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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

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Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations

Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/126](#), contains an assessment of the assistance received by the Palestinian people and proposals for responding to unmet needs. It provides a description of the efforts made by the United Nations, in cooperation with the Government of Palestine, donors and civil society, to support Palestinian people and institutions.

The reporting period (1 April 2020–31 March 2021) was characterized by continued tensions and violence and the persistence of negative trends, further impeding the resumption of meaningful negotiations and affecting prospects for peace. The fiscal performance of the Palestinian Authority was adversely affected by a combination of factors, including the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and a decline in overseas development assistance, leaving needs unmet to a significant degree. The dire situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was further compounded by a significant deterioration in the relationship between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and the decision by the Palestinian Authority to suspend coordination with Israel in response to the statement by Israel that it intended to annex territory in the occupied West Bank.

During the reporting period, the United Nations continued to coordinate and deliver humanitarian and development assistance to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Despite the challenges, the United Nations system raised a total of \$295.1 million for the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan for the Occupied Palestinian Territory and, overall, \$380.7 million in humanitarian assistance were delivered to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Some of that assistance was targeted at Palestinian

* [A/76/50](#).



individuals and communities in areas beyond the reach of the Palestinian Authority, including East Jerusalem and Area C, in the occupied West Bank, and Gaza.

Under the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, \$417 million is sought to provide basic food, protection, health care, shelter, water and sanitation to 1.8 million Palestinians who have been identified as those most in need of humanitarian interventions across the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/126](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its seventy-sixth session, through the Economic and Social Council, a report on the implementation of the resolution, containing an assessment of the assistance actually received by the Palestinian people, an assessment of the needs still unmet and specific proposals for responding effectively to them. The reporting period is from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

2. Information on the political and socioeconomic situation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory is provided in several periodic reports prepared by United Nations entities and submitted to various United Nations bodies, including the monthly Security Council briefings by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process; the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan; the annual report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); and the biannual reports of the Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians.

3. The humanitarian, economic and development needs of the Palestinian people are reflected in several complementary strategic and resource mobilization documents. Under the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, \$417 million is sought to provide basic food, protection, health care, shelter, water and sanitation to 1.8 million Palestinians who have been identified as those most in need of support and who can be reached under the operating conditions prevailing across the Occupied Palestinian Territory. That is significantly more than the \$350 million sought in 2019 but slightly below the \$426 million sought in 2020, which was a combination of the original request of \$348 million under the Humanitarian Response Plan and \$78 million requested in subsequent appeals related to COVID-19. The elevated amount reflects the severity of the health and economic crisis facing the Occupied Palestinian Territory. For the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan, the United Nations system raised a total of \$295.1 million. Overall, \$380.7 million were delivered in humanitarian assistance to the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

4. In the reporting period, the global pandemic continued to exacerbate existing humanitarian needs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and reverse development gains, with far-reaching socioeconomic consequences.

5. The inter-agency COVID-19 response plan for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, released in April 2020 with two additional updates, called for \$78 million to respond to the public health needs and immediate humanitarian consequences of the pandemic. During the reporting period, the humanitarian country team, led by the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, commenced implementation of the plan, in support of the Government's efforts to prevent further transmission of the disease, provide adequate care for patients and their families, and mitigate the worst effects of the pandemic.

6. With regard to development, the United Nations country team published its COVID-19 development system response plan in July 2020. The country team immediately began implementation of \$140 million in COVID-19 development response programming, to be delivered over the subsequent 12 to 18 months.

Approximately two thirds of that amount was funded using existing or reprogrammed resources. In addition to the \$140 million in direct programming, the country team identified \$45 million in “scalable” support programmes for affected households and small and medium-sized enterprises, comprising a portfolio of cash-for-work programmes, cash transfer programmes, microfinance and revolving loan support, and direct support to smallholder agricultural producers.

7. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2018–2022 contains the collective vision and response of the United Nations to the national development plan of the Government of Palestine contained in the Palestinian National Policy Agenda for the period 2017–2022. The Framework places the Palestinian people at the centre of development programming, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and requires financial resources of approximately \$1.26 billion over five years.

8. Throughout the reporting period, the Office of the Special Coordinator continued its efforts to support conflict prevention and a return to peace negotiations, and to promote coordination among the Government of Palestine, the United Nations, the international community and the Government of Israel.

II. Overview of the current situation

A. Political context

9. The reporting period was marked by a significantly deteriorated socioeconomic situation due, in large part, to the impact of the pandemic. The period was also characterized by the continued military occupation by Israel of Palestinian territory and the absence of a political process to resolve the conflict and end illegal settlement activity in the occupied West Bank and demolitions of Palestinian structures; the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza in connection with Israeli closures; and other unilateral actions that undermine peace efforts.

10. Since the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020, altogether 270,878 cases have been diagnosed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, leading to 2,881 deaths. In Israel, there were 832,350 cases and 6,186 deaths. The Palestinian and Israeli authorities imposed prolonged lockdowns and strict movement restrictions to control the spread of the virus. All sides worked closely with the United Nations and its partners to ensure that equipment and supplies, and, more recently, COVID-19 vaccines, were delivered to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

11. In May 2020, in response to the statement by Israel that it intended to annex parts of the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian Authority announced that coordination with Israeli authorities had been terminated and that it would not receive the clearance funds that Israel collects on its behalf under the Oslo agreements. Those clearance funds amount to 65 to 75 per cent of the total revenues of the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Authority restored coordination and the transfer of clearance revenues on 17 November, after Israel suspended its annexation plans.

