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Chair: Mr. Skinner-Klée Arenales (Guatemala)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 64: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources (A/73/87-E/2018/69)

1. **Mr. Tabet** (Deputy Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General entitled “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” (A/73/87-E/2018/69), which had been prepared by ESCWA, said that Palestinians continued to suffer under the policies and practices of Israel, which applied two different legal systems in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and thereby accorded more rights to Israeli citizens than to Palestinians. Discriminatory planning and zoning policies to all intents and purposes blocked construction and development by Palestinians living in Area C and East Jerusalem.

2. The Israeli security forces continued to use excessive force, including unlawful killings, particularly against civilian demonstrators. On 30 March 2018 alone, 18 unarmed Palestinians had been killed and 800 injured by live ammunition fired by the Israeli army during demonstrations close to the fence separating the Gaza Strip from Israel. In all, 80 Palestinians, including 17 children, had been killed between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 by the Israeli army, security apparatus or settlers. The number of attacks by settlers on Palestinians and their property in the West Bank had risen sharply in 2017 compared with the previous year. Rather than holding the settlers accountable, members of the Israeli security forces sometimes abetted them in their attacks.

3. As at the end of February 2018, some 5,890 Palestinians, including 356 children, were being held in Israeli places of detention. At the same time, 427 Palestinians, including 4 children, were being held indefinitely and without charge in administrative detention. Although the number of complaints of torture at the hands of the Israel Security Agency had quadrupled since 2013, none had triggered criminal investigations.

4. Around 8,700 Palestinians had been displaced through home demolitions since 2009. The Israeli authorities justified the demolitions by the absence of building permits, which, however, were nearly impossible to obtain. Israel also used the demolition of

homes and other property as a punitive measure against family members of Palestinians suspected of carrying out attacks. Such measures might amount to collective punishment. More than one third of Area C had been designated for exclusive use by Israel and its citizens. That had led to what could be considered the forcible displacement of Palestinians, which amounted to a war crime. Pressure was brought to bear on Palestinians living in East Jerusalem through the revocation of residence permits, while Bedouin and herder communities were threatened with relocation. The rapid growth in settler numbers represented the transfer by Israel of its population into the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in violation of international humanitarian law. In February 2017, the Knesset had enacted legislation extending its jurisdiction to matters concerning the private property of Palestinians living under occupation. In May of the same year, the establishment of a new settlement in Area C had been approved for the first time since 1992.

5. The ongoing blockade of Gaza amounted to collective punishment. Requirements regarding the movement of goods and people continued to hinder reconstruction and development in Gaza. The number of exits through the Erez border crossing in 2017 had dropped by almost 50 per cent compared with the previous year. The number of permits issued each year to traders had fallen from more than 3,500 in 2015 to 551 in 2017 and the approval rate for medical patients to make the crossing had almost halved between 2012 and 2017. The enforcement of so-called access-restricted areas along the border fence with Israel and at sea undermined the right of Palestinian fishermen and farmers to a livelihood.

6. Completion of the illegal separation wall along its planned route would isolate 9.4 per cent of the West Bank and some 36,000 Palestinians in the seam zone between it and the 1949 Armistice Line (Green Line). Moreover, around 60 km of roads in the West Bank were set aside for exclusive, or near-exclusive, use by Israeli citizens and 17.5 per cent of its total area was designated as firing zones for the Israeli military and therefore off-limits to Palestinians.

7. Israeli policies hindered the repair and construction of basic water infrastructure. In Area C, 95,000 Palestinians received less than 50 litres of water per capita per day, which was half the minimum recommended by the World Health Organization. In East Jerusalem, more than 40 per cent of Palestinian residents were not connected legally to the water grid. Israeli practices, such as the illegal transfer of hazardous waste to the West Bank, had gravely damaged Palestinian agricultural land and biodiversity. In Gaza,

95 per cent of available water was unfit for human consumption and one quarter of the population was not connected to the sewerage network. Almost three quarters of the Gaza shoreline was contaminated.

8. The occupation was the main obstacle to development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Agriculture suffered owing to access restrictions, the destruction of trees and crops and settler attacks. While Israeli companies continued to quarry natural resources, no permits had been issued to Palestinian firms in Area C since 1994. The rates of poverty and unemployment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory stood at 29 and 28 per cent, respectively, and half the population needed humanitarian assistance. The number of people receiving food aid from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had increased from 80,000 people in 2000 to more than 993,000 in 2017.

