive its clearance revenues.

The United Nations stands ready to mediate solutions to the fiscal crisis and to get the Palestinian economy on better footing. I reiterate the Secretary-General's call for both sides to re-examine the nature of their economic relationship and improve it for the benefit of both peoples.

In this context, I appeal to the Palestinian leadership to resume its coordination with Israel and accept its clearance revenues – money that belongs to the Palestinian people and cannot be replaced by donor funding. When public health conditions permit, Israel should facilitate freer movement of Palestinian workers and goods into Israel and between the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. For its part, the international community should accelerate humanitarian and development initiatives in the OPT, including those outlined in the Humanitarian Response Plan and the United Nations COVID-19 response plan.

On 14 and 15 October, Israeli authorities advanced some 5,000 settlement housing units. This resumption of major settlement activity, which follows an eight-month break in Area C housing advancements, is of great concern.

The move by the High Planning Committee is one of the largest collective advancements to date. Approximately 85 per cent of these units are in settlements in outlying locations, deep inside the West Bank, all in areas impeding the contiguity of a future Palestinian state.

While the location of these units is particularly worrying, I reiterate that all settlements are illegal under international law and remain a substantial obstacle to peace. Settlement-related activities should cease as they undermine the prospect of achieving a viable two-State solution in line with UN resolutions, international law and prior agreements.

During the reporting period, Israeli authorities also demolished or seized 59 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and three in East Jerusalem, displacing 82 Palestinians, including 23 women and 40 children, and affecting 200 others. The demolitions were performed due to the lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain.

A donor-funded school in the Bedouin community of Ras Al-Tin in the Ramallah Governorate, faces an imminent threat of demolition due to the lack of a building permit. If demolished it would affect nearly 50 children. An Israeli court has issued an interim injunction halting the demolition pending further legal proceedings. There have been no demolitions of residential structures in East Jerusalem in the reporting period.

I urge Israel to cease demolitions and seizures of Palestinian property throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law, and to allow Palestinians to develop their communities.

Over the past months, Israel has not responded to visa renewal requests for international staff members from the UN Human Rights Office. While the Office continues to deliver on its mandate, most international OHCHR staff members are now working from outside the mission area. After the release of the report to the Human Rights Council on business activities in Israeli settlements in February 2020, Israel has frozen its relations with OHCHR. I am deeply concerned that critical mandated work on human rights by the United Nations is obstructed in this manner. I urge Israel to facilitate the return of international staff members to the OPT.

On 24 September, Fatah announced that it had reached a series of understandings with Hamas, including an agreement to hold legislative and presidential elections under a proportional representation system.

These discussions are a welcome development and represent yet another effort at organizing long overdue and much needed Palestinian leadership elections, on the basis of the PLO platform. The Palestinian people have not been allowed to elect their leaders for too long. Democracy and elections are critical to enabling people to determine the direction of their national cause. The UN stands ready to support the Palestinian people in exercising their democratic rights.

Violent incidents unfortunately continued throughout the reporting period.

On 1 October, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) arrested two Palestinian men who had crossed into Israel through the Gaza security fence, carrying a homemade bomb. The next day, the IDF opened fire towards a group of Palestinians who approached the security fence in Gaza, injuring one of them.

On 5 October, militants fired one rocket from Gaza towards Israel. The rocket landed in an open area in Israel, with no injuries or damages reported. In response, Israeli Air Force aircraft fired two missiles targeting a military observation post in Gaza; no injuries were reported as well.

On 20 October, the IDF announced that it had located and exposed a Hamas tunnel entering Israeli territory from the southern Gaza Strip. A few hours after the discovery, Palestinian militants fired one rocket from Gaza towards Israel. The rocket was intercepted by the IDF's Iron Dome air-defense system and no injuries or damages were reported. The Israeli Air Force responded by striking struck an underground structure in an agricultural field in Gaza. No injuries were reported.

In total, five rockets were fired by militants in Gaza towards Israel during the reporting period. IDF fired a total of 13 missiles into Gaza in retaliation.

While the calm understandings in Gaza have largely held, the arrangements and commitments from all parties must be reinforced if they are to be sustained.

Turning to the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, two Palestinians, including one child were killed and some 65 were injured in clashes and other incidents.

Seven Israelis, including two soldiers, and one woman were injured during the reporting period.

On 4 October, Israeli forces shot and injured a 16-year-old Palestinian with a live bullet during clashes in Beit Ummar village, north of Hebron. On the same day, a 15-year old Palestinian boy was seriously injured in an incident in Hizma, near East Jerusalem.

On that day also a Palestinian armed with a knife attempted to stab an ISF officer near Hebron. The attacker was arrested and no injuries were reported.