12. The Secretary-General welcomed the agreement between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, under which Israeli annexation plans for parts of the occupied West Bank were suspended, and expressed the hope that it would create an opportunity for Israeli and Palestinian leaders to re-engage in meaningful negotiations that would realize a two-State solution in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements. Israel later also signed agreements with Morocco and the Sudan under which relations were normalized.

13. In Gaza, the relative calm between Palestinian militants and Israel was maintained. Nonetheless, in August, Palestinian militants resumed their launching of incendiary balloons from Gaza towards Israel, sometimes escalating to launching rockets and mortars. Israel retaliated by striking targets in Gaza and temporarily tightening the closures until, at the end of the month, a temporary de-escalation was achieved. The United Nations continued to lead diplomatic efforts to prevent a violent escalation, in close coordination with Egypt. These efforts were supported with generous assistance from Qatar, which allowed for a continuous supply of fuel for the Gaza power plant, the sponsoring of projects and financial assistance.

14. There was progress during the reporting period towards holding long-delayed Palestinian elections. Between September and November, Fatah and Hamas held bilateral discussions in Istanbul, Turkey, and subsequently in Cairo. On 15 January 2021, the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, issued a decree by which he ordered legislative and presidential elections and elections for the Palestinian National Council to be held in 2021 and beginning with legislative elections on 22 May. The Secretary-General welcomed the decree, calling it a “crucial step towards Palestinian unity, giving renewed legitimacy to national institutions, including a democratically elected Parliament and Government in Palestine.” On 17 February, when the Central Elections Commission closed voter registration, a total of 2.6 million voters had registered, 93 per cent of all those eligible to vote. Approximately 40 per cent of registered voters are under the age of 30.

15. Illegal settlement activities continued throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Israeli authorities advanced plans for 6,800 housing units in settlements, 600 of which were to be located in East Jerusalem. That was about half of the number for which plans were advanced during the previous reporting period (13,700 units, of which 1,300 in East Jerusalem). Tenders were announced for 2,100 units, compared with 2,400 during the previous reporting period. One reason for the decrease was an eight-month hiatus in the advancement of new plans that lasted from February to October 2020 in the context of Israeli plans to annex parts of the West Bank. During that period, the publication of a tender for 1,200 settlement housing units in the strategic location of Giv’at Hamatos was put on hold but ultimately opened for bidding on 15 November; the winning bids were announced on 20 January 2021. Overall, about 60 per cent of the units for which plans were advanced or approved or for which tenders were announced during the reporting period are to be built in outlying locations, deep inside the occupied West Bank. The rate of settlement construction in Area C declined from an average of 132 construction starts per month during the previous reporting period to 75 between April and December 2020.

16. On 25 September 2020, at the general debate of the General Assembly, President Abbas called for an international conference to restart the peace process with the goal of reaching a two-State solution. Throughout the reporting period, the United Nations and its regional and international partners continued to urge Israelis and Palestinians to take concrete actions to restore a legitimate political horizon to end the conflict. The envoys of the Middle East Quartet met several times to discuss the situation on the ground and the latest political developments, as well as to chart a way forward.

B. Humanitarian and socioeconomic context

Economic and fiscal developments

17. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and the suspension of coordination between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, economic conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory sharply deteriorated in 2020. The economic contraction affected both the West Bank and Gaza.

18. The overall unemployment rate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was 25.9 per cent in 2020 (15.7 per cent in the West Bank and 46.6 per cent in Gaza), compared with 24 per cent in 2019 (13.7 per cent in the West Bank; 42.7 per cent in Gaza). The participation of women in the labour force remains among the lowest in the world, at below 20 per cent.

19. Prior to the pandemic, approximately 110,000 Palestinians legally commuted to work in Israel and the wages of Palestinian workers in Israel and the settlements accounted for approximately one third of all consumer demand in the West Bank, a significant driver of the Palestinian economy. While large parts of the Israeli economy were shut down for significant stretches of 2020 owing to the pandemic, Palestinian workers commuting into Israel faced both lower demand for their labour and unpredictable public health restrictions on their movements. During the first lockdown, in the spring of 2020, around 150,000 Palestinians lost their jobs, of whom 41,000 had been employed in Israel and the settlements. However, throughout the period, Israel put in place protocols such as granting extended work permits to allow more than 40,000 workers from the West Bank to commute to their jobs. In addition, on 4 May 2020, Israel approved new regulations and enforcement guidelines imposing the obligation on employers in Israel to provide medical insurance and appropriate accommodation for those Palestinian workers during their stay. In March 2021, Israel launched a vaccination campaign for Palestinian workers in Israel.

20. The ability of the Palestinian Authority to address Palestinian development challenges was greatly constrained by several factors including the impact of the pandemic and a deterioration in its relations with Israel. The temporary suspension of coordination, together with unresolved issues related to the withholding by Israel of clearance revenues in response to payments made by the Palestinian Authority to security prisoners, created an unprecedented fiscal challenge. The Palestinian Authority adopted emergency austerity measures to cope with the loss of a majority of its revenues. Owing to the pandemic and the collapse of coordination, the Palestinian economy contracted around 10 to 12 per cent in 2020 – one of the largest annual contractions since the Palestinian Authority had been established in 1994.

