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October 26, 2016

**Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee), 22nd meeting**

Chair: I call to order the 22nd Meeting of the Second Committee of the 71st Session of the General Assembly.

Distinguished Colleagues, I now invite the Committee to resume its consideration of Agenda Item 19 entitled Sustainable Development, in order to hear the introduction of Draft Resolution A/C.2/71/L.21 entitled Cooperative Measures to Assess and Increase Awareness of Environmental Effects Related to Waste Originating from Chemical Munitions Dumped at Sea, which is submitted by Lithuania on behalf of the sponsors listed in the document.

In this connection, I give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to introduce the Draft Resolution. You have the floor.

Lithuania: Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Dear colleagues, I have the honor to introduce today Draft Resolution A/C.2/71/L.21 entitled Cooperative Measures to Assess and Increase Awareness of Environmental Effects Related to Waste Originating from Chemical Munitions Dumped at Sea, which has been sponsored by all Member States of the European Union, Monaco, and San Marino.

This Resolution is a follow-up to the Resolution 68/208 adopted in this committee by consensus on the 20th of December 2013, and subsequently by the General Assembly. The current draft Resolution continues to reflect concerns by many states about the potential long-term environmental effects related to waste originated from chemical munitions dumped at sea, including their potential impact on human health and safety as well as on the marine environment and resources.

This year’s Resolution is building on the report of the Secretary-General A/71/190 of 25 July 2016 that reflects the views of Member States, relevant regional and international organizations on issues relating to the environmental effects of waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea and on the modalities for international cooperation. In light of the views reflected in the Secretary-General’s report, the Draft Resolution encourages to continue outreach efforts to assess and increase awareness of the issue, calls for voluntary sharing of information, and invites Member States in a position to do so to consider providing assistance and sharing relevant expertise.

The Resolution invites the Secretary-General to continue seeking views on issues related to environmental effects of chemical weapons dumped at sea, in particular with a view to exploring the possibility of establishing a database that would contain voluntarily shared information. It also asks the Secretary-General to submit recommendations for identifying appropriate intergovernmental bodies within the United Nations system for further consideration and implementation of the cooperative measures envisaged in the Resolution.

We look forward to working with all delegations on the Draft Resolution and invite all interested members to co-sponsor the Resolution. We thank all those members which have already done so.

I thank you.

Chair: I thank the Permanent Representative of Lithuania for her statement.

I now invite the Committee to begin its consideration of Agenda Item 59 entitled 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. The documentation under the agenda item and its subitems is listed in today’s journal.

At this juncture, I would like to welcome Ms. Rima Khalaf, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, and I invite her to introduce the report of the Secretary-General issued under the item.

Madame Khalaf, you have the floor.

Rima Khalaf, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, I have the honor of presenting for consideration the note of the Secretary-General 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.

This note is mandated by ECOSOC and the General Assembly Resolutions. The Resolutions express concern over Israeli practices that violate international humanitarian law. Due to processing requirements, this note covers the period ending March 2016 and is based on verified data from credible sources, mainly the United Nations and the World Bank, but also from Israeli NGOs.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Israeli policies and practices continue to violate international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Not holding Israel accountable for its serious violations of these laws deepens Palestinians’ sense of injustice.

Israeli actions and the resulting frustration felt by Palestinians throughout half a century of a stifling and humiliating occupation undermine the ability of Palestinians to live in dignity and continue to increase tension leading to eruptions of violence. The Israeli settlement enterprise in occupied Palestinian land lies at the heart of a multitude of discriminatory Israeli policies, which include, among others, a deeply inequitable allocation of water and access to land.

Israel has created a dual justice system in the West Bank that appears to be pitted against the nomally protected population, the Palestinians living under occupation. Contrary to Israel’s legal obligation to protect these Palestinian civilians, Israeli settlers are rarely held accountable when they perpetrate acts of violence and attacks on Palestinian property and religious sites.

Israeli zoning and planning policies constitute another form of discrimination. Construction permits for Palestinians are mostly rejected, particularly in Area C and East Jerusalem. This forces Palestinians to build without Israeli construction permits, leaving them vulnerable to home demolition and forced displacement.

In order to secure a Jewish majority in East Jerusalem, Israel has employed policies that discriminate against Palestinians and pressure them to leave the city. These policies violate a wide area of Palestinian rights. They also result in increased poverty and suffering for Palestinians from neglect and severe lack of services.