On 5 October, Israeli security forces (ISF) shot and killed a Palestinian man and injured two others at a checkpoint southeast of Tulkarm, while they were reportedly throwing Molotov cocktails at passing vehicles.

On 25 October, a 17-year old Palestinian youth died during an encounter with the ISF near the West Bank village of Turmusaya, near Nablus. There are conflicting claims about the circumstances and cause of death. I urge a prompt and independent investigation into the events that led to the death of the boy.

Settlers perpetrated some 34 attacks against Palestinians, resulting in 30 injuries and damage to property. Palestinians perpetrated some 29 attacks against Israeli settlers and other civilians in the West Bank, resulting in five injuries and damage to property.

The olive harvest is a key economic, social and cultural event, but, each year, the ability of Palestinians to harvest is compromised due to access restrictions, attacks and intimidation. Since the harvest season began on 7 October, 23 farmers were injured, over 1,000 olive trees were burnt or otherwise damaged, and several tons of produce stolen, in 19 separate incidents. Israeli authorities must ensure smooth access of farmers to their land and to protect all farmers and their property from attacks.

I am also deeply concerned over the deteriorating health condition of Maher Al-Akhras, a Palestinian detainee who has been on a hunger strike for over 90 days in protest of his administrative detention. On 12 October, Al-Akhras rejected an offer by the Israeli authorities whereby he would only be released on 26 November, the original end date of his detention order, in return for immediately ending his hunger strike. To date, there has been no agreement to end the standoff.

Let me reiterate that all held in administrative detention should be promptly charged and tried in a court of law or released without delay.

On the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, I want to acknowledge the efforts made by civil society and the Palestinian Government, in partnership with the UN, on advancing the Women, Peace, and Security agenda despite the challenging political and humanitarian context. This month, the Palestinian Ministry of Women Affairs completed development of its second-generation National Action Plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325.

On 18 October, at a ceremony in Manama, Israel and Bahrain established formal diplomatic relations signing eight bilateral agreements, including a “Joint Communiqué on the establishment of diplomatic, peaceful, and friendly relations.” The document affirms that the two parties will

“continue their efforts to achieve a just, comprehensive, and enduring resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

On 20 October, the first official delegation from the United Arab Emirates visited Israel. The delegation signed four bilateral agreements with Israeli counterparts, including an agreement on mutual visa exemptions for Israeli and Emirati nationals.

On 23 October, the leaders of the United States, Israel and the Republic of the Sudan announced that the Governments of Israel and Sudan had agreed to end the state of belligerence between their countries and to normalize relations. I join the Secretary-General in expressing hope that this agreement will further cooperation, enhance economic and trade relations, and bring about new opportunities to advance peace and economic prosperity in the wider Horn of Africa and Middle East regions.

I am concerned, Mr. President, by statements by senior Palestinian officials saying that Muslims entering the al-Aqsa mosque on the basis of the recent normalization agreements are not welcome and warning of dangerous consequences of such visits. I note the delicate balance of the status quo at the Holy Compound. Any forms of politicization that may increase the risk of an escalation within the sanctity of its grounds must be rejected.

...

In closing, let me say that if the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that the virus feeds off instability and expands absent a coherent, coordinated approach to contain it.

The United Nations will continue to advocate for increased cooperation in response to the health emergency, including urging the parties to work together to mitigate risks, save lives and avoid unilateral actions that undermine these efforts.

At the same time, the pandemic has heightened the urgency of exploring all avenues to make progress towards resolving the conflict and ending the occupation in line with relevant UN resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements in pursuit of achieving a vision of two States. The Palestinian President Abbas has called for an international conference to restart the peace process with this specific goal of two states in sight -- Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestinian State – within secure and recognized borders, based on the 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

Often in this Council we have spoken of the need to act, of the urgency to act, to prevent the collapse of the two-State paradigm and to give hope to the Palestinian people – particularly the youth – that, a quarter of century after Oslo, their right to statehood can be achieved through peaceful negotiations. This is something young Israelis want too. No one wants war and conflict. But if leaders are unable to deliver on the hope for peace, this will only feed radicals and extremists.

I sincerely hope that new avenues of cooperation to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace will emerge. The normalization agreements between Israel and three Arab States must help create such opportunities. As we have seen in statements from Amman to Cairo - from international partners and the League of Arab States - the commitment to the two-State solution, in line with UN resolutions and international law, continues to be affirmed by broad regional and international consensus.

XI. CHAIR OF THE PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE SUBMITS STATEMENT TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

Cheikh Niang, Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, submitted a [statement](#) to the Security Council for its meeting of 26 October.