9. In Gaza, the poverty and unemployment figures were 54 and 42 per cent, respectively, and four fifths of the population relied on aid. The blockade had led to a sharp drop in the availability and quality of health care and a scarcity of medical equipment, supplies and staff. Indeed, according to the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Gaza would be unliveable by 2020. In the West Bank, the problems associated with the shortage of schools were compounded by the violent harassment of teachers and pupils by members of the Israeli security forces and settlers. More than 260,000 Palestinians in the West Bank depended on the provision of health care by humanitarian actors.

10. In 2017, 23,000 Israeli settlers were residing in 34 illegal settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan. The 25,000 Syrians living under occupation suffered discrimination in terms of land and water allocation, planning and zoning, and demining efforts. As a result, they lived in harsh conditions in overcrowded villages with strained infrastructure and limited resources.

11. The negative socioeconomic impact of Israeli occupation was multilayered and had deepened over the years. Many Israeli practices and measures in the occupied territories flouted Security Council resolutions and international humanitarian and human rights law; some might constitute breaches of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, while others could amount to collective punishment. The cycle of violence would not end until the roots of such violence were addressed.

12. **Mr. Shawesh** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that in the 51 years since Israel had occupied Palestinian territory and the Syrian Golan, the

occupation authorities had issued hundreds of military orders and discriminatory laws designed to cement their control over natural resources and economic capacity, thereby making it difficult for the Palestinians to attain the Sustainable Development Goals and rendering the Palestinian economy entirely dependent. A prime example was the absorption of Palestinian workers by the Israeli labour market. Rather than being employed in a productive local economy, they were contributing to output that became a source of direct imports from Israel. Investment in the Palestinian economy had become unprofitable; the exodus of workers had fuelled higher wages and production costs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and led to a major contraction in domestic agriculture and manufacturing.

13. The exploitation by Israel of Palestinian natural resources and its economic and social repercussions had been well documented in the ESCWA report. More than 5,400 buildings had been demolished since 2009 and around 13,000 demolition orders were pending against Palestinian property at the end of 2017. Plans to destroy the village of Khan al-Ahmar, which had existed long before the creation of the State of Israel, allegedly because of the lack of permits for its buildings, was only the latest example of the systematic process aimed at stifling development in Palestine.

14. In General Assembly resolution [71/247](#) on the permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, all States and international organizations were encouraged to continue to actively pursue policies to ensure respect for their obligations under international law with regard to all illegal Israeli practices and measures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly Israeli settlement activities and the exploitation of natural resources. In paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), all States were called upon to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967. In its resolution 31/36, the Human Rights Council had called for the compilation of a database of business enterprises operating in the Israeli settlements. The settlements were the principle mechanism through which Israel plundered Palestinian resources. All States, individuals and institutions should thus cease their dealings with the settlements in accordance with their legal obligations under international resolutions and judgments.

15. **Mr. El Ashwamy** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the continued policy of demolitions of Palestinian property by the

Israeli authorities was a source of deep concern to the Group. The application of Israeli domestic law to settlers and Israeli military law to the Palestinian people in the same territory was inherently discriminatory and violated the principle of equality before the law. There was strong evidence that, as a result, a reality of one State and two societies was emerging. That key point should be addressed in the next report.

16. In future reports, ESCWA should also address the exploitation by Israeli companies of the mineral salts deposits in the Dead Sea, the shore of which was located largely within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, while the Palestinians were denied the right to benefit from that natural resource. The potential of tourism should also be broached; open access to occupied East Jerusalem, in particular to the Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, would boost the fragile Palestinian economy and contribute to the implementation of the Palestinian strategic development plan. The next report should be issued earlier to facilitate a more thorough assessment of its content and the provision of more substantive comments thereon.

17. **Mr. Al-Kuwari** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), said that the ESCWA report not only confirmed the continued and systematic violation by the occupying Power of human rights and international law but indicated an alarming deterioration in the situation on the ground. It was morally, legally and politically unacceptable to allow the more than 50 years of occupation, oppression and humiliation to continue. The plight of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians could be worsened further still as a result of the funding crisis facing UNRWA. The report conveyed only a fraction of the violations perpetrated with total impunity by Israel, its military forces and settlers against the Palestinian people.