Humanitarian developments

21. The suspension of coordination, which lasted until 18 November 2020, caused additional challenges to the public health and humanitarian responses to the pandemic. The United Nations temporarily assumed responsibilities for processing deliveries of humanitarian aid and related equipment and for facilitating the exit of patients from the Gaza Strip, actions that would ordinarily have been coordinated bilaterally between Israeli and Palestinian authorities.

22. By the end of 2020, about 2 million Palestinians were estimated to suffer from severe or moderate food insecurity, 1.4 million in Gaza and 600,000 in the West Bank. Those numbers represent an increase of about 300,000 people compared with 2019. The COVID-19-related restrictions have further undermined access to social services across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, with greater impact on the most vulnerable including the elderly, persons with disabilities, cancer patients in Gaza, Bedouin communities in Area C, households isolated by the separation wall and undocumented residents of East Jerusalem. Mental health service providers have reported a surge in cases of gender-based violence affecting women and children.

23. In the reporting period, 19 Palestinians, including six children, were killed by Israeli forces (including 11 perpetrators or alleged perpetrators of attacks against Israelis). A total of 1,662 Palestinians were injured, among them women and children, of whom 171 were injured by live ammunition, 373 by rubber bullets and 937 by tear gas inhalation requiring medical treatment. Those figures represent a decrease from

the previous reporting period that was attributed to the halt in the Great March of Return demonstrations at the Gaza-Israel perimeter fence since December 2019 and to a decrease in the number of escalations between Israel and armed groups in Gaza. In the West Bank, on at least 374 occasions, assailants believed or known to be Israeli settlers either injured Palestinians (136 injuries in 88 incidents) or damaged or stole their property (286 incidents), slightly more than the numbers recorded in 2019, but significantly more than in previous years. There were also 3 Israeli fatalities in the reporting period, 1 soldier and 2 civilians; 104 Israelis were injured, including 8 women and 9 children.

24. The demolition of Palestinian residential, livelihood and service infrastructure in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continued during the reporting period. Israeli authorities demolished, seized or forced the demolition of 1,004 Palestinian structures across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, citing the absence of building permits issued by Israel, which are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain. The number is 72 per cent higher than in the previous reporting period.

Movement, humanitarian access and operational space

25. Humanitarian operations in the West Bank continued to be hampered by the imposition by Israel of physical obstacles (such as the barrier, checkpoints, roadblocks and gates) and administrative barriers (such as the permit regime). These restrictions affect access to East Jerusalem and other areas between the barrier and the Green Line.

26. Severe restrictions were imposed on the movement of people in the context of the pandemic. Those were compounded by locally imposed lockdowns, the suspension of coordination and the internal political divide. In the reporting period, there were an average of 900 exits per month from Gaza by permit holders through the Erez crossing point controlled by Israel, 95 per cent fewer than in the previous reporting period and the lowest since 2012.

27. Kerem Shalom remained the primary crossing for the movement of commodities to and from Gaza. On average, 8,841 truckloads of goods entered Gaza per month during the reporting period, slightly more than in the previous reporting period. An average of 291 trucks per month exited Gaza, mostly to West Bank markets.

28. The Rafah crossing was closed during most of 2020. About 25,400 exits were recorded there throughout the reporting period, down from 77,520 in the previous reporting period. From 9 February 2021 until the end of the reporting period, the crossing was open five days a week.

29. The fishing zone off the coast of Gaza largely remained at 15 nautical miles in the south and 6 in the north, but was occasionally expanded and restricted, and sometimes completely closed, during 2020. These and other restrictions were imposed by Israel in response to violence carried out by armed groups or individuals in Gaza.

Barrier

30. Palestinian farmers continued to face difficulties in obtaining Israeli authorization to access their land in restricted areas behind the barrier in the seam zone, compounded by the suspension of coordination between the Palestinian Authority and Israeli authorities. The approval rate for permit applications by landowners to access their land in the seam zone fell from 71 per cent of applications in 2014 to 37 per cent in 2019. During the 2020 olive harvest, 69 gates and 4 checkpoints were designated for agricultural access, compared with 73 and 5, respectively, in 2019.

III. United Nations response

A. Human and social development

31. The United Nations continued to coordinate and deliver humanitarian and development assistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Some of that assistance was targeted at Palestinian individuals and communities in areas beyond the reach of the Palestinian Authority, including East Jerusalem and Area C, in the occupied West Bank, and Gaza. The United Nations focused its efforts on the most vulnerable segments of the population.

Education

32. UNRWA provided free primary education to 286,645 students in 278 elementary and preparatory schools in Gaza and to a further 45,883 students in 96 elementary and preparatory schools in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

33. The pandemic has severely disrupted education. UNRWA schools were closed in Gaza and the West Bank from March until the end of the 2019/20 school year, in line with the decision of the Palestinian Authority. During the 2020/21 school year, temporary closures continued in schools with high numbers of COVID-19 cases.

34. Ten UNRWA schools were upgraded in Gaza, a further 10 UNRWA schools were rehabilitated and 1 was reconstructed in the West Bank.

35. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) worked with the Ministry of Education to support around 50,000 education staff in 2,259 schools in operationalizing and implementing the COVID-19 prevention and control in school protocol. Furthermore, 1,670 schools were provided with essential hygiene and cleaning materials, an effort that reached nearly 62,250 students.

36. In partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Empowerment, the private sector and academia, UNICEF supported 10 teams of young people in designing solutions to improve education and civic engagement through initiatives under the Generation Unlimited youth challenge.

37. UNICEF continued its partnership with local partners and supported 1,585 adolescents in acquiring entrepreneurial and civic engagement skills.