First, I would like to congratulate the Russian Federation for its professional handling of this month's Presidency of the Council in the face of ongoing challenges due to the pandemic.

As the United Nations marked the 75th anniversary of the signing of the Charter, the question of Palestine, whose fate is inherently bound to the history and existence of the Organization, tragically remains unresolved. Today, while their territory remains under continuing occupation and millions of Palestine refugees remain exiled from their homes, the Palestinian people face ever increasing new challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused loss of Palestinian lives, compounded by social distress and economic downturn, and concerns about recent developments, including Israel's ongoing annexation threats, have put a just and durable solution of the question of Palestine in deep peril.

Since my last statement to the Council in July, the signing of agreements between Israel and the United Arab Emirates on 15 September, and between Israel and Bahrain on 18 October, has brought a change in relations in the Middle East. The State of Palestine subsequently rejected the agreements because, while ostensibly purporting to halt Israeli de jure annexation plans of more Palestinian territory, the Palestinian people had been excluded from the process while the threat of annexation and the occupation of their territory continues, as do the colonization measures that entrench the occupation and facilitate annexation, all in grave breach of international law. Some Member States and partners also expressed concern about the unilateral character of the action as others welcomed the decision by Israel to suspend its planned annexation and called for the permanent halting of annexation plans and measures. The Secretary-General expressed the hope that the agreements could create an opportunity for Israeli and Palestinian leaders to re-engage in meaningful negotiations to realize a two-State solution in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements.

Later, at the general debate of the 75th General Assembly in September, we heard countless statements reaffirming support for the right of the Palestinian people to selfdetermination and freedom and for the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders and firmly opposing Israeli annexation.

The Committee calls for the total halt of any annexation plans by Israel, the occupying Power, and supports any initiatives, including a possible international peace conference, as repeatedly called for by Palestinian President Abbas, under the auspices of an expanded Quartet, that would allow for the re-engagement of the parties and the launch of a credible political horizon. The goal of seeing 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; we must double our efforts in that direction and prevent that the current health emergency and socio-economic crisis push this issue to the backburner.

The Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov, in his 29 September briefing to the Council, stated that the implementation of SC resolution 2334 (2016) has not seen any significant progress. Israel's continued military occupation of the Palestinian territory is facilitating illegal settlement activity, a situation confirmed by the Special Coordinator's followup warning statement of 15 October issued in response to Israel's advancing plans to illegally build nearly 5,000 settlement units in locations deep inside the occupied West Bank. Settlement construction is illegal under international law and remains one of the major obstacles to peace and it must stop.

A spike in expropriations, seizures and demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures was also reported, alongside daily violence – including Israeli settler violence – against Palestinian civilians; at the same time, rockets fired from Gaza into Israel continued, highlighting a persistent risk of military escalation, which must be prevented at all costs. The arrest and imprisonment of Palestinian civilians, including children, by Israel also continues, including the use of administrative detention, and the abuse and neglect of Palestinian prisoners persists. We call on Israel to halt these illegal actions.

The Committee remains concerned by the USD 200 million financial shortfall faced by UNRWA at a time when the needs of the 5.6 million Palestine refugees supported by the Agency are increasing because of the global pandemic. We urge donors to provide UNRWA with sufficient and predictable funding for its vital core activities and emergency appeals.

The Committee notes with concern the rising COVID-19 infection rates in the Occupied Palestinian Territory – as well as in Israel – and urges increased support by the donor community to address increased needs and vulnerabilities of the population in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza.

The Committee is heartened by recent steps taken toward Palestinian unity and welcomes plans to hold legislative and presidential elections in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in the near future.

The 2020 report of the Committee – General Assembly document A/75/35 of 1 September 2020 – offers a list of recommendations to advance efforts aimed at achieving a just solution to the question of Palestine, including actions by the Committee, other intergovernmental bodies including the Human Rights Council, by Member States and regional organizations and UN entities; enhanced advocacy and outreach activities with the international community and civil society; and specific support action in response to the COVID-19 pandemic response. The Committee welcomes the Secretary-General's clear position on the question of Palestine, based on international law, countless United Nations

resolutions and the search for a just solution, which echoes our own long-held stance on the matter.

Let me conclude by reaffirming the need for our collective show of solidarity with the Palestinian people and their resilience and our commitment to continue to exert our best efforts toward the achievement of a just, comprehensive and durable solution to their cause. In this regard, the Committee invites all Member States to attend this year's commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 1 December, and for all to use this special event to recommit and revitalize our collective efforts to resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which remains the key to lasting peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

XII. UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR CALLS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO ADOPT NEW ACCOUNTABILITY CULTURE REGARDING THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION

On 26 October, Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, issued the following [press release](#).