18. Notwithstanding calls by the international community, Israel had scaled up its illegal actions, including its unceasing settlement enterprise, which constituted the largest obstacle to the two-State solution. In the first half of 2018, settlements had continued to grow at an unprecedented rate; the construction of more than 6,000 new housing units in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem had been approved, which would enable over 27,000 more Israelis to move to the settlements. According to a report by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, one third of the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem, some 100,000 people, lived in buildings that were not approved by the Israeli authorities and which therefore could be subject to demolition orders. The authorities were pressing ahead with plans to raze the village of Khan al-Ahmar,

which was located in an area in which Israel had long sought to minimize the Palestinian presence.

19. On 18 October 2018, the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem had informed the Security Council that, since 30 March 2018, more than 170 Palestinians had been killed and 5,000 wounded by Israeli gunfire during protests in Gaza. Israel continued to exploit natural resources and restrict movement by Palestinians through annexation, the apartheid wall, the permit regime and hundreds of checkpoints. One could only conclude that Israel was more interested in consolidating its colonial regime over Palestinian land than achieving a just peace and security. Israel must be compelled to respect international law and called to account for its violations thereof.

20. **Mr. Al Shuaibi** (Oman), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that the 70 years since the Nakbah ("catastrophe") had been characterized by the plundering and theft of Palestinian natural resources, during which time the Palestinians had been deprived of the basic right to development. The Group was especially perturbed by information contained in the ESCWA report concerning the use of excessive force by the Israeli army and the lack of accountability for violations by security and military personnel, especially given that several incidents smacked strongly of unlawful killing. Palestinians were also subject to violence and harassment by settlers. Nonetheless, Palestinians in the West Bank preferred not to report such offences because they were usually not investigated, especially when settlers committed them in the presence or with the knowledge of the Israeli military. The fire-bomb attack on the Dawabsha family in the summer of 2015 and the recent killing of Aisha al-Rabi by stone-throwing settlers were cases in point.

21. According to Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), the establishment of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, had no legal validity. Nevertheless, 600,000 persons lived in 277 settlements, 97 of them unauthorized, and settlements and associated areas covered 40 per cent of the total area of the West Bank. The settlements were underpinned by Israeli Government policy through the provision of services, preferential treatment and incentives. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had indicated that Israeli policy amounted to the transfer by Israel of its population into the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which was prohibited under international humanitarian law. The settlements continued to be a driver of displacement and forced evictions and the measures taken by the Israeli military to protect the settlers greatly hindered access by Palestinians to their land and resources. Should the

latest operation to forcibly displace Palestinians, which was taking place in Khan al-Ahmar, be carried out, thousands of people from already fragile communities would face even tougher living conditions with the elimination of their centuries-old traditional style of pastoral economy.

22. The Group of Arab States called on all States to take the measures necessary to ensure that paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) was implemented and to prohibit commercial relations of any type between their business enterprises and illegal Israeli settlements. The import of goods produced in those settlements not only served to encourage the process of their expansion but exacerbated the poverty into which they had driven Palestinians.

23. **Mr. Almanzlawiy** (Saudi Arabia) said that many of the practices and measures implemented by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory ran counter to Security Council resolutions and international humanitarian and human rights law. Moreover, the occupation stood in the way of sustainable development and, indeed, left nearly one half of the Palestinian population dependent on emergency humanitarian assistance. Saudi Arabia was particularly concerned about the use of excessive force by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people, who were fighting for their freedom. Israel not only wronged the living but violated the sanctity of the dead by not releasing the corpses of Palestinian martyrs, thereby compounding the harm already inflicted by settlers on the Palestinians and their property, including holy places and historical monuments.

24. Saudi Arabia shared concerns about the appalling situation in the Gaza Strip brought about by the blockade that had been imposed on it in 2006. The restrictions on the movement of persons, goods and medical and food supplies amounted to the unprecedented collective punishment of more than 1 million people, who lacked basic medical services and emergency health care. The fragile food situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory meant that 1.6 million Palestinians were food insecure. Female-headed households were especially affected.

25. The attainment by the Palestinians of all their legitimate rights, in particular their right to an independent State with its capital in Jerusalem, remained a top priority for Saudi Arabia. Between the years 2000 and 2018, his country had provided the Palestinians with \$6 billion in humanitarian and development aid. At the recent summit of the League of Arab States, which it had hosted in April 2018, Saudi Arabia had announced the donation of \$50 million to

UNRWA and \$150 million to an endowment programme in Jerusalem. The United Nations and the international community should compel Israel to comply with international resolutions on ending the occupation, the complete withdrawal from occupied Arab territories and the release of all Palestinian prisoners. A two-State approach was the best way to bring about a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestine question.

