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## Second Committee

### Summary record of the 31st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 10 November 2003, at 3 p.m.

*Chairman:* Ms. Cronenberg-Mossberg (Vice-Chairman) . . . . . (Sweden)  
*later:* Mr. Raubenheimer (Vice-Chairman). . . . . (South Africa)

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*In the absence of Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Ms. Cronenberg-Mossberg (Sweden), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

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

**Agenda item 103: 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/58/75-E/2003/21) (continued)**

1. **Ms. Romero** (International Labour Organization) said that ILO had witnessed with great concern the deterioration of the economic situation in the occupied territories, where the continuing violence and restrictions had had disastrous consequences on employment and poverty. The Israelis and the Palestinians were stuck in a vicious circle in which violence created poverty and unemployment while poverty and unemployment bred violence. It had been acknowledged by Israeli politicians that economic circumstances could not be separated from the security issue. Many people had now lost hope in the "road map" to peace, but if the Israelis and the Palestinians decided to go forward with it, ILO would help with matters within its competence.

2. Despite the situation in the occupied territories, ILO had launched an enhanced programme of technical cooperation, which included projects to improve women workers' rights and gender equality. The project entitled "Social and civil dialogue for reconstruction and reconciliation", which was designed to foster dialogue on labour issues between Israelis and Palestinians, would be implemented by early 2004. The success of the ILO operations and the protection of the rights of Palestinian workers depended ultimately on positive political developments.

3. **Mr. Rahman** (Malaysia) said that Malaysia remained deeply troubled by the impact of the continuing illegal Israeli occupation on living conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. The oppressive measures taken by Israel violated the Fourth Geneva Convention, resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council and fundamental norms of international law. The report prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) (A/58/75-E/2003/21) recorded a dismaying number of civilian deaths and injuries on both sides; the high rate of

Palestinian deaths was particularly alarming, especially as over 500 Palestinian children had been killed since September 2000. Israel must stop such atrocities.

4. The humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people was deteriorating fast. The indiscriminate use of force and other illegal measures should not be allowed to continue. Israel's settlement policies and its construction of the separation wall had deprived Palestinians of resources that were rightfully theirs. Palestinians were also discriminated against in their access to water throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. No population could endure the harsh circumstances under which the Palestinians lived. All normal life had been severely disrupted and the prospects for development remained very dim. Some 60 per cent of the Palestinian population lived below the poverty line, over 100,000 had disabilities, and 9.3 per cent of Palestinian children suffered from acute malnutrition. The international community must respond urgently to that dire situation.

5. Malaysia was also deeply concerned about the many social and economic difficulties facing the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, where Israel had demonstrated no intention of curbing its expansionist policies. The Israeli authorities had ravaged the Golan by destroying forests and permitting factories in the Israeli settlements to dump untreated chemical wastes. The situation was compounded by the restrictions on the access of the Arab population to water.

6. The General Assembly had repeatedly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources and had recognized the right of those people to claim restitution if those resources were damaged. It was clear from the report that the natural resources had been indiscriminately plundered by Israel, with consequent severe damage to the environment. Some 150 Palestinian communities had no independent water supply, and the natural flow of water to Palestinian areas had been diverted. The international community must put pressure on Israel to cease such inhumane practices, end its occupation and honour its international obligations.

7. **Mr. Al-Kawari** (Qatar) said that the ESCWA report reflected the harsh conditions in which Palestinians were living under the illegal Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory,

including Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan. Qatar's position had always been that peace negotiations must result in the restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people in accordance with Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace. The Declaration of Principles signed by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel in 1993 emphasized the need for Israel's total withdrawal, but developments since 2000 had had a serious impact on the peace process as Israel continued to flout the wishes of the international community.

8. Notwithstanding the Security Council resolutions calling on Israel to preserve the integrity of the occupied Arab lands, guarantee freedom of movement and end its arbitrary actions, Israel was striving to preserve the status quo. It had furthermore done great damage to the environment by uprooting trees, laying waste to land and destroying dwellings. In 2001, the Committee Against Torture had concluded that in some instances Israeli practices could be classified as degrading. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had been refused information about its staff members detained by Israel. The impact of Israel's arbitrary measures on the infrastructure of the occupied territories was being felt particularly severely by women and children. The occupying authorities had reinforced their presence in the occupied Syrian Golan, where the Arab population had suffered a further deterioration in its living conditions, and they were seriously damaging the environment by destroying forests and allowing the dumping of chemical wastes.

