

**Statement by the
Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People
at the Conference of Civil Society Organisations Working on the
Question of Palestine**

***“Building Bridges with International Civil Society to Address the
Ongoing Nakba”***

Room XVII, UNOG, 10.00 a.m., 3 April 2024

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the Holy Month of Ramadan is coming to an end, we have completed the sixth month of a devastating war in Gaza that will impact the Middle East for years to come. The Gaza Strip has been subject to one of the most intense bombardments in modern history. This is reflected today in more than 32,000 killed and more than 73,000 injured, according to the local health authorities; the denial of humanitarian assistance, water, fuel and other essential supplies, causing starvation and spread of disease; and the destruction of civilian infrastructures, including schools and hospitals. The majority of casualties continue to be women and children.

More than 1.9 million Palestinians in Gaza have been forcibly displaced – meeting the international legal definition of a forced mass displacement of a civilian population under occupation. The majority of them are currently sheltering in UNRWA schools and facilities. Israel continues therefore to inflict the Nakba onto Palestinians in Gaza, most of whom are 1948 refugees, by forcing them from their homes in Gaza.

The war on Gaza and the heavy death toll it has caused is supplemented by the escalating violence by Israeli forces and settlers in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, with this year already being the deadliest on record.

I once again echo the Secretary-General's appeal for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, a call that continues to be made from every corner of the globe. The international community must act to protect the millions of Palestinian children, women and men whose lives are being threatened by Israel's ongoing military attacks against the Gaza Strip and across the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

I welcome the adoption of the UN Security Council resolution 2728 on 25 March, calling for an immediate ceasefire and the lifting of all barriers to the provision of humanitarian assistance during the remaining weeks of Ramadan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Palestinians continue to endure decades of systematic violations of their inalienable rights, including the rights to return and of self-determination.

I couple my call for an immediate ceasefire and prioritizing the need for urgent humanitarian assistance with the need for the resumption of diplomatic efforts to realize a durable and just solution in the Middle East. The two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders is the only viable solution to ending the Israeli occupation. We need to forge a decisive path towards achieving this just and lasting peace between Israel and the State of Palestine – of which East Jerusalem and Gaza are and must remain an integral part.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Committee, established by the General Assembly in 1975, organizes international meetings in various regions to promote constructive discussions of the various aspects of the question of Palestine and to mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people. It has decided to convene this conference under the theme of building bridges with civil society from different parts of the world to address the ongoing Nakba. Member States have a collective

duty to bring this suffering to an end and to uphold their obligations under the UN Charter and international law by ensuring accountability for these crimes.

There is no better partner than civil society to inform us about the realities of this war and to provide us with recommendations on the enforcement of international humanitarian and human rights law.

We must indeed synergize efforts to end the war on Gaza and resolve this overall Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We must re-commit to usher the independence of the State of Palestine, as called for by the vast majority of the world.

I thank you.