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Chair: Mr. Diallo (Senegal)
later: Ms. Rebedea (Vice-Chair) (Romania)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 61: 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/68/77-E/2013/13)

1. **Ms. Khalaf** (Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)), introducing the Commission's report 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, covering the period from 30 March 2012 to 29 March 2013 (A/68/77-E/2013/13), and accompanying her statement with a digitized slide presentation, said that Israel's discriminatory policies towards the Palestinians amounted to de facto segregation. They included the establishment of two entirely separate legal systems, one for Israeli settlers and another for Palestinians. The latter did not enjoy equal use of roads and infrastructure or equal access to basic services and water resources. They were subjected to a matrix of military orders that applied only to Palestinians. The zoning regime applied by Israel effectively allowed Palestinian construction on only 1 per cent of Area C in the West Bank and 13 per cent of East Jerusalem. Many Palestinians were thus forced to build without a permit, and their property faced the risk of demolition.

2. Israel had continued to pursue a policy of disproportionate and excessive use of force and arbitrary detention. From 30 March 2012 to 29 March 2013, 268 Palestinians had been killed and 4,483 others injured by Israeli security forces and settlers. In November 2012, Israel had launched a military offensive against the Gaza Strip, killing 99 Palestinian civilians, including 33 children. Israel continued to use practices that amounted to torture. The systematic and institutionalized ill-treatment of child prisoners had also been documented.

3. Israel had continued to forcibly displace Palestinians, including 815 people owing to home demolitions in the West Bank and 3,000 owing to the November 2012 offensive on the Gaza Strip. Since the beginning of the occupation, Israel had seized some 40 per cent of the West Bank for settlements, something

that amounted to the illegal transfer of its population into occupied territory. Although all of the 150 settlements and approximately 100 unauthorized outposts were illegal, their inhabitants now accounted for some 19 per cent of the total population of the West Bank. The E1 settlement plan, if implemented, would completely sever East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank and compromise the territorial contiguity between the northern and southern parts thereof. There had been an increase in settler violence and intimidation, including racist attacks against Palestinian people, property and holy sites. Israeli security forces had often failed to intervene.

4. In its advisory opinion of 9 July 2004, the International Court of Justice had concluded that the West Bank wall and its associated regime were contrary to international law, and that Israel was obligated to cease construction of and dismantle the wall and to make reparations for damages caused by its construction. Israel had yet to comply. In addition, Palestinians faced daily obstacles and humiliation in their movements.

5. Israel had maintained the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip since June 2007, which amounted to the collective punishment of over 1.6 million people. The Israeli military also prevented Palestinians from accessing 35 per cent of agricultural land in the Gaza Strip and 85 per cent of the maritime areas to which they were entitled under the Oslo Agreements.

6. Israel exploited around 89 per cent of available water in the Palestinian territory and prevented Palestinians from developing or drilling wells. Per capita consumption of water was below 70 litres per day for Palestinians, as compared with up to 450 litres per day for Israelis living in illegal settlements. In the Gaza Strip, between 90 and 95 per cent of water was unfit for human consumption, and the deterioration of sanitation owing to the blockade caused about 89 million litres of untreated or partially treated sewage to be discharged into the sea every day. In the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, only 31 per cent of Palestinians were connected to the sewage network.

7. Economic growth in the West Bank and Gaza Strip continued to be unsustainable owing to persistent restrictions on movement and access. Unemployment in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had remained high, rising to 22.9 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2012. In 2011, 25.8 per cent of individuals in the West

Bank and the Gaza Strip had lived in poverty and 12.9 per cent in deep poverty. In East Jerusalem, 78 per cent of Palestinians — the worst figure on record — lived below the poverty line. The World Bank had estimated that if restrictions in Area C were lifted, Palestinian gross domestic product (GDP) and employment would each increase by 35 per cent. A rough calculation showed that the Palestinian economy had lost \$16.5 billion in 2004 constant prices over the previous 10 years. Over 40 per cent of Palestinian households were classified as food insecure or vulnerable to food insecurity, and high rates of anaemia had been recorded. The offensive on the Gaza Strip had damaged 286 schools, and another 38 were at risk of demolition in the West Bank. The harassment of pupils and teachers had continued. In addition, 25,000 to 50,000 people in the Gaza Strip would need some form of psychological care.