The 53 year old occupation of the Palestinian Territory will only come to a just and complete end with the international community imposing accountability measures on Israel to enforce the many resolutions on the issue adopted by the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, a UN human rights expert said today.

“An entirely new accountability culture is sorely needed by the United Nations to bridge the enormous gap between promise and performance,” said Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur for the Situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967. “The UN has adopted hundreds of resolutions on this occupation, and these hundreds of resolutions have been ignored and defied by Israel, the occupying power.”

Building on his October 2019 report to the General Assembly on accountability, the Special Rapporteur pointed out that the resolutions and decisions of the Security Council and the General Assembly are the bedrock of the international legal consensus respecting the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

The Special Rapporteur observed that the Security Council – over the past 50 years – had adopted more than 30 binding resolutions on the Israeli occupation respecting the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the prohibition against territorial annexation, and the illegality of the Israeli settlements. Israel has accepted and applied none of them.

“As a solemn condition of joining the United Nations, member states commit themselves – in Article 25 of the UN Charter – to accepting and carrying out the decisions and directions of the Security Council,” said Mr. Lynk. “If the rule of law matters, then so does accountability. If the Security Council is to speak with authority, then the disobedience of Council decisions must have consequences.”

The new report also examined the influential role of businesses and corporations in sustaining the Israeli settlement economy.

“The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, adopted in 2011, call upon corporations to exercise “enhanced due diligence” when operating in conflict zones and occupations,” noted the Special Rapporteur.

“The Security Council has stated that the settlements are a flagrant violation under international law,” said Mr. Lynk. “I would add that they are a presumptive war crime under the 1998 Rome Statute. The settlements are the engine of the Israeli occupation.

In these circumstances, it is impossible for businesses to be engaged, directly or indirectly, with the settlements while honouring their human rights commitments.”

He asked all UN member states to ensure that all corporate activities regulated by them should cease any and all commercial relationships with the settlements. As well, he asked UN member states to prohibit the entry of all Israeli settlement goods and services into their domestic markets.

XIII. STATE OF PALESTINE MOVES FORWARD IN PROMOTING WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN PEACE AND SECURITY

On 28 October, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) issued the following [press release](#).

Under the auspices of H.E. Prime Minister Dr. Mohammad Shtayyeh and to mark the 20th anniversary of United Nation Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR1325) on Women, Peace and Security, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, in partnership with UN Women, presented Palestine’s second National Action Plan (NAP) to implement UNSCR1325 and further consolidate women’s participation in decision-making and peacebuilding.

In 2016, the State of Palestine was the second Arab state to adopt a National Action Plan (NAP), recognizing the disproportionate impact of conflict and occupation on Palestinian women and girls and their vital participation in peacebuilding. Today, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs launched Palestine’s second national plan on women, peace and security.

The announcement was made at a high-level conference that brought together, in-person and virtually, Palestinian government representatives, senior women politicians, feminist leaders and representatives from member states and civil society at the local, regional and international level.

With the generous support from the Government of Norway, the second-generation NAP will inform the implementation, financing and monitoring of current and future initiatives to support women’s participation in peace and security for the coming years (2020-2023).

“The State of Palestine is committed to reinforcing its commitments to women, peace and security within the framework of the global agenda. We are also keen to make progress on that through the development of the Second National Plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325.” Said H.E. Dr. Amal Hamad, Minister of Women’s Affairs. “We are also looking forward to the implementation of UN resolutions to achieve peace, justice, security and prosperity for all

Palestinian women who continue to suffer the consequences of the occupation and conflict. Palestinian women must be equal partners in decision-making at all levels, and we are working to strengthen their participation in state and peace building based on international legitimacy.”

The participants took stock of the successes and challenges of the first NAP and highlighted efforts and interventions by the Higher National Committee on UNSCR 1325 and the National Civil Society Coalition on UNSCR 1325 led by the General Union of Palestinian Women.

During the implementation of the first NAP, the State of Palestine developed its first voluntary report on UNSCR 1325 and submitted seven reports, statements and communications to human rights bodies on the gendered impact of occupation and conflict on Palestinian women and girls. Many strategic initiatives were also taken to enhance the participation of women in political and decision-making processes.

The high-level conference also provided an opportunity for the participants to make recommendations for the meaningful implementation of the second NAP, including setting up a multi-stakeholder financing mechanism, conducting an annual evaluation and review of the NAP implementation and establishing a robust NAP monitoring and evaluation system. The participants also called for enforcing interlinkages between the NAP and other important international frameworks and agreements to ensure higher levels of women’s protection and participation.

