

**Statement by the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the
Palestinian People on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the adoption of
General Assembly resolution 3376 (XXX)**

10 November 2005

Today marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Today is not a cause for celebration but rather an opportunity for all of us to reflect upon decades of failed efforts to resolve the question of Palestine. Today's anniversary also reminds us that we have to redouble our efforts at bringing about a just solution of the question of Palestine.

It was on this very day in 1975 that the General Assembly adopted resolution 3376 (XXX) establishing our Committee and outlining its mandate. In that resolution, the General Assembly expressed its deep concern that no just solution to the problem of Palestine had yet been achieved, and recognized that the problem of Palestine continued to endanger international peace and security. It reaffirmed that the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people included the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty; and the right of Palestinians to return to their homes and property, from which they had been displaced and uprooted. To this day, the Committee remains the only intergovernmental body in the entire United Nations family devoted exclusively to political aspects of the question of Palestine.

In a report submitted to the Security Council in June 1976, the Committee affirmed that the question of Palestine was at the heart of the Middle East problem and that no solution could be envisaged without fully taking into account the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. The Committee urged the Council to promote action for a just solution, taking into account all the powers conferred on it by the Charter of the United Nations. The recommendations of the Committee included a two-phase plan for the return of Palestinians to their homes and property; a timetable for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied territories by 1 June 1977, with the provision, if necessary, of temporary peacekeeping forces to facilitate the process; an end to the establishment of settlements; recognition by Israel of the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied territories pending withdrawal; and endorsement of the inherent right of Palestinians to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty in Palestine. The Committee also endorsed the view that the United Nations, which had a historical responsibility towards the Palestinian people, should render to the Palestinian authorities the necessary economic and technical assistance in order to contribute to the economic and social development of the new Palestinian State. The Committee's original recommendations were not adopted by the Security Council and have not been implemented. They, however, were endorsed by an overwhelming majority in the General Assembly, to which the Committee reports annually.

In pursuance of this mandate, the Committee's programme of work has been gradually expanded. With the support of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat, the programme came to include a variety of activities, such as the convening of international meetings and conferences in all regions of the world; a publications programme; the development of the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), containing thousands of United Nations documents related to the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict; establishing cooperation with a wide network of civil society organizations active on the question of Palestine; and organizing an annual training programme for young staff of the Palestinian Authority.

Since its inception, the Committee has advocated a peaceful solution of the question of Palestine in accordance with principles of international law. It welcomed the Middle East peace process, initiated

in 1991 at the Madrid Peace Conference, and later actively encouraged the implementation by the parties of the Oslo accords. It gave its full support to the Road Map introduced by the Quartet with a view to fulfilling the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders. At the same time and in keeping with its mandate, the Committee continues to promote the full realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and mobilize international assistance for and solidarity with the Palestinian people.

In September of this year, the Committee expressed the view that the removal of Israeli settlements from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip was a promising step that could revive negotiations within the framework of the Road Map and move forward the stalled peace process. It expressed the hope that the resulting positive momentum would be followed by similar steps in the rest of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and breathe new life into the political process. Yet, in response to events, the Committee continues to voice its concern about the creation by Israel, the occupying Power, of new facts on the ground that include settlement expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and accelerated construction of the illegal wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Committee reminds Israel that those activities contravene international law, as spelled out by the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice. It calls upon all Governments to fulfil their obligations under international law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, and take the necessary steps to ensure compliance by Israel with its international obligations.

Today, we are as committed and ready as ever to work hard to help the Palestinian people to fulfil their inalienable rights and realize their national aspirations in a State of their own. We shall carry on most vigorously the important mandate entrusted to the Committee by the General Assembly for the benefit of the Palestinian people. We shall continue our work at heightening international awareness of the question of Palestine. In this way, the Committee will contribute to maintaining the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with respect to the question of Palestine until the question has been resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner and in accordance with international legitimacy.

On behalf of the Committee, the Bureau wishes to thank all those who have joined and supported the Committee in its quest for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, including Members and Observers, intergovernmental organizations, the United Nations family of organizations and civil society. Over the past 30 years, their commitment, political activism and initiatives have strengthened the efforts of the United Nations and of the Committee.