8. Turning to the occupied Syrian Golan, Security Council resolution 497 (1981) stated that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights was null and void and without international legal effect. Israel had nevertheless continued its de facto annexation policies, discriminating against Syrian Arab citizens in favour of the 19,000 illegal Israeli settlers. The measures taken included restrictions on building permits and discrimination in urban planning, essential services and water allocation, particularly for irrigation.

9. The prolonged Israeli occupation and its discriminatory regime and practices should not be allowed to persist with impunity. The international community should make every possible effort to ensure the implementation of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

10. **Mr. AlHantouli** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that for decades the Palestinian people had suffered from the ongoing Israeli occupation and the killings, arbitrary arrests of civilians (including children), land confiscations, destruction of property and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, all of which undermined the Palestinian economy. Those policies were part of a systematic strategy aimed at the forced displacement of the Palestinian people.

11. Most Palestinian farmers depended on the cultivation of olive trees, which was a part of

Palestinian history and society. The sale of olive oil could bring tens of millions of dollars to the Palestinian economy. However, the current harvest was being impeded by a brutal and systematic assault on the part of the Israeli occupation authorities and settler gangs, which were uprooting trees, stealing harvests and flooding farmland with waste water, causing severe economic and environmental damage. That very day, settlers had destroyed 600 trees near the town of Nablus. Israel denied the Palestinian agricultural sector its vital economic role not only by preventing access to agricultural land and water, but also by depriving farmers of access to local and foreign markets. The Palestinian economy was denied access to 40 per cent of the land and 82 per cent of the groundwater in the West Bank.

12. Israel exploited more than 90 per cent of Palestinian water resources for its exclusive use. Average water consumption in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was 70 litres per capita per day, below the minimum recommended by the World Health Organization (100 litres per day), and well below the average in Israel of 300 litres per capita per day.

13. Israel's continued blockade of Gaza hindered the movement of imports, exports and persons. Palestinian farmers were denied access to more than 35 per cent of the area of the Gaza Strip, and Palestinian fishermen were denied access to more than 85 per cent of Palestinian fishing waters. The blockade prevented the implementation of necessary water projects, leading to what the United Nations Development Programme had described as a worsening humanitarian crisis.

14. The apartheid annexation wall was 732 kilometres long, and 87 per cent of it lay within the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Its location had been chosen deliberately to take control of Palestinian resources, particularly groundwater, and make the State of Palestine less viable.

15. Settlement activities were the principal obstacle to a just and comprehensive two-State solution. The international community should therefore take effective measures to prevail on Israel to bring a definitive end to its colonial occupation. The State of Palestine welcomed the decisions taken by certain States to send a clear message to the occupying Power, for instance by imposing a specific label on products from illegal Israeli settlements. It also welcomed the guidelines recently adopted by the European

Commission concerning the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the European Union from 2014 onwards. The guidelines represented a step in the right direction and should be developed further. A strong and sustainable Palestinian economy could develop only once the State of Palestine gained its freedom and sovereignty over its natural resources.

16. *Ms. Rebedea (Romania), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

17. **Mr. Elkaraksy** (Egypt) said that the Palestinian and Syrian peoples continued to suffer as a result of Israel's arbitrary measures and policies, which constituted flagrant violations of numerous international conventions. Israel, the occupying Power, had imposed a virtual apartheid in the occupied territories. Settler attacks on Palestinians had increased, as had Israeli roadblocks in the West Bank. The Palestinian Authority was facing a financial crisis as it struggled to meet its payroll and other expenses in a context of sharply curtailed foreign investment. Economic development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was not sustainable.

18. Israel's actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan contravened the Hague conventions of 1899 and 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Palestinians and Syrians under occupation faced discrimination in access to water, and the separation wall further hindered access to natural resources. The world must not stand idly by in the face of the humanitarian and socioeconomic crisis they were suffering. Egypt therefore called upon all Member States to support the draft resolution that would be submitted under agenda item 61.

19. **Mr. Haniff** (Malaysia) said that the international community overwhelmingly condemned the continued occupation by Israel as a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, human rights law, the Charter of the United Nations and United Nations resolutions. Israeli forces continued to act with absolute impunity and in utter contempt of international law.