Palestinians continue to suffer from excessive use of force by Israeli security forces and lack of protection from Israeli settler attacks. Further, upon the eruption of violence in October 2015, there were documented cases of possible unlawful killings by Israeli forces, and in some instances what appears to amount to extrajudicial killings and summary executions of individuals who posed no imminent danger to life.

Since 1967, one in five Palestinians has at some point been detained by Israeli authorities. The detention of Palestinians is often coupled with violations of their rights and international humanitarian law. These include the excessive use of administrative detention without charge or trial – without charge or trial. Reports of institutionalized cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment as well as medical negligence of Palestinian detainees, including children, continue to emerge.

In 2015, Israel passed a law that allows force-feeding the detainees on hunger strike, which is viewed by the Israeli Medical Association as equivalent to torture.

76,000 Palestinians in Gaza remain homeless as a result of the destruction of their homes in the 2014 Israeli offensive and their inability to reconstruct their homes due to the blockade. At the same time, Palestinians in the West Bank continue to be displaced mainly due to home demolitions or takeover, land confiscation, harassment and violence, access restrictions, and revocation of residency permits. Israel also resumed the demolition of homes as a punitive measure against families of suspected Palestinians in a clear violation of international humanitarian law. Over 49 years of occupation, Israel has confiscated approximately 20% of West Bank lands.

The illegal presence of Israeli settlements in the occupied territory and the Israeli government’s policy to expand such settlements violate international humanitarian law and Palestinian rights, including the right to self-determination. Israeli settlers continue their attacks on Palestinians, their property, and religious sites with impunity.

The nine-year-old blockade on the Gaza Strip amounts to the collective punishment of 1.8 million Palestinians and has had a devastating effect on the population, economy, and infrastructure. It has created a humanitarian disaster and impeded projects by the United Nations and other organizations. Restricting access to agricultural land and limiting fishing zones compound the hardships for Palestinians in Gaza.

A complex and multilayered system of administrative and physical barriers constrain the movement of Palestinians in the West Bank and impedes their access to land and basic services. In addition, the wall Israel has been constructing in the West Bank, which was ruled illegal by the International Court of Justice, is the primary obstacle to the movement of Palestinians. The repercussions of the 2014 offensive on Gaza continue to unfold and to be compounded by the blockade.

The massive destruction to the water, electricity, and waste water infrastructure exacerbated Gaza’s water and sanitation crisis, damaged the agricultural sector, and worsened the dire maritime soil and air conditions in general.

In the West Bank, discriminatory Israeli policies have left Palestinians with limited access to their own water and land. At the same time, Israeli settlers and companies continue to exploit Palestinian natural resources and pollute the environment.

Moving on to a snapshot of the economic and social conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory.

As a cumulative impact of nearly 50 years of occupation, one in two Palestinians – that is 2.3 million people – need some form of humanitarian assistance in 2016. The long-standing Israeli restrictions, practices, and destruction of Palestinian infrastructure have stifled Palestinians’ economic activity and resulted in an aid-dependent economy. Such an economy cannot be put on a development path that is sustainable under the current paradigm. The staggering 26% unemployment rate is only one indicator in this regard. The even more staggering 41% unemployment rate among youth provides a grim outlook for the future.

The 1.6 million Palestinians who suffer from severe food insecurity are a striking manifestation of these dire economic conditions. This situation is particularly alarming in Gaza. Half of the families there are forced to eat less food than needed while almost two-thirds purchase food on credit.

Half a century of Israeli occupation and practices has had a detrimental impact on the health and well-being of Palestinians. In the Gaza Strip, on top of the deterioration of the health sector due to the blockade and destruction, Palestinian children and adults alike have to live with the mental and psychological impact of the occupation.

Among the most distressing statistics is the fact that for the first time in five decades, infant mortality in Gaza is on the rise. In the West Bank, Israel’s practices impeded Palestinians’ access to health services on various levels. Similarly, access to education for Palestinian children has been compromised. Schools are severely lacking owing to the blockade and destruction in Gaza and to restrictions on construction in the West Bank. 86% of UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip have to operate on double shifts to accommodate students. Palestinian students and teachers in the West Bank have to withstand attacks and harassment by Israeli forces and Israeli settlers on their way to school.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Israel’s violation of international law continue in the occupied Syrian Golan which Israeli illegally annexed in 1981. Israel continues to move its population to settle into this Syrian territory and continues to exploit its natural resources. At the same time, Syrian citizens living under occupation face discriminatory policies such as unequal water allocation and restrictions on construction in their villages. In contrast, Israeli settlements receive government support and incentives, including active plans to increase their numbers.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, the note concludes that Israel continues to employ measures and practices in occupied Palestinian and Syrian territories that violate fundamental principles of the United Nations, including the inadmissibility of acquiring land by force, the principle of non-discrimination, and the right of peoples to self-determination. This is on top of the violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. 50 years of occupation have not only witnessed the obstruction and at times reversal of Palestinian socioeconomic development but also Israel’s continued consolidation of its control over the occupied territories through a three-tiered approach: population displacement, land grab, and suppression of any form of resistance.