26. **Ms. Odhav** (South Africa), recalling the words of the late President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, that the freedom won by South Africa with the ending of apartheid, to which the United Nations had contributed, was incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians, said that her country's support for Palestine remained unwavering. South Africa condemned in the strongest possible terms the flagrant human rights violations and use of excessive force by Israeli security forces against Palestinian protesters. Those incidents required thorough, unbiased investigation and their perpetrators must be called to account. The same was true of settler violence.

27. In its report, ESCWA had catalogued actions amounting to the systematic undermining by Israel of the economic and social well-being of Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan. Those actions included applying parallel legal systems, obstructing access to land and building permits, confiscating and destroying property and infrastructure, and exploiting, endangering and depleting natural resources, such as scarce water reserves. The impact of those deplorable actions would also be felt by future generations of Palestinians, who bore no responsibility for the complex issues that had fuelled the decades-long conflict.

28. The distressing circumstances of the occupation had been compounded by the decision of certain Member States to withhold funds from UNRWA. Through its work on health care, education and fostering livelihoods, it played an invaluable role in creating the conditions that could pave the way to full self-determination and, ultimately, prosperity, for the Palestinians.

29. **Ms. Cue Delgado** (Cuba) said that Israel was preventing the Palestinian people from implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by stripping them of their sovereign right over their own natural resources. Owing to the almost total control maintained by Israel over water supplies, shortages continued to have an adverse impact on the lives of Palestinians. Restrictions imposed by the Israeli

authorities, the confiscation of land and violence prevented access to and the use of agricultural land by Palestinians and Syrians of the Golan. The destruction of trees and hydroelectric structures had contributed to a deterioration not only in the quality of basic services but also of the environment.

30. The high rates of poverty in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were alarming. In refugee camps in Gaza, where the average population density was nearly 40,000 persons per km² and 140,000 children under the age of 5 years suffered from chronic malnutrition and stunting, living conditions were a particular source of concern.

31. Cuba condemned the continued military occupation of Palestinian territory by Israel and that country's illegal policies and settlement practices, human rights violations and systematic war crimes, which caused immense suffering to the Palestinian people. Cuba rejected the unilateral decision by the Government of the United States of America to establish its diplomatic mission in Jerusalem, which flew in the face of international law and United Nations resolutions. Her delegation would fully support the State of Palestine in its role as chair of the Group of 77 in 2019.

32. **Mr. Al-Laithi** (Iraq) said that, although his country had been plunged in war against international terrorism, it had never lost sight of the Palestinian question, which remained the central issue for all Arabs. The practices and settlement policies carried out by the Zionist occupation authorities in Jerusalem constituted a blatant violation of United Nations resolutions, international law and human rights, and had an adverse impact on the socioeconomic conditions of those living under occupation. Excessive force was used by the occupation authorities to impose racist and discriminatory policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan.

33. The illegal practices of the Israeli occupation authorities made the Sustainable Development Goals all but unattainable for the Palestinian people and Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan. They had the right to demand compensation for the exploitation, loss, depletion or endangerment of their natural resources resulting from such practices. The Palestinian people urgently needed the political and economic support of the international community to alleviate their suffering. In that context, the funding cuts facing UNRWA were a major source of concern.

34. Iraq endorsed the right of the oppressed Palestinians to sovereignty over their own territory. In that context, his country advocated the application of paragraphs 1 and 5 of Security Council resolution [2334](#)

(2016), with a view to curbing Israeli violations, bringing about a just and comprehensive peace and supporting the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians to establish an independent State within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. Such an outcome would contribute greatly to security, stability, well-being and peace in the Middle East and the world. Similarly, his country fully supported the rights of Syrians living in the occupied Syrian Golan to their land and resources.

35. **Ms. Shurbaji** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her Government welcomed the inclusion in the ESCWA report of information provided by her country on the situation of Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan and the use of a broader range of sources of information regarding the practices of the Israeli occupation authorities. Nonetheless, the Syrian Arab Republic was still waiting to see more detailed legal descriptions of those practices in ESCWA reports, in line with Security Council resolution 497 (1981), rather than a cursory overview in which no clear condemnation of such practices emerged and the position of the United Nations was ill-defined.