9. Humanitarian aid was not the solution to what was a political crisis in the occupied territories. Political action must be taken to end Israel's blockade and other constraints imposed on the civilian population. Lasting peace could not be achieved by building walls but only by Israel's withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 border.

10. **Mr. Al-Khasawneh** (Jordan) said that his delegation was disappointed to learn that the living conditions of Palestinians and Syrians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan had continued to deteriorate as a direct result of Israel's occupation and the unlawful measures taken by the Israeli Government in contravention of binding international humanitarian law. Non-compliance with the whole array of resolutions adopted by the various organs of the United Nations had become a permanent

feature of Israel's dealings with the United Nations. In particular, it had failed to respond to General Assembly resolution 57/269 reaffirming the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural and economic resources.

11. Israel continued to unlawfully use and to degrade the water resources of the occupied territories, where 150 Palestinian communities had no independent water supply. Such action exacerbated the existing water shortage and had an adverse impact on the region's fragile environment. Environmental degradation was, in turn, leading to the spread of diseases and to higher mortality rates among vulnerable groups.

12. Israel's continuing illegal settlement activity and land confiscation were alarming; indeed they were violations of the law of armed conflict and of international humanitarian treaty and customary law. Such activity threatened to destroy the prospects for the emergence of a viable Palestinian State. Furthermore, the construction of the separation wall in the West Bank was not only unlawful but also had devastating socio-economic and humanitarian repercussions.

13. Jordan had always been committed to the search for a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The emergence of an independent Palestinian State in the entirety of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and a full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan were the cardinal components of a comprehensive peace. Jordan therefore called upon Israel to cease forthwith its settlement activity and the construction of the separation wall, to end its policies of closure and practices of land confiscation and depletion of resources and to resume the peace process with a view to establishing a comprehensive peace in accordance with the agreed terms of reference.

14. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) said that the report before the Committee fully documented the barbarity of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and of the Syrian Golan.

15. Given that the Committee was concerned primarily with sustainable development, poverty eradication and attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, above all through the exploitation of natural resources, the illegal exportation by Israel of the natural resources of the Palestinian territories and the occupied Syrian Golan was of direct concern to it.

16. The separation wall Israel that was currently building in occupied Palestine was estimated to be three times as high and twice as long as the Berlin Wall. It would annex 10 per cent of Palestinian territory, result in widespread destruction of agricultural land, deny Palestinian farmers access to their land and deprive them of the water they needed to farm it as well as isolating a swathe of land between the Green Line and the wall, much of which was planted with olive trees and used for the cultivation of field crops.

17. **Mr. Sabbagh** (Syrian Arab Republic) noted that the report before the Committee (A/58/75-E/2003/21) provided many examples of the use of excessive force by the Israeli army of occupation, destruction of homes, theft of water resources, confiscation and bulldozing of agricultural land, random killing of civilians, including children, and other atrocities.

18. In the occupied Syrian Golan, the occupation forces used various means of oppressing the Syrian Arab population, including arbitrary arrests, torture and humiliation in Israeli prisons, and were continuing to confiscate land, agricultural crops, livestock and water as well as imposing exorbitant taxes on the population. The Golan environment had been depleted by the uprooting of trees, the burning of forests and the practice of allowing factories in the Israeli settlements to dump untreated chemical waste.

19. The Israeli Government had continued its policy of expanding the settlements, which were illegal under international law. It had continued to uproot fruit and olive trees and was building a wall annexing vast areas of Palestinian land which contained many important sources of water. The construction of the wall was a clear indication of Israel's intention to step up its colonialist expansion in occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem and prevent the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State.

20. The Israeli Government had repeatedly demonstrated that it had no interest in international law or international humanitarian law and it continued to defy the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. It had demonstrated its opposition to a just and lasting peace based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and to the principle of land for peace which had been endorsed by the Arabs at the Beirut Summit and was basing its

strategy on aggression and the expropriation of Arab lands and property.

21. **Mr. Ayari** (Tunisia) said that the serious escalation in the Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arab inhabitants of the occupied territories had adversely affected the outlook for a peaceful settlement. These practices not only violated international conventions, in particular the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, and of United Nations resolutions but also reaffirmed Israel's policy of occupation and settlement, despite the agreements concluded within the framework of the Middle East peace process.