Distinguished Delegates, the note also concludes that the impunity Israel has enjoyed so far has only rendered the attainment of peace more difficult. International law in all its elements must be respected and enforced without exception to ensure a just and lasting peace. That is why Israel must end its occupation and comply with international law. There are no prospects for peace unless this happens.

Thank you.

Chair: I thank the Executive Secretary for her statement. In accordance with the practice of the Main Committees of the General Assembly, I now invite delegations to make comments or pose questions to the Executive Secretary on the report that has been introduced.

I recognize the Distinguished Representative of the State of Palestine. Palestine, you have the floor.

PalestinIAN REPRESENTATIVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, I would like to thank Her Excellency Dr. Rima Khalaf, the Under-Secretary-General of ESCWA for this very important and valuable briefing; however, in Palestine and having reviewed this report, we found that there is a set of remarks that the ESCWA should consider, especially in the upcoming reports.

Mr. Chair and Mrs. Khalaf, the Paragraphs 6, 16, and 19 of the report used the word Israeli Security Forces and Army. It is for sure the use of the word Security Forces is not very correct. Well, the Israeli forces, we have to say the Israeli occupying forces, because the UN and the whole world know that this is an occupying power. So the forces on the Palestinian occupied territories are the forces of the occupying Israeli power, and we cannot call it the Israeli Security Forces.

And in this regard, allow me to show you this picture, or this photo. Please, Mr. Max, the technician, please help me with this. This is the child, Mahmoud Rafat Badran. This child, Mahmoud Rafat Badran, in the last days of last Ramadan was killed by the Israeli Army and without any guilt.

CHAIR: An interruption based panel. It's for questions and answers. So if you could kindly respect that, we're not going to the session of the pictures and so on. Thank you for your understanding.

PalestinIAN REPRESENTATIVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that – I don't think that there is anything that would prevent us from showing any pictures, and we don't have any legal rule that say no for showing pictures. If there is a legal rule, I will respect it. But if there is no legal rule, please allow me to explain what I would like to explain by way of illustration and photos.

CHAIR: Thank you, Delegate. The advice that I have received is that this is the practice in such meetings. It is based on practice, and you are kindly requested to respect this practice. Thank you.

PalestinIAN REPRESENTATIVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No problem. Online you can find thousands of pictures of the Israeli criminals, and we will find one way or another to show these pictures in general. Okay. This was the first remark using the Israeli Security Forces, which is totally unacceptable for us. So whether for us as the Palestinian delegation or any other delegation.

At the beginning of the report the phrase the violence by illegal armed Israeli settlers. And this phrase, or this expression, is also very problematic. And it could be understood to mean that the armed settlers only are those who are practicing violence against Palestinians. And in fact all settlers, without exception, practice violence. And this phrase could be understood in a way that there are some legally armed settlers and illegally armed settlers. I think it's better to only keep it short as the armed settlers. And when we go to the Arabic translation of the report, we find it a little bit different.

Number three. The paragraph 16 reads as follows. Overall during the reporting period 212 Palestinians were killed by the Israeli Army, Security Forces, or settlers, including 40 children. It spoke about the number of Palestinians who were killed at the hand of the Israeli occupying forces, and you didn't hear a mention the Israeli occupying forces, but only the Israeli Security Forces and settlers. And we think, again, that Security Forces is a very problematic expression and is very illusory.

Paragraph 17. Many of whom were killed while allegedly carrying out attacks against Israelis. This is a totally unacceptable phrase. Who has decided that they are carrying arms against Israelis? It should be made clear in this report that those who have decided to do so are the Israeli occupying forces who were responsible and in charge of investigations. And we found – we have a lot of videos that would prove the lie – that they were lying. So who – actually those who were in charge of investigations were the Israeli occupying forces, and thus it shouldn't be left like this without clarification.