36. The Israeli practices were an intrinsic part of a policy of illegal annexation and settlement in the occupied Syrian Golan, exemplified by the application of discriminatory laws providing for the confiscation of land, restrictions on building and planning and discrimination with regard to the allocation of water to Syrian farmers and the price they paid for it. By contrast, the illegal settlers were granted preferential conditions. Attempts by the Israeli authorities to gain control of and exploit natural resources persisted. They also continued to prospect for oil, impose Israeli education curricula and attempt to foist Israeli citizenship on Syrians. The decision by Israel, for the first time since 1967, to hold elections to so-called local councils in villages in the occupied Syrian Golan in late October 2018 was an especially grave breach of Security Council resolution 497 (1981).

37. Israel had made no secret of its constant violations of hundreds of resolutions by international entities, particularly those in which it had been called upon to desist from exploiting and depleting natural resources in the occupied Arab territories. The people of those territories needed the international community and the United Nations to take a responsible stand, demanding respect for international law, resolutions and agreements. Otherwise, the ESCWA report and the draft resolution being prepared by the Committee would merely join the United Nations archives of similar reports and resolutions.

38. **Mr. Al-Kuwari** (Qatar) said that his country was particularly concerned by the challenges facing hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren across the Occupied Palestinian Territory in accessing quality education in a safe, child-friendly environment and the fact that schools, students and teachers were subject to attacks and threats. Investing in children's education was a key to development and efforts must therefore be made to protect educational institutions. Emergency situations must not serve as an excuse for ignoring the right to education. The recent donation by Qatar of \$50 million to the UNRWA education programme had been vital in the Agency's decision not to postpone the opening of schools in the current school year. The contribution came in the framework of his country's efforts to play a positive role in fostering the stability needed to achieve peace.

39. The 2030 Agenda required effective measures to remove the obstacles that stood in the way of self-determination for peoples straining under the yoke of colonialism and foreign occupation, which impinged on their economic and social development. Qatar reaffirmed the right of all Palestinians to sovereignty over their territory, including East Jerusalem, and the right of Arabs living in the occupied Syrian Golan to control their own natural resources.

40. **Mr. Suárez Moreno** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his country was deeply concerned about the impact of the Israeli occupation on the Palestinian people, society and economy. It was especially alarming that about 80 per cent of Palestinians in Gaza received aid. The decision by the United States to cut funding to UNRWA had been based on flimsy pretexts and was actually designed to suppress the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela supported the work of UNRWA in assisting more than 5 million refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. The current financial crisis would only deepen the hardship in which they lived.

41. His country stood for the sovereign right of peoples to exploit their natural resources for their own development. The illegal exploitation of such resources by third countries not only represented a violation of national sovereignty but also deepened poverty and inequality. That principle should apply to all countries, including the State of Palestine, and so enable them to work for their own sustained growth. The international community must act more firmly and effectively to impress upon the leaders of Israel the need to end their expansionist policies and comply with international law.

42. In the occupied Syrian Golan, the policies of Israel, including with regard to land, housing, water and development, were holding back the economic and social development of the Syrian people. Israel should withdraw from the Syrian Golan and comply with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. Moreover, his country reaffirmed its support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the Syrian Arab Republic.

43. **Ms. Krisnamurthi** (Indonesia) said that her country viewed with deep concern the ongoing illegal military occupation by Israel, the suffering it caused the Palestinian people and the adoption, in 2018, of the Basic Law: Israel – the Nation State of the Jewish People. In a recent report, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 had noted that the new legislation could be used to justify the protection of Israeli settlements and other annexational trends. Israeli policies stifled the economic life of the Palestinians, infringed their right to development and contributed to the already high level of unemployment among them. The recurrent under-funding of UNRWA, which had been exacerbated by the termination of funding by one of its hitherto largest donors, was another source of concern. Achieving sustainable development in Palestine hinged on ending the occupation and implementing the two-State solution.