38. UNDP supported improved access to education for 21,308 students at 55 schools in marginalized communities in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Some 10,000 university students benefited from improved learning environments because of the rehabilitation of Al-Quds University. In Gaza, solar systems were installed in three public schools for girls, which benefited approximately 3,008 students. Also in Gaza, 389 undergraduate students benefited from the Al Fakhoora scholarship and empowerment programme.

39. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) supported the upgrade of the Ministry of Education website and its e-learning platform to enable greater interaction with the community and students.

40. UNESCO, the Ministry of Education and partners finalized a manual on the training of inclusive education trainers and started the training of supervisors and counsellors, which will be scaled up to around 3,000 teachers.

41. In Gaza, the Mine Action Service provided training to over 15,000 persons at risk of being harmed by explosive remnants of war. The Mine Action Service continues to provide support regarding the explosive ordnance disposal requirements of all United Nations school facilities in Gaza.

Health

42. The World Health Organization (WHO) continued to promote universal health coverage and the right to health through the strengthening of the health-care system, the monitoring of barriers to health-care access and attacks against health-care facilities, and advocacy to address policies and practices affecting the health rights of Palestinians. WHO continued its work to enhance information systems, build capacities through the implementation of a regional framework for action and undertook assessments of the management and performance of the primary health-care system.

43. WHO supported the implementation of a system-strengthening approach to reduce neonatal mortality. Early essential newborn care has been put in place in five government hospitals and four non-governmental maternity hospitals in Gaza. WHO worked with the Ministry of Health to develop and implement standard operating procedures for the prevention and control of infections for pregnant women and newborns.

44. During the suspension of the coordination between the Palestinian Authority and Israeli authorities, WHO established a temporary mechanism for patient and companion permit applications through which over 1,400 patient applications were submitted and over 1,600 companion applications.

45. UNRWA conducted approximately 2.7 million face-to-face primary health-care patient consultations at its 22 health-care facilities in Gaza and over 756,000 consultations in the West Bank at its 43 health-care facilities. The number of face-to-face consultations declined steeply compared with the previous reporting period because of the pandemic.

46. In addition, 23,067 Palestine refugees in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and a further 13,924 Palestine refugees in Gaza received assistance for secondary and tertiary health-care costs. UNRWA continued to prioritize care for the 98,373 patients in Gaza and 42,177 patients in the West Bank diagnosed with non-communicable disease. Services were adapted to protect those at high risk of contracting COVID-19 by introducing home delivery of medicines and launching a mobile application with regard to non-communicable diseases.

47. UNICEF conducted a mapping study of the maternal, neonatal and child health-care services in Gaza, targeting 41 governmental facilities.

48. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health in updating the national neonate health-care protocols, which included the early identification of developmental delays and disabilities in children, and the principles of the baby-friendly hospital initiative. UNICEF ensured the uninterrupted procurement of vaccines and sustained the continued vaccination of children. With WHO, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health by developing the comprehensive multi-year immunization plan for the period 2020–2024.

49. UNFPA provided capacity development for some 595 health-care providers on essential sexual and reproductive health services. Over 10,000 women were provided with sexual and reproductive health services, including breast cancer screening, while awareness-raising activities on sexual and reproductive health reached 100,000 people.

50. Through the upgrading of the chemotherapy department at the Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem, UNDP has provided access to health-care services for about 3,200 cancer patients per year.

51. In Gaza, UNDP installed two microwave systems for medical waste treatment and 15 autoclaves, provided medical waste transport vehicles and trained over 6,110 health-care workers.

52. Also in Gaza, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) supported the installation of a 715-kilovolt-ampere (kVA) solar power system at the European Hospital in Gaza, thus contributing a sustainable source of electricity and reducing the amount of interruptions of health-care services.

Water and sanitation

53. In 2020, UNICEF reached 320,650 children and their families; they benefited from having safe drinking water and sanitation services and from the promotion of safe hygiene. The sanitation works in Gaza were completed, which provided 70,000 people with safe sanitation facilities.

54. Together with the Palestinian Water Authority, UNICEF completed the rehabilitation and construction of water networks in the southern part of the West Bank, providing approximately 5,000 people in vulnerable communities with safe drinking water. Also in the southern West Bank, UNICEF provided water for 1,045 children and their caregivers in coordination with local municipalities.

55. UNDP handed over the Khan Younis waste water treatment plant to the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility. The plant, constructed by UNDP, has a capacity of 26,600 cubic metres per day and directly serves 217,000 residents of Khan Younis. UNDP is installing a 7-megawatt-peak solar energy system that will ensure a constant supply of electricity.

56. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supported access to irrigation for 3,000 households in the West Bank and Gaza through the rehabilitation and construction of groundwater wells, rainwater harvesting cisterns, water towers, reservoirs and irrigation wells.

57. UNOPS, in collaboration with UNRWA, is supporting the construction of wastewater collection and storm water drainage systems in Ein el-Sultan refugee camp near Jericho to improve health and hygiene conditions.

58. The Mine Action Service conducted explosive remnants of war risk assessments for water projects implemented by UNICEF and the Office of the Quartet, which helped to clear 15,580 m² of land and benefited vital infrastructure projects.

Employment

59. The UNDP cash-for-work programme in Gaza generated 2,883 short-term jobs totalling approximately 308,409 workdays.

60. UNDP provided financial and technical support to 106 micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza.

61. FAO established a mechanism for supporting private investments in agribusiness by matching investment grants. In the first phase of the initiative in 2020, altogether 105 investments were selected to receive a total of \$4.1 million.