20. Referring to paragraph 16 of the report, he said that Israeli policies had led directly to the death and injury of civilians, including women and children. The number of Palestinians killed and injured between

March 2012 and March 2013 was more than double the figure for the same period the previous year.

21. As a member of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, he had recently visited Amman and Cairo on a United Nations mission. The Special Committee had heard testimony of victims of and witnesses to the illegal blockade of Gaza. The blockade continued to cause a decline in standards of living, unprecedented levels of unemployment and unrelenting poverty. Prospects for growth were stifled by the severe export restrictions that Israel had imposed. Since 2007, the output of Gazan fisheries had declined from 4,000 to 1,500 tons a year. Farmers had been affected by a near total restriction on exports and enforcement of a buffer zone inside Gaza. Malaysia called on the international community to pressure the Israeli Government to allow Palestinians to export their farm products; as it stood, 80 per cent of Palestinians continued to depend on the international community for humanitarian assistance.

22. Some multinational corporations were profiting from Israeli settlement enterprises. Businesses had a responsibility not to be complicit in Israeli policies and practices that openly violated the rights of Palestinians. It was inconceivable that a business might be unaware of the illegal nature of Israeli settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Scrupulous due diligence and a clear awareness of potential legal consequences for businesses associated with the Israeli settlement enterprise were imperative.

23. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Israel's actions had exacerbated the sanitation crisis, destroyed agricultural land and destabilized the delicate ecosystem. Israeli settlers had consistently harassed and committed violence against Palestinians and damaged Palestinian olive groves. In the Golan Heights, high taxes and restrictions on water use had placed farmers at a disadvantage.

24. The United Nations development system should strengthen its assistance programmes to mitigate the hardships faced by the Palestinians and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan. The relevant United Nations agencies, particularly the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), should receive adequate and reliable financial resources to facilitate that work.

Israel, the occupying Power, must refrain from the exploitation, damage, causing of loss or depletion, and endangerment of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan.

25. **Ms. Dali** (Tunisia) said that her entire region was in the throes of a struggle for freedom, dignity, decent life and self-determination. During that time, the Palestinian struggle and Israeli repression alike had continued unabated. Tunisia, which had been at the forefront of the revolutions, supported the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with absolute sovereignty over its historic territory, as well as the recovery of all occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan and parts of Lebanese territory.

26. Numerous United Nations reports had documented Israel's violations of international law, which must cease as a first step towards ending the occupation. In order to realize sustainable development in the region, the Palestinian and Syrian peoples must first enjoy permanent sovereignty over their natural resources. That objective would require international solidarity and concerted action.

27. **Mr. Al Zeed** (Saudi Arabia) said that the occupation impeded sustainable development and caused poverty, food insecurity and unemployment. Israel's arbitrary policies hampered the efforts of donor countries, such as Saudi Arabia, to implement development projects. The Palestinian people was entitled to seek compensation for the resulting exploitation, damage, causing of loss or depletion, and endangerment of its natural resources. Construction of settlements and the separation wall must cease, as they constituted a grave violation of international law, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and the relevant United Nations resolutions. The international community should take practical measures to prevent Israel from exploiting natural resources and endangering the environment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan.

28. **Mr. Al-Hajri** (Oman) said that his country was working with other Arab countries and the international community to facilitate direct negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis. The United Nations had proved unable to shoulder its responsibilities in supporting the establishment of an independent State

on the basis of the 4 June 1967 borders. As a result, settlements had expanded, Palestinian land continued to be confiscated, and the stranglehold on the Palestinian people was ever tighter. The occupation authorities had felt able to persist in preventing farmers from gathering their crops, not to mention hindering social contact among Palestinians. The international community should take practical steps towards a just and comprehensive solution and confidence-building among the peoples of the region.

29. **Mr. Albu-Mohammed** (Iraq) said that the Israeli occupation had raised the cost of production and isolated the Palestinian economy from the global system. The inhumane blockade on Gaza hindered the movement of goods, and the illegal confiscation of land had destroyed the infrastructure of the domestic economy. The Israeli occupation authorities had recently allowed companies to exploit natural resources in the Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan, in violation of international law. By building settlements, expropriating natural resources and subjecting the Palestinian economy to its law, Israel was controlling the future of the Palestinian people and preventing sustainable development.