44. Her country's continued staunch support of the Palestinian people, their struggle for independence and their legitimate rights, including with regard to Jerusalem, had been underlined by a Palestine solidarity week recently held in Jakarta. In June 2018, her Government had announced that it would provide Palestine with \$2 million in capacity-building aid in the areas of agriculture, entrepreneurship, empowerment of women, education and information and communications technology. To date, her country had conducted 169 capacity-building programmes for Palestine, involving almost 2,000 Palestinians. Indonesia had also signed a trade agreement with the Palestinian Authority that would enable the import of Palestinian products into Indonesia tax free. The international community must renew its efforts to remove all obstacles to Palestinian independence and thereby enable the Palestinians to achieve the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda and pave the way for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement.

45. **Mr. Bin Momen** (Bangladesh) said that his country was deeply frustrated by the worsening socioeconomic situation and underdevelopment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, induced by five decades of Israeli occupation. Economic growth, at 2.4 per cent,

was poor and investment, infrastructure, living standards and labour market conditions were deteriorating. Poverty had increased from 26 per cent in 2011 to 29 per cent in 2017, 31.5 per cent of the population was food insecure and nearly half a million schoolchildren faced challenges in accessing quality education; it was outrageous that even school students were subjected to humiliation, harassment and violence.

46. Palestinians faced energy shortages and difficulties in gaining access to public health services, water and sanitation. Practices by the Israeli authorities and settlers, such as the transfer of hazardous waste, had damaged agricultural land, livestock and biodiversity in the Palestinian Occupied Territory. It was unacceptable that Palestinians were prevented from working their farmland. Those and other development issues must be addressed.

47. The principle of “leaving no one behind” applied to all, including peoples under foreign occupation. The international community should impress upon Israel, the occupying Power, that it must end the systematic violation of international humanitarian and human rights law and restrictive measures so as to enable economic growth in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The funding crisis facing UNRWA must also be resolved. Bangladesh supported the establishment of an independent, viable, contiguous and sovereign Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in the framework of a two-State solution. The Palestinian people and the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan had inalienable rights to their natural resources and to claim restitution for the harm caused by the illegal measures taken by Israel. The Sustainable Development Goals could not be achieved in the occupied territories without an end to the occupation and self-determination for the people in those territories.

48. **Ms. Shareef** (Maldives) said that the international community had failed to reverse the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Syrian Golan. All Member States had a responsibility to ensure that no country enjoyed impunity in its defiance of the principles of international law. The fact that millions of Palestinians relied on humanitarian assistance and were subject to food and water shortages, and the finding that Gaza would become unliveable by 2020, all pointed to an impending catastrophe that required urgent action.

49. Economic and social development in the occupied territories was being held back by the threat of displacement, poor sanitation and the lack of basic services such as safe drinking water, health care and education. Palestinian children were increasingly under threat; more students were falling victim to tear gas and

rubber bullets and the number of children detained in Israeli prisons was rising.

50. For the Palestinians to achieve development, the occupation must end. Their human rights and right of self-determination would be best served by a two-State solution. It was incumbent on all countries to abide strictly by Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), in which the Council had made clear that it would not recognize any changes in the 4 June 1967 lines, other than those agreed by the two sides through negotiations. Israel must return the land and resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan to their rightful owners.

51. **Ms. Al Ali** (United Arab Emirates) said that her country had always supported the Middle East peace process and that efforts should be intensified to achieve a comprehensive, lasting and just settlement for the Palestinian and other occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan. The Palestinian people had an inalienable right to exercise control over their natural resources and establish an independent State. They continued to require support to alleviate the worsening economic, social and humanitarian situation facing them and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. International leaders should fulfil their pledges regarding the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 11, by removing obstacles to their achievement.

52. In 2017 and 2018, the United Arab Emirates had provided more than \$130 million in aid to the Palestinian people, including funding for UNRWA. In 2018, it had contributed \$50 million to the UNRWA education programme and a further \$15 million to ensure continuity in the 2017-2018 school year and provide essential material for more than half a million school pupils. Her country was also helping to rebuild schools, hospitals, health-care centres and other basic facilities and providing food aid to Palestinian refugees caught up in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. Early in 2018, it had provided fuel for hospital power generators in the Gaza Strip.

53. **Mr. Ebrahim** (Kuwait) said that the State of Palestine could hardly be expected to achieve sustainable development by 2030 if its people could not live in security and peace or preserve their heritage, including holy sites, owing to the constant violations by Israel of international law and customs. An end to the suffering of the Palestinians could come about only by applying the relevant international resolutions, the principle of Land for Peace, the performance-based road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the terms of reference contained

in the Arab Peace Initiative. Only then would they be able to forge ahead to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The Palestinians were waiting for the United Nations to act on its own commitments to achieve world peace and security.