62. FAO provided entrepreneurship training to 400 young Palestinians at four universities to promote the uptake of green jobs among young people and the creation of green enterprises by them.

63. The International Labour Organization (ILO) continued to work on the review of the Palestinian Labour Law. As a result, 16 new amendments and 19 new recommendations have been proposed.

64. ILO trained 163 government officials and staff on occupational safety, and health-related and gender-responsive labour inspection practices.

Targeted social protection

65. In Gaza, UNRWA distributed quarterly food parcels to 98,935 individuals classified as living in abject poverty. Another 36,129 beneficiaries in the West Bank received assistance in the form of cash-based transfers.

66. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) refurbished and rehabilitated four operating shelters for women in the West Bank and Gaza, and standard operating procedures were developed. During the pandemic, awareness-raising activities were conducted on gender-based violence services.

67. The World Food Programme (WFP) continued to support the social safety net programme of the Palestinian Authority by ensuring cash-based transfers and in-kind food distribution for around 350,000 people, and injecting approximately \$4 million into the local economy. In response to the pandemic, WFP scaled up food assistance to support an additional 84,000 people.

68. WFP extended its cash-based transfer assistance to 265 families by targeting vulnerable pregnant and lactating women, and children under five years, in the H2 zone of Hebron, which enabled them to buy food rich in vitamins and minerals.

69. With the Ministry of Social Development, UNICEF launched a social protection response to COVID-19 to support 687 newly impoverished households.

Culture

70. UNESCO rehabilitated five cultural heritage sites and continued the renovation of the Riwaya Museum in Bethlehem. The initiatives created temporary job opportunities totalling 4,000 workdays.

71. UNESCO supported the Ministry of Culture in promoting the resilience of Palestinian artists and the cultural industry by organizing a series of debates focused on young people and emerging technologies, the status of women in culture and the prospects for the independent cultural scene in the State of Palestine.

72. UNDP rehabilitated two historical sites, in Qalandiya and Kafr Aqab, respectively, as part of the employment generation programme. In addition, it rehabilitated 40 shops in the H2 zone of Hebron.

Food security and agriculture

73. FAO increased the productivity of 1,213 small- and medium-scale farmers in agriculture cooperatives in the West Bank with in-kind and technical support, including post-harvest technologies, tractors, planting and harvesting machines, drying facilities and nurseries.

74. FAO began the installation of an off-shore marine cage in waters off Gaza that will be owned by the local community as part of efforts to strengthen the resilience of local fishing communities.

Human rights, women, children and youth

75. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) continued to support the national human rights institution and civil society organizations in building their capacity to engage with the treaty body mechanisms and strengthening their monitoring and follow-up of the implementation by the Government of the State of Palestine of its international human rights treaty obligations.

76. OHCHR worked with governmental institutions, civil society and other United Nations system agencies to ensure the adoption of a human rights-based approach in the response plan to COVID-19 and supported the preparation of guidance notes on issues including detention, justice, women, children and the rights of persons with disabilities.

77. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Social Development in establishing a process to follow up on the concluding observations issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF and OHCHR detailed the reporting process on the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

78. UNICEF contributed to strengthening child protection systems and ensuring that documentation, and prevention and response services were in place to address grave violations. The social work curriculum was finalized. In the national intersectoral violence against children strategy for the period 2021–2023, a framework was defined for ensuring that the capacities of social workers were enhanced and children were better protected.

79. UNICEF and its partners reached 62,140 children with child protection services and with mental health and psychosocial support services.

80. UNICEF, UN-Women and UNDP provided legal aid services, including in connection with the COVID-19 response, to over 21,000 Palestinians, of whom 72 per cent were women and girls. Some 11,500 people benefited from in-person legal awareness activities.

81. UN-Women helped to provide 719 sessions of individual and group therapy and psychological first aid to female inmates detained in the correctional and rehabilitation centres in Janin, Ramallah and Jericho.

82. UN-Women supported the Palestinian Bar Association in Gaza in the development of its gender strategy. Furthermore, 86 lawyers participated in awareness-raising activities to enhance their knowledge about the Personal Status Law, violence against women and international human rights. A total of 184 university students attended awareness-raising sessions on women's rights.

83. With UNFPA support, more than 100,000 young people were reached with empowerment programmes through community-based initiatives, capacity development interventions and community awareness sessions.

84. UNFPA supported two emergency shelters for women in the West Bank and Gaza and fully equipped isolation rooms for receiving new cases during the pandemic. Altogether 70 providers of gender-based violence services were trained on safety and protection protocols for the shift to virtual and telephone services and counselling.

85. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) engaged 40 young women and men from Khan Younis to design a safe and inclusive public space with the use of innovative digital tools and computer games.

86. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) delivered a three-month virtual training on participatory video methodology for 12 young people under the youth crime prevention initiative. In addition, UNODC developed a brochure on forensic medicine services in the State of Palestine.

87. In Gaza, the Mine Action Service implemented a community-based resilience training initiative focusing on women's empowerment, which reached 1,084 individuals, including 788 women.

88. In the West Bank, UNRWA provided counselling and case management services to 148 survivors of gender-based violence and in 181 child protection cases. An additional 118 cases were referred to external services. Immediate assistance was rendered in 63 emergency cases.

89. In Gaza, UNRWA provided mental health and psychosocial support services to 11,104 Palestine refugees and referred 901 Palestine refugee women to legal counsellors.