30. It was essential for the Palestinians and the inhabitants of the Syrian Golan to gain full sovereignty over their natural resources. His country supported the legitimate struggle, grounded in international law, for the establishment of an independent, contiguous State of Palestine on the borders of 4 June 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital. He urged the parties to the peace negotiations to accelerate progress towards a two-State solution.

31. **Ms. Bajaña** (Nicaragua) said that the occupation economy affecting all areas of Palestinians' lives, especially in the Gaza Strip, as well as ongoing attacks by the Israeli military, made it impossible for Palestinians to focus on development. Nicaragua, which had also suffered from foreign aggression and occupation at different times in its history, reaffirmed the legitimacy of the Palestinian people's struggle for an independent and sovereign State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

32. The first step towards sustainable economic development for the Palestinian people was to enforce United Nations resolutions calling on Israel to recognize the self-determination and sovereignty of that people and to allow the return of Palestinian

refugees to the territory that had historically belonged to them. Nicaragua condemned Israel's violations of international law. With its expansionist and genocidal policies, it had made State terrorism a way of life in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

33. The Committee should support the construction of vital infrastructure and continue to denounce Israel until such as time as the Palestinian people could exercise its inalienable rights. The lack of progress in the recently resumed peace negotiations proved once again that Israel's real intention was not peace but rather to hold out until it could permanently alter the demographic and religious make-up of those territories. The international community should designate 2014 as International Year of Solidarity with Palestine. That year should see the admission of Palestine as a full member in the United Nations.

34. **Ms. Al-Hadid** (Jordan) said that permanent sovereignty over natural resources was a prerequisite for development, which depended on an enabling environment with an appropriate legal and institutional policymaking framework. Prolongation of the physical, institutional and administrative restrictions imposed by Israel would make revival of the Palestinian economy all the more costly and time-consuming. Already, constraints on Palestinians hindered access to farmland and other resources, costing them \$3.4 billion each year. Limits on the movement of goods, services, people and finances into and out of Palestine, along with donor aid shortfalls, had reduced private employment and household income growth.

35. Institution-building was a core part of development in Palestine, and would require a donor coordination framework to enhance aid predictability and manage financing shortfalls. Her delegation called upon the international community to scale up its development efforts and assume its responsibility towards the Palestinian people.

36. **Mr. Al-Mutri** (Kuwait) said that Israel had established two separate legal systems in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Its arbitrary and inhumane acts of repression blatantly violated international law and human rights conventions. Israel was cutting off the Palestinian economy from the outside world. Settlement expansion and the demolition of homes, mosques and schools had escalated in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Those actions, which sought to change the demographic composition of the

Occupied Palestinian Territory, showed that Israel's engagement with the peace process was not genuine. Moreover, they contravened numerous provisions of international law, including article 55 of the Hague Regulations and article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The dumping of waste in the Occupied Palestinian Territory violated the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal. The ongoing blockade on the Gaza Strip was a clear case of systematic collective punishment and therefore infringed article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The international community must press for the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, and for an end to Israel's occupation of the Arab territories seized in 1967, including the occupied Syrian Golan and parts of Lebanese territory.

37. **Ms. Soemarno** (Indonesia) said that every country had a sovereign right to exercise permanent sovereignty over its natural resources in pursuit of economic growth, sustainable development and the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The separation barrier, water and food insecurity and restrictions to mobility and humanitarian assistance had suffocated the economy, exacerbating unemployment and shrinking the scope for private sector business. The deliberations of the Committee would be meaningless if it did not address that situation.

38. Over the previous five years, Indonesia had trained over 1,200 Palestinians in a range of areas. In 2014, her country would host a conference on cooperation among East Asian countries for Palestinian development. The conference would seek to secure sustainable assistance for Palestine and address the practical needs of the Palestinian people. Indonesia reaffirmed its unwavering support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the establishment of an independent, sovereign State of Palestine. Peace on the basis of the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, would constitute an important element of any agreement reached in the current negotiations.