“Increasing the representation and participation of Palestinian women in the security sector can help shape security institutions that are responsive and representative of the Palestinian society at large, including women”, said Ms. Maryse Guimond, UN Women Special Representative for Palestine. “Similarly, the participation of Palestinian women in managing crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic ensures that the response and recovery efforts effectively address the specific needs of women and girls and leave no one behind.”

Over the past years, UN Women and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs have joined forces to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Palestine and called for a stronger and more equitable role for Palestinian women in the security sector, crisis management, reconciliation efforts and in Palestinian general elections

XIV. ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION WELCOMES INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR A PEACE CONFERENCE ON TWO-STATE SOLUTION

On 28 October, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) General Secretariat issued the following [press release](#).

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), has welcomed the positive international position, that supported Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas’s call to hold an international peace conference, in cooperation with the International Quartet, with participation of all concerned parties, to achieve the vision of the two-state solution in accordance with international law, United Nations resolutions and the agreed upon references, leading to an end to the Israeli occupation, and the achievement of The two-state solution based on the June 4, 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.

The Islamic Group participated in the session via a speech delivered on behalf of the OIC, in the open session held by the Security Council on Monday, October 26, 2020 to discuss the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's call. The Islamic Group joined the UN Security Council member states that backed and supported President Mahmoud Abbas's call. It also expressed its rejection of annexation and colonial settlement measures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

XV. UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR CALLS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AS ISRAEL RECORDS HIGHEST RATE OF ILLEGAL SETTLEMENT APPROVALS

On 30 October, Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, issued the following [press release](#).

The Israeli government's recent announcement that it has approved construction of nearly 5,000 more settlement homes in the occupied Palestinian territory is a grave breach of international law, an independent human rights expert said today.

"The international community must answer this grave breach of international law with more than mere criticism," said Michael Lynk, UN special rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967. Earlier this month, a defence ministry planning committee approved plans for 4,948 more homes.

"As the Israeli settlements continue to devour the land that is meant for the independent Palestinian state, the international community observes, it sometimes objects, but it does not act," said Lynk. "It is high time for accountability."

The latest announcement means that the Israeli government has approved more than 12,150 settlements this year, he said. According to the advocacy group Peace Now, this would be the highest number of annual approvals by Israel since Peace Now began to record the figures in 2012.

"While Israel may have shelved its plans for the de jure annexation of the settlements in August, it is continuing with its de facto annexation of the Palestinian territory through this unrelenting settlement growth," Lynk said. "Both de facto and de jure annexation of occupied territory are clear violations of the Charter of the United Nations and the 1998 Rome Statute on the International Criminal Court. This acceleration of settlement growth worsens an already precarious human rights situation on the ground."

On at least six occasions since 1979, the United Nations Security Council has said that the Israeli settlements are a "flagrant violation under international law" and have "no legal validity."

In 2016, in Resolution 2334, the Security Council demanded that Israel "immediately and completely cease all settlement activities." However, since 2017, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process has reported to the Security Council 14 times that Israel has taken no steps to satisfy this obligation in compliance with Resolution 2334.

Lynk also expressed deep concern that the United States amended its existing scientific agreements with Israel on 27 October to allow joint funding for projects in the illegal Israeli

settlements. Previously, the agreements only permitted funding to projects within Israel's internationally recognized pre-1967 borders.

“These changes to the bilateral agreements between the United States and Israel fly in the face of Resolution 2334, which calls upon all member states to recognize the illegality of the settlements, and to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967,” he said.

“The international rule of law matters and, if we are to avoid the rule of the jungle, it must be obeyed. And if the rule of law matters, then so must accountability,” Lynk said. “If the Security Council is to speak with authority, then the disobedience of Council directions must have consequences.”

He recalled that in 2016, former UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon asked: “Is this all meant to simply run out the clock? [The Palestinians] ask: ‘are we meant to watch as the world endlessly debates how to divide land while it disappears before our very eyes’?”

At the same time that approvals of new settlement homes are accelerating, Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes and properties is also increasing, Lynk said.

According to Palestinian human rights organization Al-Haq, 177 properties were demolished in the three months of July, August and September, nearly as many as the 186 destroyed in the first six months of the year.

The 76 Palestinian-owned structures destroyed in September displaced 136 Palestinians and affected the livelihood of 300, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA.

The demolitions also violate international humanitarian law and contribute to the coercive atmosphere in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Lynk said.

“Accountability must be on the agenda,” he said. “Settlement products should be prohibited in the international marketplace. Agreements, existing and proposed, with Israel, should be reviewed. The UN Database and the current investigations at the International Criminal Court should be supported.”