Environment, housing and urban development

90. UNDP enhanced access to adequate housing for 120 people through the restoration and rehabilitation of 22 houses in East Jerusalem.

91. UNDP developed a comprehensive master plan for the Wadi Gaza coastal wetlands along with an investment needs and park programme development strategy to support native biodiversity, improve water quality, eliminate solid waste and construction debris, and manage flood risk.

92. UN-Habitat delivered spatial planning support targeting 1.5 million Palestinians, mostly living in Area C. Furthermore, UN-Habitat is supporting the formulation and adoption of the flagship national urban policy for the State of Palestine.

93. UNOPS is supporting the construction of a wastewater treatment plant at the Jericho agro-industrial park, which will reduce the load of industrial wastewater generated.

B. United Nations system emergency assistance

94. An estimated 1.8 million Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory needed humanitarian assistance. Given the limited extent of donor contributions, humanitarian agencies continued to streamline and prioritize activities to target the maximum number of vulnerable people in a highly constrained context. To that end, they had three priorities during the reporting period: protecting civilians; providing basic services and better access to resources to enhance livelihoods; and supporting vulnerable Palestinians in coping with the protracted crisis. The inter-agency COVID-19 response plan for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, released in April, was designed to enable effective public health and multisector interventions, with a continued emphasis on supporting those most vulnerable. Its aim is to support the efforts, led by the Government of the State of Palestine, to contain the disease and mitigate its impact.

Emergency agriculture support

95. FAO provided critical emergency agriculture support to more than 3,000 families in Gaza by installing solar energy systems to operate irrigation and poultry and dairy farms, thus ensuring the uninterrupted production of food amid the several electricity crises in Gaza.

Emergency food support

96. UNRWA supported 1,043,173 Palestine refugees in Gaza with in-kind emergency food assistance. Of those, 606,037 were living below the abject poverty line and received 80 per cent of their daily caloric needs. The remaining 437,136 were living between the abject and absolute poverty lines and received 43 per cent of their daily caloric needs. The Agency established a door-to-door delivery of food baskets, stepped up hygiene measures at distribution centres and introduced an appointments system to avoid overcrowding.

97. In the West Bank, UNRWA, in partnership with WFP, provided in-kind food assistance to more than 37,000 members of Bedouin communities. A further 24,218 food-insecure individuals received cash assistance from UNRWA.

98. In Gaza, 24,000 people affected by COVID-19 received support from WFP through the cash-based transfer programme. WFP extended its direct cash assistance to 7,332 people under its pilot multipurpose cash project.

99. UNICEF supported 3,191 young children by assessing their state of nutrition and their early childhood development. Of those children, 109 were treated for malnutrition. A total of 2,732 high-risk pregnant and lactating mothers received 85 educational sessions on various topics.

Emergency education support

100. UNICEF facilitated safe access to schools for 658 children and 32 teachers in the H2 zone of Hebron.

101. With UNICEF support, 36,336 children affected by the humanitarian situation were provided with essential stationery kits to enable them to continue learning.

102. In response to the pandemic, UNRWA adopted blended learning arrangements in all its schools in the West Bank. Approximately 32,200 students accessed remote learning during periods of school closures.

Emergency health support

103. The United Nations and its partners supported the efforts of the Palestinian Government to control the pandemic, reduce the demand for critical hospital care services and provide adequate care for COVID-19 patients. The United Nations and its partners facilitated the procurement and delivery of personal protective equipment, oxygen therapy machines, testing materials and other critical equipment.

104. WHO and UNICEF supported the Government's preparedness efforts for receiving and administering COVID-19 vaccines and facilitated vaccine procurement through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility Advance Market Commitment (COVAX-AMC). The first batch of some 60,000 vaccines was delivered to the West Bank and Gaza on 17 March.

105. WHO provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Health in its efforts to strengthen the health-care system. Activities included the establishment of respiratory triage centres and of quarantine, isolation, and treatment facilities; and the implementation of good practices for disease surveillance, contact tracing, laboratory diagnosis, infection prevention and control, clinical management of critical cases and respiratory triage through the training of front-line workers and the provision of the latest evidence-based guidance.

106. WHO worked with the Ministry of Health to develop the national emergency action plan for responding to mental health needs during the pandemic and conducted a study on the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of Palestinian adolescents.

107. WHO and UNICEF assisted in the formation of a risk communication and community engagement task force comprising the Ministry of Health, the Bank of Palestine, the Palestinian International Cooperation Agency, United Nations system agencies and non-governmental organizations to produce a national health awareness campaign.

108. WHO continued to support pre-hospital response services, emergency departments and acute surgical capacities, as well as limb-saving and limb-reconstructive surgery and treatment services to respond to the long-term needs of those who had sustained injuries during demonstrations of the Great March of Return in Gaza from March 2018 to December 2019.

109. In Gaza, UNRWA provided secondary or tertiary care to 4,865 refugees classified as poor. An additional 4,500 patients received life-saving medicines.

110. In the West Bank and Gaza, UNRWA introduced specific COVID-19 prevention measures, prioritized essential services, established a triage system at its health-care facilities, introduced telemedicine consultations and started home delivery of medicines.

111. UNRWA provided uninterrupted mental health and psychosocial support services in Gaza and the West Bank. Mental health counsellors saw 2,541 adults in Gaza and 3,054 adults in the West Bank.