39. **Mr. Al-Thani** (Qatar) said that by depriving the Palestinians of basic services and natural resources, Israel had brought on unemployment and an unprecedented drop in their living standards. Israel's actions prevented sustainable development,

contravened international law, hindered the realization of peace and undermined the credibility of the United Nations. Israel should comply with Security Council resolution 497 (1981) concerning the occupied Syrian Golan; open the border crossings of the Gaza Strip to humanitarian assistance; and refrain from exploiting, damaging, endangering or causing loss or depletion of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan.

40. **Mr. Sareer** (Maldives) said that discriminatory practices had had a dire social and economic impact on the Palestinians and on their natural resources and environment. Violations included the expansion of Israeli settlements, the construction of the wall, the exploitation of Palestinian natural resources, home demolitions, revocation of Palestinians' residency rights and severe restrictions on the movement of goods and persons. East Jerusalem and the West Bank had effectively been separated. Israel controlled almost all Palestinian water resources. Sanitation facilities were inadequate. Solid waste was dumped without restriction on Palestinian lands, fields and side roads, endangering the environment and making the land useless for agriculture. Those policies were indicative of malice rather than neglect.

41. The exploitation of natural resources, restrictions on access to water and land, and discriminatory laws also continued to impede economic growth in the occupied Syrian Golan.

42. Only the recognition of the State of Palestine, with full territorial integrity and sovereignty over its natural resources, could make it possible to achieve social harmony, legal equality, economic opportunity and sustainable development. Maldives believed wholeheartedly in a two-State solution and urged the United Nations to take effective action to that end. It earnestly hoped that the recently resumed negotiations would lead to the settlement of key issues.

43. Ms. Alshamsi (United Arab Emirates) said that, after the recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer State, Israel had retaliated by withholding the tax revenues that it collected on behalf of the Palestinian Government. Its expansionist apartheid policies included the construction of the separation wall, the blockade on the Gaza Strip and the denial of access to natural resources, water, roads, infrastructure and basic services. As a result, the Occupied

Palestinian Territory lacked access to international markets and suffered widespread poverty and food insecurity. Israel had also continued to build illegal settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan in order to Judaize the area and alter its historic Arab character.

44. The Palestinian people had an inalienable right to determine its own future through the establishment of an independent State on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Syria had a right to seek the return of the occupied Syrian Golan, which was an inseparable part of its national territory. The Security Council should assume its responsibilities by prevailing on Israel to bring an end to its aggressive policies. Her country would continue to assist Palestinian State-building and development efforts. She urged the international community to do the same, particularly through support for UNRWA.

45. **Ms. Rocha Ponce** (Plurinational Republic of Bolivia) said that Israel must respect the inalienable right of the Palestinian people, and of all States in the region, to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders. The United Nations must remain completely involved in all decolonization processes, consistent with General Assembly resolution 65/119 on the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

46. The occupying Power had devastated vital infrastructure such as water and sewage networks, which were enshrined as a human right under the new Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, water consumption by approximately 1 million Palestinians in 492 communities was below the level recommended by the World Health Organization. Israel maintained virtually exclusive control over aquifers, wells and other water infrastructure in the West Bank and had uprooted thousands of olive trees. The separation wall had caused flooding and land degradation in adjacent areas, not to mention cutting off access to agricultural land and endangering biodiversity. Her country called on Israel immediately to respect the inalienable sovereignty of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources.

47. **Mr. Jawhara** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, although the United Nations had adopted dozens of resolutions affirming the sovereignty of the Syrians in

the occupied Syrian Golan and the Palestinians over their natural resources, Israel and Israeli settler militias continued systematically to exploit the natural resources of the occupied Syrian Golan and occupied Palestine and to prevent Syrians and Palestinians from exercising their rights. Israel ensured that only settlers benefited from the natural resources of those territories, and, by means of ongoing confiscations of Arab land, was continuing its settlement expansion policy. Occupation forces and settlers had set fire to rare forests and uprooted olive and fruit trees near Syrian villages and on agricultural land adjacent to the ceasefire line. They had imposed a blockade that prevented Syrian villagers from selling their apple harvest, which was often their sole source of income. In collaboration with Israeli, United States and European companies, the occupation forces were also confiscating land from Syrian villages and pressuring their inhabitants to leave so that wind farms could be constructed. Furthermore, Israel's policy of burying nuclear and chemical waste in the occupied Syrian Golan seriously threatened the delicate ecology of that area.