54. Kuwait condemned the brutal and unjustifiable policies and practices carried out by Israel in the occupied territories. Indeed, the occupation itself was a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, its resolutions and international law. Kuwait supported all legal and peaceful measures taken by the State of Palestine at the national and international levels to affirm its sovereignty over its territory and natural resources and called on the international community to continue to exercise pressure on Israel and stand by the Palestinian people in their just cause and the defence of their legitimate rights.

55. **Mr. Hajilari** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that it was clear from the many illegal measures documented in the ESCWA report that the Palestinians, who suffered flagrant daily violations of their basic rights, were not in a position to take steps towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The illegal blockade, which amounted to collective punishment, undermined the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of Palestinians. Their natural resources were being exploited and depleted and water shortages disrupted development initiatives.

56. About 1.8 million Palestinians needed humanitarian water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance. Movement restrictions, land confiscations, settler violence and other factors prevented Palestinians from using their agricultural land. Many suffered from limited access to essential services, including a stable food supply, public health, education, water and sanitation infrastructure and fuel and electricity. In addition to UNRWA, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization also faced shrinking funds, hampering its efforts to support quality education in Gaza. Indeed, Gaza would have become unliveable years ago, according to the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, had it not been for the aid and services provided by the United Nations.

57. The international community must do all in its power to put a permanent end to the grave humanitarian situation and thereby enable the Palestinians to chart a successful course to achieving sustainable development and economic growth. That required an immediate end to the occupation and the restoration of their rights. The Islamic Republic of Iran appealed to the international community to support the Palestinian people in their

efforts to establish an independent State in their ancestral land, with Jerusalem as its capital.

58. **Ms. Kempinsky** (Israel), explaining that she was the youth delegate of Israel to the General Assembly, said that she had grown up in Haifa, a city known for its multiculturalism. As a child she had had Christian, Druze and Muslim neighbours and learned about Christmas and Ramadan from her classmates. As teenagers, they had done volunteer work in hospitals, animal shelters and other locations, each contributing to the local community. Such a community worked well when everyone understood that their economy and well-being were more important than their differences.

59. Her childhood memories, however, also included terrorist attacks and the accompanying anxiety about the fate of loved ones. Today, children living in Israeli villages close to Gaza were growing up in fear, knowing that they must be within 30 seconds' running distance of a bomb shelter and wondering how Hamas might attack next: by launching rockets at their kindergartens or fire kites at their family wheat crops, or perhaps by digging a new terrorist tunnel. Throughout the country, generations were growing up in fear. Recently, a young mother had been killed by a co-worker in an attack that had turned a harmonious workplace into a scene of terrorism. Just walking in the streets could be dangerous; drivers turned their cars into deadly weapons and young Palestinians used kitchen knives to stab passers-by, becoming terrorists before graduating from high school.

60. Things could be different. In Haifa and elsewhere, young Israelis and Palestinians had found ways to communicate with one another, to develop visions and projects and dream together of something better. She wanted a future in which she and her family could feel safe, not only in Haifa, but anywhere in the country. The United Nations had the ability to lead. It was unfortunate that some delegations used it as a platform for incitement. Rather, it should be a place for all to listen, to express different opinions and find ways to bridge them, to create plans and partnerships. That was what the current discussion ought to be about.

61. **Mr. Gertze** (Namibia) said that the ESCWA report made for difficult reading, depicting as it did flagrant violations of human rights and the denial of dignity to the people of Palestine by Israel. In particular, Namibia deplored the violations of the rights of women and children. Education was a basic right for all and yet children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were often unable to attend school and exposed to trauma and injury. Israel ought to put the rights of children ahead of other considerations. To achieve sustainable

development, the Palestinians needed access to electricity and sufficient, good-quality water. Poverty could not be eradicated when infrastructure was constantly destroyed and the supply of electricity disrupted.

62. Namibia, too, had endured the deliberate suppression of its economy during the colonial era, especially during the illegal occupation of his country by the apartheid regime of South Africa. It was unacceptable that the Palestinian economy should be so heavily reliant on international assistance as a result of the excessive barriers placed in the way of normal economic activities. There was a need to preserve the territorial contiguity, unity and integrity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, guarantee the freedom of movement of persons and goods and demand compliance with the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. The people of Palestine should work together under one Government.

