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**COMMITTE ON THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, 371ST MEETING (AM)**

**Rights Committee Approves Work Programme for Next International Seminar on Question of Palestine, Hears Briefing on Moscow Meeting**

In a brief session this morning, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People approved the provisional work programme for the United Nations International meeting on the Question of Palestine, to be held in Brussels on 3 and 4 September.

By organizing the meeting on the theme “Israeli settlements as obstacles to peace — possible ways forward”, said Chairman Fodé Seck (Senegal), the Committee aimed to contribute to international efforts in support of Israeli-Palestinian peace.  On its margins, a separate meeting for consultations with civil society groups, organized jointly with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), would be held.

Offering an overview of the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, held in Moscow on 1 and 2 July, Rapporteur Christopher Grima (Malta) said the fact that it was convened in the Russian Federation, a permanent member of the Security Council and important player in the region, was significant.  Held under the theme, “The two-State solution:  a key prerequisite for achieving peace and stability in the Middle East”, the meeting was intended to mark a high point in this year’s programme.

“We were not disappointed,” he said, noting that senior-level participation by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the Palestinian Foreign Minister, the Arab League Secretary-General, the OIC Assistant Secretary-General and others contributed to the high turnout.  Seventy-three Governments were represented by 140 delegates, while 45 journalists were accredited from 15 media organizations.  The Russian Government was represented by the Director for International Organizations at the Foreign Ministry.

In the opening session, said the Committee’s Rapporteur, the Special Coordinator spoke on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General, warning of a “tide of terror and extremism” engulfing the region.  He said the two-State solution was the only viable way forward, and he urged the Israeli leadership to freeze settlements.

In the plenaries, Mr. Grima said, delegates cautioned against placing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict “on the back burner”.  The conflict helped the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Sham (ISIL/ISIS) recruiters and threatened to spark a religious war over Jerusalem, with fallout far beyond the region.  There had been no political process for more than a year.  Although the Israeli Prime Minister had reversed course and expressed support for the two-State solution, participants expressed doubts about whether there was any substance to such new statements.

Calls were made to expand the Quartet on the Middle East in a balanced manner to boost its effectiveness, he continued, as well as to raise the cost of occupation for Israel and boycott settlements.  “All these are daunting challenges that our Committee will be following up on in the months to come,” he added.

Also today, the Committee, acting on the recommendation of its Working Group, accredited two civil society organizations:  the Gaza-based Palestinians Without Frontiers, and the United National Organization for Human Rights, based in Egypt.

The Committee, established by the General Assembly in 1975, is charged with recommending a programme to enable Palestinians to exercise their inalienable rights, as recognized by Assembly resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974.  Its programme of international meetings and conferences focuses attention on the urgency of bringing about the two-State solution and mobilizing assistance to Palestinians.