22. The most serious development was the Israeli Government's ongoing construction of the separation wall inside the Palestinian territories, leading to the confiscation of yet more Palestinian land and further mobility restrictions. Condemned by the entire international community, the construction of the wall clearly violated the Fourth Geneva Convention and the provisions of the road map, particularly concerning the two-State vision. The Israeli Government's attempts to impose a fait accompli were completely unacceptable and would increase Palestinian feelings of despair and frustration. The international community and the Quartet in particular should work to prevent that from happening. The inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan were also subjected to continuing violations of their human rights as a result of the Israeli occupation authorities' practices and expansionist policies and efforts to alter the region's demography.

23. Such continuing Israeli practices caused continuing tension in the region and threatened the peace process on which the international community had pinned such high hopes. Urgent steps should therefore be taken to secure Israel's full and immediate withdrawal from the reoccupied areas and to put a stop to the occupation and settlement behind that tension. The present stage was crucial and Tunisia therefore renewed its call for the deployment of an international disengagement observer force to ensure protection for the Palestinian people. It also urged the international community to prevail upon Israel immediately to end its hostile practices in the occupied Palestinian territories and the occupied Syrian Golan, and to implement all United Nations resolutions calling for its withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied since 1967 and affirming the inalienable right of the

inhabitants of those territories to their own resources. In conclusion, he called for a return to the table for negotiations based on the principle of land for peace and stressed the importance of retaining the current item on the Committee's agenda.

24. **Mr. Husain** (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference) said that the report before the Committee underscored the serious detrimental effect of the occupation of Palestinian territory on all aspects of the living conditions of the Palestinian people. His delegation shared the views expressed in the report, particularly regarding the importance of reviving the Middle East peace process, the principle of land for peace, and the need for compliance with the agreements reached between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel.

25. Member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference were gravely concerned about the difficult situation facing the Palestinian people and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan. At the Tenth session of the Islamic Summit Conference, member States had reaffirmed the need to establish an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem (Al-Quds al-Sharif) as its capital, and to implement all international resolutions pertaining to Palestine and the Middle East. They had also called on the Quartet to work assiduously to reach a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, in implementing relevant resolutions, the Madrid Principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map.

26. The prolonged Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights had caused extensive disruption in the lives of whole communities, with serious repercussions on the employment situation, personal freedoms and health care. The Islamic Summit Conference had strongly condemned Israel's policy of flouting Security Council resolutions on the occupation of the Syrian Golan, land annexation and confiscation, establishment of settlements, diversion of water resources and the imposition of Israeli nationality on Syrian citizens. The Heads of State and Government had demanded that Israel should complete its withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan to the 4 June 1967 borders, in accordance with Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace.

27. The Organization of the Islamic Conference objected to the construction of the wall, deeming unacceptable as it created unjust realities in respect of

the borders of the State of Palestine and undermined confidence-building measures in pursuit of the road map.

28. In conclusion, he called for the resumption of the peace negotiations for the establishment of an independent sovereign State of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital. The Organization of the Islamic Conference firmly believed that, by so doing, the foundations for sustainable peace and prosperity for Palestine and all countries of the region would be laid.

29. *Mr. Raubenheimer (South Africa), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

30. **Mr. Sermoneta** (Israel) speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Committee was being used as a political platform to level false accusations against Israel and noted that no reference had been made during the discussions, or in the report to the brutal campaign of terrorism being waged against Israelis, with the complicity of senior Palestinian leaders.

31. The biased document prejudiced issues that both parties had agreed to address through direct bilateral negotiations and ignored the fact that the Palestinian Authority already exercised jurisdiction over many natural resources through interim cooperative arrangements, pending the outcome of permanent status negotiations. Given their geographical proximity, both sides must take a cooperative and realistic approach to those negotiations and not confine themselves to rigid concepts of sovereignty.

32. The key to improving the social and economic situation of the Palestinians was to create an environment of peace and stability. Indeed, prior to the terror campaign, the Palestinian economy had shown an impressive rate of growth. Palestinians must therefore cease their acts of terror and engage in meaningful political dialogue with Israel. Israel had been forced to build the security fence, which was, a temporary, non-political measure whose sole purpose was to protect Israelis going about their lives — on buses, in restaurants, in shopping malls and in discotheques.