112. UNICEF ensured that quality essential life-saving health and nutrition services, including the provision of assistive devices, were accessible, available and acceptable to 27,604 high-risk pregnant and lactating women and 112,391 children under the age of five.

113. In Gaza, UNICEF supported the training of around 55 nurses and midwives on the updated postnatal home visit protocol and ensured delivery of postnatal home visit services to 6,579 high-risk pregnant and lactating women and babies. UNICEF-supported interventions contributed to the improved quality of neonatal health-care services in five neonatal health-care units benefiting 14,650 newborns.

114. UNFPA provided an estimated 52,000 people living in Area C of the West Bank with access to essential primary health-care services at mobile clinics.

115. UNDP strengthened the health-care sector response to COVID-19 through the deployment of 143 health-care workers in Gaza and 689 health-care workers in the West Bank.

Emergency housing support

116. UNOPS supported the reconstruction of 310 houses in Gaza and the rehabilitation of another 363.

117. In 2020, UNRWA rehabilitated 396 substandard shelters in Gaza. Following the hostilities in August 2014, a total of 7,445 houses were categorized as totally destroyed and in need of reconstruction. While significant progress has since been achieved, as at January 2021, approximately 350 families have yet to start the reconstruction of their completely destroyed shelters.

118. UNRWA provided cash assistance to 54 displaced families following the demolition of their homes by the Israeli authorities. Furthermore, 284 Palestine refugee families received cash assistance and referrals to meet their humanitarian needs resulting from search-and-arrest operations by Israeli security forces in Palestine refugee camps.

119. UNDP supported 1,397 internally displaced people in returning to their homes following the reconstruction of 215 totally damaged housing units in Gaza, which generated approximately 60,000 workdays.

Emergency income generation

120. From 1 January to 31 December 2020, UNRWA helped to provide 8,105 people with short-term job opportunities through cash-for-work arrangements, which generated approximately 416,192 workdays.

121. UN-Women provided 300 women rendered vulnerable by the pandemic with cash-for-work assistance and job placements in service sectors deemed essential during the lockdown.

Emergency water and sanitation support

122. UNICEF supported the supply of safe drinking water for vulnerable communities and children in the West Bank through the rehabilitation and construction of water pipeline networks in Area C and the creation of hydraulic maps to ensure that water was distributed fairly.

123. UNICEF provided hygiene kits against e-vouchers for 18,000 households in Gaza and 5,000 households in the West Bank. In addition, UNICEF distributed 86,520 water bottles and 2,040 hygiene kits to quarantine and health centres in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. UNICEF provided hygiene materials to schools and conducted COVID-19-related awareness-raising activities for over 3,500 students.

124. UNRWA continued to provide basic water and sanitation services in all eight refugee camps in Gaza and 19 refugee camps in the West Bank. In response to the pandemic, UNRWA enhanced hygiene and sanitation measures, including through the hiring of 300 additional sanitation workers in Gaza and 304 additional workers in the West Bank.

C. United Nations system support to Palestinian institutions

125. UNDP and other United Nations system agencies are working with key stakeholders to support an inclusive, transparent and effective political process for the upcoming electoral cycle. Doing so includes strengthening institutional capacities and promoting the participation of women, young people, persons with disabilities and marginalized communities in line with human rights obligations.

126. WFP provided support to the Ministry of Social Development for making the national social protection system more efficient and robust. WFP, ILO and UNICEF are supporting the Ministry of Social Development in strengthening the capacity of national systems to include persons with disabilities and elderly people.

127. FAO provided technical support to the Ministry of Agriculture for the formulation of a national food and nutrition security policy and a national investment plan for food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture for the period 2020–2022.

128. FAO provided technical support to the Ministry of Agriculture for leading, coordinating and ensuring the functionality of a multi-stakeholder interest group for value chain and markets.

129. UNOPS continued to provide technical assistance to the High Judicial Council in strengthening its capacities for strategic planning and the operational management of facilities.

130. UNODC supported the forensic science laboratory of the Palestinian police, helped to establish a new biological screening section within the laboratory for the examination of biological evidence of sexual and gender-based violence, and provided related training.

131. In 2020, UNODC continued to provide technical assistance to the national programme on drug control, and crime prevention and criminal justice, in the revision of a draft law to combat trafficking in persons in the State of Palestine.

132. UNFPA supported the establishment of an adolescent health unit at the Ministry of Health. The effort was accompanied by the development of a three-year strategic framework on sexual and reproductive health for adolescents and young people endorsed by the Ministry of Health and the Palestinian Coalition for Adolescent Health.

133. With the support of WHO, the Palestinian National Institute of Public Health developed a national COVID-19 surveillance system in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and developed a public-facing website with information about COVID-19.

134. UN-Women worked with the Palestinian police, the High Judicial Council, the Office of the Attorney General, the Supreme Judge Department, and the Ministry of Social Development to support the development of 14 protocols including standard operating procedures, five emergency plans, and gender-responsive guidelines on strategic litigation for violence against women prosecutors.

135. UN-Women facilitated training for 78 judges, police, and prosecutors to enhance their knowledge and skills about implementing laws and policies in line with international standards. Eighteen specialized prosecutors and heads of units for family and juvenile protection were trained in implementing risk assessment policies and ensuring protection for women victims and survivors of violence.

136. UNESCO provided policy advice to the Ministry of Education for the education reform with regard to digital learning, quality assurance, governance and teacher development.

137. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia supported the State of Palestine by organizing the second advanced workshop on the implementation of the institutional gaps assessment methodology in workforce planning.