Paragraph 40. Community in area C. Well, using this expression of significant procedural and legal steps, still this expression as well is totally misplaced because if you read the report, you will find that these steps and procedures are normal so long as they are legal and they are taken under the Israeli rule. And by the way, this is the law of the Israeli occupation.

As for paragraph 50, it spoke directly about the Dawabsha family. However, it did not speak about the Israeli criminal settlers and it did not mention the statements of the Director of the Army at the time, who stated that they know who were the killers, the killers were. However, they could not arrest them. Therefore, they only arrested some of them. However, they were acquitted later under the pretext that they were minors and maybe it is very useful to remind you to compare the Israeli trials of criminal Israeli minors and the trials for Palestinian minors.

As for Paragraph 82, it spoke about non-admissibility by – for Palestinians to make use of maritime wealth. And we think that it's very important to refer to this. Also the Palestinian wealth is in the Mediterranean do not stop short at the oil wells, especially in Rantis. And I would like in Western Ramallah in Rantis we have four oil wells that are used by Israel. And oil has been extracted from these wells in favor of Israeli companies. That's why next time we do expect that the report should clarify this point.

As for paragraph 19, it spoke about the stock exchange in Palestine. And we think that the set-off money is used by the Israelis against the Palestinians, and this causes some sort of uncertainty in the economy which would eventually have dire consequences on the future of the Palestinian economy.

Dr. Rima, I would – I also have some general remarks that I think the report or the upcoming reports should take into consideration. The report did not mention the livelihood gaps between Israelis and Palestinians by comparing the income per capita of Palestinians and Israelis. This means that the prices of staples, goods, is the same. And this eventually has its own adverse consequences on the power purchase parity of the Palestinians as well as our productivity capability and our competitiveness capability.

Also the report did not mention the public statements of the Israelis against the Palestinians. And they are always propagating for the nonacceptance of the two-state solution. And they never miss any opportunity without speaking about the rejection of the two-state solution, a matter that eventually deepens the uncertainty and also which adversely affects the investment rates.

The report also did not mention the repeated attacks against journalists as well as the administrative detention of journalists and how far this affects the Palestinian social life. And we do expect that the next report would eventually explain in details the – in detail the cases of journalists, especially those who have gone into hunger strikes. For example, Muhammad al-Qiq. He is now on a hunger strike for 94 days. So why hasn't this been mentioned in the report? And why didn't the report – why did the report stay silent as regards to the consequences of such violations?

Fourth, in paragraph 50 we said that the report spoke about the Dawabsha family. However, it did not mention a very important segment, which is the Palestinian tourism and it’s of paramount importance that the next report would draw a panoramic picture of the Palestinian tourism in Jerusalem and Bethlehem because we are the legitimate and original owners of these territories, whether in Bethlehem or Jerusalem or the al-Aqsa Mosque. However, we are not benefiting from the tourism.

We have religious tourism. You cannot imagine that we only gain zero of the – of all this tourism due to all the Israeli practices. And we do think that it's very significant that this should be mentioned in the next report. All the – all tourists, they are accommodated. And sometimes they were terror – they are terrorized to have their accommodation in Israel and not in Palestine.

Sixth, as we are now on the threshold of the end of the first of 15 years to achieve the goals of sustainable development, it's of paramount importance to connect to the upcoming report with the capability of Palestinians to achieve the goals of sustainable development.

Seventh, there are a lot of racist laws that have been passed by the Israeli Knesset recently. And such laws have adverse socioeconomic effects. Therefore, it's very important that reports has to tackle the impact of such laws on the Palestinian economy.

Eighth, the report remained silent regarding the socioeconomic dimensions of blockade between – we have three totally separated zones in Palestine, and this is very well known for everybody. And it's almost next to impossible to communicate even or to connect any of these three parties. And this is an economic catastrophe that we are suffering due to such blockade and due to such separation.

Ninth, the report also stayed silent regarding the incapability of Palestinians to engage in free trade with other – with the countries of the world. And this eventually causes a lot of economic burdens. You know that we have no control whatsoever on our borders, and this eventually and absolutely has its repercussions on foreign trade. So the next report also should heed this point.

Tenth, that report did not speak about the procrastinated – or about the conventions that the Palestinians has to take and the long ways they have to take in order to move from one point to another. So instead of 25 or 30 minutes from one point to the other, we might – it might take us two hours to reach our point of destination.