48. Those inhuman and immoral practices prevented sustainable development, impeded health care delivery and caused poverty and unemployment. They demonstrated Israel's lack of respect for international norms and instruments, particularly Security Council resolution 497 (1981). The Committee and ESCWA had an important role to play in shedding light on such activities. All human rights advocates should work to bring an end to Israel's barbaric occupation of Arab territories.

49. **Mr. Dehghani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation was seriously concerned at the mass imprisonment and administrative detention of Palestinians; the routine demolition of Palestinian homes; the intensification of illegal settlement activities; and the use of violence by Israeli settlers, who were seldom held to account. The blockade on the Gaza Strip prevented the population from meeting basic daily needs, was a violation of international humanitarian law and posed a serious threat to international peace and security and regional stability. The ongoing settlement campaign contravened the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Fourth Geneva Convention and the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

50. The occupation lay at the heart of the protracted crisis in the Middle East. Any solution to the crisis would require an end to the occupation and the establishment of an independent and viable State of Palestine with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital. His Government firmly supported the Palestinian people in its legitimate struggle for self-determination.

51. The Golan was an integral part of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, and all measures to undermine that country's territorial integrity should be condemned. His delegation was deeply concerned at the deterioration of the human rights situation in the area.

52. **Mr. Escalona Ojeda** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the report of the Commission left no doubt as to Israel's daily violations of international law, United Nations resolutions, international human rights law and humanitarian law, and the opinion of the International Court of Justice. Those violations, which constituted clear crimes against humanity, included indiscriminate and excessive use of force, violent practices amounting to torture, arbitrary detention, massive forced displacement, home demolitions, prevention of access to water and agricultural land, contamination of water, theft of harvests, uprooting of olive trees, attacks on holy sites, the collective punishment of the Gaza Strip and the harassment of teachers and pupils. They were intended to undermine the only possible solution to the conflict, namely the establishment of two States living side by side in peaceful coexistence. It was no longer enough to denounce Israel; the time had come to consider other ways to bring it into compliance with international law.

53. **Mr. Mohamad** (Lebanon) said that it might appear inconceivable, in an age of globalization and the free movement of goods and persons, that a repressive Power could prevent an occupied people from enjoying the universally acknowledged right to land and water, and could persist in ignoring international law, human rights principles and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

54. The delegation of Lebanon remained committed to those resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative. He expected, however, that when the representative of Israel took the floor, his statement would merely confirm his delegation's disregard for the views of the international community.

So long as that was the case, the Palestinian issue would be an open sore.

55. **Mr. Malawane** (South Africa) said that, during 2013, Israeli squatters had intensified their activities in the West Bank, particularly by destroying olive trees. The prolonged Israeli occupation and repressive and discriminatory practices had led to loss of land and productive resources; a decline in GDP; a deepening fiscal crisis; lower wages; and rising poverty and unemployment. Israel had withheld and redirected tax revenues collected on behalf of the Government of the State of Palestine, further hampering the ability of the Palestinian Authority to mobilize domestic resources.

56. South Africa had provided diplomatic training to Palestinian officials and financial contributions to UNRWA. However, assistance from the international community, United Nations agencies and donor countries would not solve the problem. Donor efforts were directed towards short-term relief, but the system of closures and restrictions was causing lasting damage to the Palestinian economy. Dependence on international assistance was not sustainable, particularly given its recent decline. Nor could aid be a substitute for sovereignty over land, borders, trade, natural resources and economic policy. Only through a viable two-State solution could the Palestinian people enjoy sovereignty over their natural resources and realize the MDGs.

57. **Ms. Al Doseri** (Bahrain) said that the separation wall in the West Bank and the blockade on the Gaza Strip prevented sustainable development by impeding access to water resources, farmland and fisheries. The population of the occupied Syrian Golan lived under similar restrictions. The international community should make greater efforts to ensure that the people of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan could enjoy their rights fully and without conditions. It should bring pressure to bear on Israel to comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

58. **Mr. Becher** (Israel) said that Committee's valuable time had been misused by certain Member States in pursuit of their own political agendas. What had unfolded was an anti-Israeli campaign masquerading as a Second Committee debate. Such a charade did not help tackle the major economic, social and environmental challenges facing the world; it merely undermined the Committee's credibility as a fair and impartial body. The account which the

Committee had heard was predictably one-sided, unilateral and plainly unhelpful. It exploited the cause of Palestinian self-determination in a deliberate attempt to denigrate, defame and delegitimize the State of Israel. It was based on outrageously biased accusations that presented a distorted and inaccurate version of reality on the ground, and therefore did not merit a detailed response.