63. Namibia supported the efforts of the Palestinian people to achieve their inalienable right to self-determination, justice, freedom and independence by political, diplomatic, peaceful and non-violent means. Social normalcy, legal equality, economic opportunity and sustainable development could be brought about only through legally established statehood. To that end, the illegal Israeli occupation must end.

64. **Ms. Bjaña** (Nicaragua) said that her country welcomed the election of the State of Palestine to chair the Group of 77 in 2019. When the international community had embarked on efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, it had pledged that no country would be left behind; yet it was inconceivable that the Palestinians would be able to bring about the necessary changes while under occupation. Indeed, the adverse impact of ongoing practices and policies, such as the demolition of properties and infrastructure, land confiscation, the constant expansion of illegal settlements and long-standing restrictions on movement and trade could reverse the process of development in Palestine. It was a sorry state of affairs that the Committee had been unable to reach consensus on such a fundamental issue.

65. Nicaragua hoped that, through dialogue and negotiations, and with good faith on all sides, both peoples would be able to live in lasting peace, because both States and their peoples had equal rights to peace, security and sustainable development. The Palestinians had the same right as all to live in peace, receive development aid and benefit from cooperation and

investment to achieve sustainable development. Her delegation hoped that the draft resolution submitted by Egypt on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (A/C.2/73/L.37) would contribute to easing the economic and social difficulties faced by the civilian Palestinian and Syrian populations living under foreign occupation and, ultimately, to fostering efforts to re-establish peace, unity and well-being for those peoples.

66. **Mr. Tajuddin** (Malaysia) said that 2018 marked one more year in which the international community had failed to take action on flagrant violations by Israel of numerous Security Council resolutions and international humanitarian and human rights law. The continued expansion by Israel of its illegal settlements in Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 was intended to undermine negotiations on the two-State solution and was a driver of forced eviction and displacement of Palestinians. The exploitation, endangerment and depletion by Israel of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory exacerbated the already challenging situation facing the Palestinians.

67. Malaysia strongly condemned the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force by Israeli security forces against Palestinians, particularly in the Gaza Strip, and remained committed to a two-State solution based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. The international community should be more assertive in ensuring that the final status of Jerusalem was not resolved by unilateral decisions but rather through bilateral negotiations between Palestine and Israel. Any attempt to recognize it as the capital of Israel, through the establishment or transfer of a diplomatic mission to the city, constituted an act of aggression, a blatant infringement of the rights of the Palestinian people and a grave breach of international law.

68. **Mr. Alshames** (Libya), referring to the ESCWA report, said that, in addition to restrictions on movement, shortages of food and fuel and other obstacles imposed by the occupying Power on the Palestinians, their land was being swallowed up as the building of settlements continued. At the same time, construction of the separation barrier was cutting off access by Palestinians to their fields and farms. The blockade imposed by the occupying Power on the Gaza Strip had turned it into a giant prison and isolated it from the rest of the world; it was a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law.

69. The Palestinian people would be unable to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals as long as they did not enjoy sovereignty over their natural resources, their

access to water was curtailed, their lands were being confiscated and their infrastructure was being destroyed by the occupation authorities. The same could be said of the occupied Arab Golan. The practices of the occupying authorities were in flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and international human rights law. Libya supported the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, the establishment of an independent State on the totality of its territory with Jerusalem as its capital and the right of return of all refugees to their homes.

70. **Mr. Al Haddad** (Bahrain), referring to paragraphs 15–17 of the ESCWA report, said that forced evictions were a gross violation of human rights and international humanitarian law, which also prohibited the confiscation and demolition of private property. In the reporting period alone, more than 310 Palestinian structures had been demolished. Ongoing Israeli settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory violated a number of Security Council resolutions, including resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), and was a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

71. Movement restrictions, land confiscation and settler violence all hindered access by the Palestinians to their land in the seam zone and in the vicinity of settlements and, as a result, constrained farming activities and had a negative impact on olive production and prices. Planning restrictions meant that local communities in Area C had only limited capacity to repair or build basic water and sanitation infrastructure at the community or household levels. That in turn led to shortages of drinking water and water for domestic use and for livestock in many communities and hampered development in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Bahrain supported the United Nations in its efforts to achieve a political solution ensuring the right of the Palestinian people to sovereignty over their land and resources.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.