And finally, the report did not mention the fact that settlements are used as tax havens, so Israeli settlements are used as tax havens, definitely, for Israeli businessmen. And also they are used as intermediary stations for the transit of goods without customs. So they are – the goods are transited through these settlements in order to avoid or to evade customs and taxes. So we do expect that the next report also tackles this point.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I wish that all these remarks are to be considered, and we are currently – we stand ready to cooperate with you or to answer any questions or any issue or any explanation that you might need.

Thank you.

Chair: Okay. I see no other requests for the floor. I'd now like to invite the Executive Secretary to respond. You're welcome. The floor is yours. Thank you.

Rima Khalaf, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia: Thank you, Mr. Chairman; and I thank the Honorable Delegate of Palestine for his remarks, many of which are accurate and shall be taken into consideration in ESCWA’s future reports.

Nonetheless, please note that the word count limit, which is 8,500 words per report, does not allow us to cover each and every detail of suffering experienced by the millions of Palestinians and Syrians under occupation.

On the use of Israeli security forces, the report refers to quotes from other sources and this is the language that appears in the original. But we'll have a look at it in the next report to see how we can use language that is more reflective of reality.

On the issue of settlers, the UN position is that all Israeli settlement in the occupied territories is illegal. The expression illegal Israeli settlers used in the report should not, therefore, be understood to imply that there are any Israeli settlers whose presence in the occupied territory is legal. Nonetheless, the report uses the term as it appears in the ECOSOC Resolution. The Distinguished Delegate also mentioned the cumulative economic cost of the occupation. Actually the cumulative economic cost of the occupation is outside the purview of this note; however, I'm pleased to tell you that ESCWA, as well as other UN agencies, have started constructing an analytical framework that would allow us to assess such cost more accurately.

Distinguished Delegates, when a situation in reality is plainly imbalanced, it must be reported as such in any objective report. Our note reflects that one side, the occupying power, dictates reality on the ground. For 50 years, Israel has been allowed to continue its occupation. Its settlements, the legality of which not one nation outside Israel recognizes, have expanded. Israel has violated the UN Charter, countless Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions, and many instruments of international law without being held accountable. Oppression and the violation of rights are both morally untenable and politically unsustainable.

UN Resolution 3246 in 1974 reaffirmed "the inalienable right of all peoples to self-determination, freedom, and independence." And also reaffirmed the legitimacy of their struggle for liberation from colonial and foreign domination and alien subjugation by all available means, including armed struggle.

In January of last year, our Secretary General stated, "It is human nature to react to occupation which often serves as a potent incubator of hate and extremism."

And I conclude with Archbishop Tutu who shared his experience saying the following, "I have witnessed the systemic humiliation of Palestinian men, women, and children by members of the Israeli security forces. Their humiliation is familiar to all black South Africans who were corralled and harassed and insulted and assaulted by the security forces of the apartheid government. Those who turn a blind eye to injustice actually perpetuate injustice. If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor." I hope we do not remain neutral today.

Thank you.

Chair: I thank the Executive Secretary for her response, and I also thank the Distinguished Representative of Palestine for his intervention and specifically for his understanding when we were discussing the other issue that we all had.

And now I invite the committee to begin its general discussion of Agenda Item 59. Before we proceed, I would like to remind delegations of their agreed time limits for statements during the general discussion of individual items, namely seven minutes for delegations speaking on behalf of a group of states and five minutes for individual member states. In order to assist speakers in time management, a speech timer is visible on the screen and I look forward to the cooperation of all speakers.

I first give the floor to the Distinguished Observer of the State of Palestine. Palestine, you have the floor.

PalestinIAN REPRESENTATIVE: Thank you, Chairman. Allow me first of all to congratulate you and the members of the Bureau. We would like to thank you for the efforts that you're making in managing the work of this committee. We'd also like to thank Ms. Rima Khalaf, the USG of ESCWA and her colleagues. I'd like to thank them for their very complete presentation of the Secretary General's report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation.

During the Security Council's session on the 19th of October, the ambassador before the Security Council presented a large box full of documents, certified documents, from the UN agencies and claimed that these documents were not reliable. These are documents that take the part of Palestine against Israel. We confirmed that these documents, even if they cover a lot of realities in an objective fashion, there are a number of facts that are not mentioned in a number of international documents.