59. Israel had in fact backed a project allowing the exploitation of a natural gas field in the Gaza Strip on behalf of the Palestinian Authority. That project had the potential fundamentally to change the fortunes of the Palestinian people in a manner not matched by any of Israel's detractors, for all their rhetoric. It showed the immense potential of Israeli-Palestinian cooperation. Yet such facts appeared to be completely irrelevant to many participants in the current discussion.

60. Core issues, including that of water resources, should be resolved through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. The road to peace ran through Ramallah and Jerusalem, not through United Nations Headquarters.

61. There was no blockade on the Gaza Strip. Indeed, all of the humanitarian aid entering the Strip came from Israel. Moreover, it would hardly take a renowned explorer to discover that there was an additional entry point to the Gaza Strip besides Israel.

62. It was outrageous that the Syrian representative had the audacity to attack Israel. Despite being in the midst of a murderous rampage, the Syrian Government had found the time to fire mortar shells into the Golan region of northern Israel on 9 October 2013, not to mention attacking Palestinians in refugee camps within its own borders.

63. Israel stood prepared to share its knowledge and experience with its neighbours and to work with the Committee in addressing its mandate. He hoped that, in future, the valuable time of the Committee would be devoted entirely to the shared goals of the international community.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

64. **Mr. Jawhara** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the representative of the Israeli occupation had sought to divert the work of the Committee and accused it, and many of its members, of politicization. He had spoken of human rights and assistance to the Palestinian

people, forgetting that he represented the worst occupation ever known to humanity. The crises in the region should not distract attention from the sovereign rights of the Palestinian and Syrian peoples. The representative of the Israeli occupation had referred to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic; but the Israeli occupation authorities had contributed to the violence in the country by providing armed groups with weapons and emergency assistance, and by helping them to cross the line of separation. Those actions endangered peace and security in the region and violated the relevant Security Council resolutions, which made it clear that whoever assisted a terrorist was a terrorist.

65. The peoples of the region needed peace, security and sustainable development. The statement made by the representative of the Israeli occupation had, however, confirmed that the policies of aggression, occupation, confiscation, settlement and blockade would continue, as they were part of the ideology of the occupying Power. Any State that supported Israel and its crimes bore responsibility for that situation, which the United Nations had been unable to reverse.

66. **Mr. AlHantouli** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the expectations of the representative of Lebanon had, regrettably, been correct. True to form, the representative of the occupying Power had reacted by denying realities that had been confirmed by the United Nations, Member States and observers on the ground. Indeed, he had rubbed salt into the wound by lying. The occupying Power's approach to cooperation consisted of taking others' possessions while guarding its own.

67. The representative of the occupying Power had said that the issue ought to be resolved bilaterally. Yet although a new round of negotiations had been under way for three months, the Israeli Government had recently announced the construction of 1,500 additional settlement housing units. It was all too easy for Israel to negotiate while continuing to kill, arrest, confiscate and deny people their basic rights. The international community should take the same approach to Israel as it had to all other racist regimes in the past. Otherwise, Israel would have no reason to move towards peace.

68. **Mr. Becher** (Israel) said that his country was in no way involved in the Syrian crisis; neither side in the conflict appeared to need its help. With regard to the

Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, the parties were endeavouring to reach an agreement on all core issues. If success depended on the involvement of the United Nations, the outcome would surely be tragic for all sides.

69. **Mr. AlHantouli** (Observer for State of Palestine), said that the United Nations had a role to play in resolving the issue because the General Assembly had issued the birth certificate of the State of Israel.

70. **Mr. Jawhara** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the representative of the Israeli occupation had attacked the United Nations and shown contempt for the Organization, its resolutions and international law. All accounts indicated that his country, or rather occupying entity, was involved in the events in Syria. Anyone who represented the Israeli occupation had no human conscience whatsoever and no right to opine on the needs of the Syrian people.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.