D. Private sector development

138. In 2020, UNRWA provided 1,790 microfinance loans worth \$2.23 million to Palestine refugees in Gaza. In the West Bank, UNRWA delivered 4,516 loans, valued at \$6.18 million.

139. ILO provided support for the strengthening of the Cooperative Work Agency to fulfil its mandate in serving the cooperative sector as a regulatory administrative body and a centre for promotional services. In 2020, ILO supported the update of the Cooperative Work Agency sectoral strategy (2021–2023).

140. UN-Women provided technical assistance to the financial sector, in particular the banking sector, with the aim of mainstreaming gender in the workplace and improving the access of women to upper-level management positions.

E. Coordination of United Nations assistance

141. Collaboration and coordination between donors and United Nations system entities continued under the auspices of the Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The humanitarian country team met regularly to agree on humanitarian advocacy and response measures. The United Nations country team continued to coordinate its development programming with the priorities outlined in the Palestinian National Policy Agenda for the period 2017–2022.

IV. Donor response to the crisis

Budgetary and fiscal support

142. The Palestinian Authority continued to face severe fiscal constraints, hampering its ability to address humanitarian and development needs. In both 2019 and 2020, Israel and the Palestinian Authority became locked in a dispute over the withholding by Israel of clearance revenues owed to the Palestinian Authority and, in both years, no clearance revenue was transferred for many months. This situation has created an unprecedented fiscal challenge for the Palestinian Authority, which adopted emergency measures in both 2019 and 2020 to cope with the loss of the majority of its revenue. To finance the deficit, the Palestinian Authority relied on donor support and financing from national banks.

143. Donor support to the Occupied Palestinian Territory remained near historic lows, owing in part to an earlier decision by the United States to cease funding UNRWA and to allocate a significant portion of the programme budget of the United States Agency for International Development elsewhere. Based on data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, on a per capita basis, net official development assistance decreased by around 37.3 per cent between 2009 and 2019.

Donor coordination

144. The local aid coordination structure was further reformed and brought under the Office of the Prime Minister. The structure continued to function as the main forum for Government-led coordination of donor-funded development interventions in 15 sectors.

145. The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians held two meetings during the reporting period, in June 2020 and in February 2021, and convened a local donor meeting in December 2020. The Committee maintained its strong support for the implementation of the package of urgent humanitarian and economic interventions agreed upon in September 2018 and for the COVID-19 response. Donor support provided space for political efforts by Egypt, the United Nations and others to prevent renewed conflict and support Palestinian reconciliation. It also provided the impetus for larger-scale development projects. Qatar funded fuel supplies for the power plant in Gaza, which increased the electricity supply to Gaza to an average of 12 hours per day in 2020. Considerable progress was made on the construction of critical water and sanitation facilities and the importation of equipment for the health-care sector.

V. Unmet needs

146. The severity of the health and economic crisis facing the Occupied Palestinian Territory is reflected in the funding requested in the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan and in the number of people targeted. Humanitarian partners are appealing for

\$417 million, significantly more than the \$348 million sought before the pandemic, in 2019. By March 2021, 70 per cent of the funds requested for the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan and 90 per cent of the amount requested in the inter-agency COVID-19 response plan had been raised. However, only 22 per cent of the \$417 million requested in the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan has been secured, leaving significant gaps across most sectors.

147. Severe financial challenges continued to constrain UNRWA operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In 2020, UNRWA emergency operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory remained largely underfunded, with only 56.4 per cent of the required funds pledged and received by the end of the year. Critical operations could only be maintained thanks to a grant from the Central Emergency Response Fund and advances from the UNRWA programme budget. In 2020, UNRWA required \$152 million to cover the additional requirements for its COVID-19 response across all five fields of operation. As at December 2020, Gaza had received 55 per cent of the total requirements, while in the West Bank, 86 per cent had been received for interventions specific to COVID-19.

VI. Challenges

148. The continued absence of a political process to end the occupation and achieve a viable two-State solution continues to be the largest impediment to Palestinian development. Continued Israeli settlement expansion, demolitions, closures, access and movement restrictions, and other aspects of the protracted military occupation continue to have a severe impact on the humanitarian, economic, social and political life of Palestinians and their ability to exercise their fundamental human rights. Violence and incitement continue to perpetuate mutual fear and suspicion. The internal Palestinian political division also places formidable obstacles to addressing humanitarian needs and restoring a political horizon. Decreasing funding to the State of Palestine, and to the United Nations, poses a further challenge to the provision of development and humanitarian assistance. Moreover, the viability of the Palestinian Authority has been severely undermined by an economic and fiscal crisis and by the negative effects of the pandemic.

149. The pandemic has had far-reaching humanitarian and development consequences. It remains a persistent health threat that has caused serious economic fallout.

VII. Conclusions

150. The operational context for the work of the United Nations during the reporting period was increasingly difficult because of the challenges outlined in the present report. The United Nations will continue to work towards the realization of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#), [338 \(1973\)](#), [1397 \(2002\)](#), [1515 \(2003\)](#), [1850 \(2008\)](#), [1860 \(2009\)](#) and [2334 \(2016\)](#), an end to the occupation that began in 1967 and the establishment of a sovereign, democratic, viable and contiguous Palestinian State, existing side by side in peace with a secure Israel. It is only by realizing the vision of two States living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition, with Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the State of Palestine, and all final status issues resolved permanently through negotiations, that the legitimate aspirations of both peoples will be achieved.