And there are two main reasons for this. The first one stems from the fact that Israel does not allow representatives of the United Nations or other international organizations to work freely in the occupied Palestinian territories. You know that Israel in January 2015 prevented the human rights rapporteur from accessing the occupied Palestinian territory to carry out a study on human rights. And the pretext given – well, there was a pretext given for not allowing him to access that territory. There was also a South African delegation that was not permitted to access the territory following an attack on Gaza. There's also a reason, and that's the diplomatic policy pursued and the ramifications. This is diplomatic terrorism which is characterized by accusations of anti-Semitism against all of those who criticize Israel.

May I recall the ferocious aggression that targeted the Jewish judge, Golda Stern, who was considered as a real danger of the Israeli state. He was – he had to present himself to the Senate and to participate in an event. Diplomatic terrorism is carried out by Israel, and it's remarkable in the Israeli practices that are carried out at all levels following the decision of UNESCO which reaffirmed the historic reality. To wit, the Jews have no relation to al-Aqsa Mosque and the campaign carried out by the government in terms of settlement. There's an international organization that has participated in the meeting, and the Security Council wished to address the issues of Israeli settlement. There is a campaign being carried out by the Israeli Prime Minister.

Chairman, 70 years after the Nakba that caused the loss of 70% of our territory, 700,000 Palestinians are now refugees full after 50 years of Israeli occupation in the Palestinian territories. During these years, Israel has managed to establish a system of apartheid and to divide the Palestinian territories into three main regions: Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, and prevents any interaction between these regions. Israel controls more than 61% of the West Bank and prevents Palestinians from carrying out economic activities. At the same time, the number of settlements, or settlers resident in Palestinian territory, is 600,000.

For 10 years now, Israel has imposed a stifling military siege on the West Bank which is populated with 2 million Palestinian citizens who have suffered from three attacks.

Chairman, this report is the latest in a long line of reports that have been drawn up by the United Nations on the Palestinian cause. These are reports which document in an objective fashion Israeli aggression that is targeted against the Palestinian people, and even if these reports are effective from a legal point of view, for the occupying state, these reports don't serve any purpose. We have to ask; while these reports condemn Israel in a clear fashion, but what should the international community do to uphold the principles of the United Nations Charter and the principles of international law as well as the relevant resolutions that have already been adopted by the Security Council?

Settlement activity and Israeli occupation is a war crime which goes against the grain of the fourth Geneva Convention. That is why the settlers and those who incite settlement activity are accomplices in this crime.

Since this is the case. you must take sanction measures within the framework of international law and the – to bring Israel to account before international justice. We must also prevent or stop any support for settlement activity.

Here again, we call on the international community to boycott Israeli settlements and to boycott those settlements, to boycott the products and the goods from Israel, to not accept their situation. Do not accept the Israeli diplomatic representations, and prevent your companies from establishing connections with these settlements. This is the only peaceful and legal means that will enable us to uphold justice and to implement the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter.

Thank you, Chairman.

Syrian Arab Republic: At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Rima Khalaf, the Under-Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary of the ESCWA, as well as the members of the Committee for their efforts towards preparing the report. And as expected, the existing report of the ESCWA has mentioned a number of violations against the Syrian population in the Golan and the Palestinian people, which reiterates the fact that Israel is employing a strategy which is mainly based on the displacement of population and the expropriation of land. And in relation to the implementation of the UN-related resolutions, we would like to mention a number of facts in this regard.

First of all, the Israeli occupying authorities are still imposing their discriminatory laws on the people of the occupied Syrian Golan, and this comes as a flagrant challenge of the UN resolutions, especially the Security Council Resolution 497 of 1981, and these authorities encourage the settlement in the Golan by giving financial incentives, which amount to $12,000 for every Israeli family which accepts to settle in the Golan for at least five years. In the meantime, it is demolishing Syrians' houses and prevent them from construction.

Second, the Israeli occupying authorities apply their discriminatory and racist policies as they deprive the Syrians in the Golan from benefiting from their main liveli – source of livelihood, namely agriculture. And it has appropriated the land of the Syrians as well as the economic blockade on the Syrians as they are deprived from marketing their goods in their mother country, Syria. And in the meantime, Israelis dumping hazardous waste in the territories of the Syrian-occupied Golan, a matter that eventually has very adverse health effects.

Third, the Israeli occupying forces apply very discriminatory policies when it comes to pricing as Syrians have to pay $1 for every cubic meter of water; however, whereas the settlers, the Israelis settlers, only pay $0.30.

Fourth, the occupying authorities is expropriating the agricultural and arable land of Syrians in the Golan in order to build electricity plants and to extract the wealth from the land of the Golan.

Fifth, in addition to all the foregoing, the Israeli occupying authorities, since the start or the outset of the crisis in Syria, they are providing logistic and medical help to the mercenaries and terrorists of Nusra Front. And recently, they have started to impose their influence and power on the Yarmouk Valley and Raqqad Valley which are contingent to the Golan in collaboration with the terrorists armed groups. And these groups are working on behalf of the Israeli occupying forces by trying to evacuate these areas.

And also there are recent reports that say that the Israeli authorities are trying to talk the Syrian people in these zones out of their land and try to lure them out by way of migration.

Mr. Chair, the facts that we have just mentioned in addition to the other facts that are contained in the ESCWA report and all the inhumane and discriminatory practices of the Israeli occupation, this leads eventually to the impediment of all the efforts geared toward socioeconomic development and it even exacerbates the suffering by the Syrians and the Palestinians who are suffering from the Israeli occupation. And we call upon all the member states to stand up in solidarity with the legitimate rights of the Arab peoples who are suffering from the occupation. And we would also like to reiterate that we have to work against the efforts by Israel to try to whiten its picture.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for her statement, and I know give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia, you have the floor.

Saudi Arabia: In the name of God, the Clement and the Merciful, Chairman, I would like to begin by thanking you for giving me the floor to discuss this agenda item, the report on natural resources. We endorse the statement made by Thailand on behalf of the G-77 in China and the statement made by Tunisia on behalf of The Arab Group. Chairman, the United Nations reports mention a great number of blatant violations carried out by the Israeli occupiers as part of their military, the bellicose policies against the Palestinian people. This is a kind of apartheid. There are settlement activities, use of force, destruction of houses and agricultural land. Policies that impose constraints and restrictions on movement of Palestinian people, depriving them from also of medical services and education, jobs, markets, natural resources. An economic siege has been imposed in Palestine, in particular on humanitarian agencies in Palestine. The rate of unemployment has increased and the rate of productivity and salaries have decreased. The rate of poverty and the issues of living conditions have also been established.

Since the beginning of the Israeli occupation, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has always supported the rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to create an independent state that is sovereign with Jerusalem as its capital. In this context, we restate once again that the Jewish people have no right to the mosque, and we condemn the activities that have been carried out by the Israeli authorities. The mosque is a Palestinian, Arab – Muslim property. Any references to the Torah in these places are based on historic tales preached by the occupiers of Palestine. UNESCO affirms what I’m saying. Not changing the status quo, or rather we should change the status quo, and any attempts to impose the contrary of what I have said with regard to the property of the Palestinian people is erroneous. We denounce the attacks on churches by Jewish settlers. All of these things have always been carried out in full view of the international community. These are practices which violate the sacred nature of these places.

Chairman, the kingdom of Saudi Arabia sees the settlement of the Palestinian issue as one of its priorities. We wish to end the conflict, and we wish to establish a peace agreement in the region and a Convention which imposes the withdrawal from – of Israelis from the occupied territories and those territories that have been occupied since 1967 and to reestablish the rights of the Palestinian people, the rights that have been confiscated from the Palestinian people, indeed.

My country would call on Israel to cease these violations of international law and to submit to the United Nations Resolution to cease its exploitation of Palestinian water resources, environmental pollution, and the misuse of agricultural land.

It is time for Israel to respect the decisions of this institution, of this committee. These decisions that reinstate the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, their right to make use of their own natural resources, and their right to receive compensation and damages following the excessive use of these natural resources by the occupying force. Exploitation of resources, which is by nature illegal. Chairman, we express our considerations to the Economic and Social Committee of the United Nations for West Africa – West Asia, rather. ESCWA. We thank them for their report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation.

I would here like to state that it is very important to talk about the issue of tourism in Palestine. Palestinians do not benefit from this sector because of Israeli procedures. It is very important that the next report of ESCWA mention these obstacles, which impede the development of Palestinian tourism, and that this report allow the Palestinian people to achieve the SDGs.

Chairman, we are obliged to cooperate in the United Nations to establish a healthy and balanced environment for international relations and to settle disputes by peaceful means. It is very important that the United Nations and the international community continue their support for the Palestinian people so that they can in an effective way make use of their natural resources.

Thank you, Chairman.