33. In response to unwarranted political attacks levelled by the representative of Syria, his delegation felt compelled to enquire about the anti-Semitic writings of the Syrian Minister of Defence. With respect to the torture of citizens, it would be useful to

have some explanation of conditions in the Al-Maza prison and the massacre of some 10,000 citizens by Syrian armed forces in the town of Hama. Finally, given that Syria was known to sponsor terrorism, in violation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), and to glorify suicide attacks, Syria was the last State to lecture anyone about international law and the Charter.

34. **Mr. Sabbagh** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, dismissed the accusations saying that he could not grasp why the representative of Israel had requested the right of reply when the report so clearly documented the brutal acts of the occupying Power.

35. The Israeli Government was led by a notorious terrorist, Ariel Sharon, who, according to two officers who had participated in the Kafr Qassem massacre of 1956, had ordered that Palestinian children be burned alive in the presence of their mothers. He had also ordered the destruction of Palestinian houses in Qibya and the assassination of Egyptian prisoners of war by firing squad and tank fire. The Syrian delegation also recalled the massacre of civilians in Sabra and Shatila, which had claimed the lives of thousands of Palestinians, and that in Qana and Jenin.

36. Israel had introduced terrorism into the region through the Haganah and Stern Gang, which had later been incorporated into the Israeli armed forces. Some States while claiming to combat terrorism were actually committing the acts that they decried. The war crimes committed by the occupying Power — such as displacement and expulsion of people living in the occupied territories, colonial policies, construction of a racist separation wall, annexation of land and violations of international law and Security Council resolutions — those all constituted true acts of terrorism.

37. The increasingly brutal pressure exerted by Israel against the Palestinians was naturally provoking a reaction. While agreeing that killing of innocent civilians was indefensible, he said that it was necessary to seek the causes behind the conflict in the region, namely the Israeli occupation. Resistance was a natural right and legitimate act in the framework of self-defence and the right to combat foreign occupation, in accordance with the Charter, and in no way constituted a form of terrorism.

38. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Israeli representative had again failed to address the item under consideration, namely the sovereignty of the Palestinian people over their natural resources, and had managed only to make a “standard issue statement” that terrorism was responsible for the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. The only new element in his statement was that he viewed the Secretary-General’s report and statements made as mere accusations against Israel.

39. The root cause of the suffering of the Palestinian people was not terrorism, but rather the ongoing military occupation. Over the years, that occupation had turned into a brutal and cruel form of colonialism, which denied Palestinians their rights and freedoms. It determined every aspect of their lives, including whether they lived or died, could bury their dead, own a home, buy food, work, receive medical care, go to school, travel, or even be with their families. Mounting despair was driving some Palestinians to commit horrific and sometimes morally wrong acts. Her delegation continued to take a firm stand against such acts, but was convinced that their root cause lay in the occupation. While such oppression did not justify the acts, it could explain them. Only through understanding of the root causes of the violence could a political, rather than military, solution to the conflict be found.

40. She recalled that on 6 November the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing had issued a statement in which he noted that the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territories had deteriorated significantly over the past three years, in spite of the repeated condemnations by the international community of Israel’s illegal collective punishment against the Palestinians and of its policy of demolishing Palestinian houses and civilian property. A recent example of the latter was the reported demolition of some 100 buildings in the Yibna Camp in the southern Gaza Strip town of Rafah, from 10 to 12 October 2003. Residents had in most cases not been given enough time to remove their belongings and some 1,000 people had been left homeless.

41. **Mr. Sermoneta** (Israel) said that his delegation would state its position with regard to the report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing in the appropriate Committee. He was surprised that the Palestinian observer should refer to the issue as “standard” and that she found the killing of innocent

people in acts of terror only “sometimes” morally repugnant. Such qualifications should be deplored. His delegation did not find anything standard in terrorism against civilians.

42. The Syrian representative’s notion of resistance was warped; he should read the Secretary-General’s report on the battle of Jenin. Delegations should take advantage of the freedom of information afforded in the United States and Israel, a freedom that Syria lacked, to reach their own conclusions about the veracity of the Syrian delegation’s allegations.

43. **Mr. Sabbagh** (Syrian Arab Republic) speaking in exercise of the right of reply, cited paragraph 42 of the report, which referred to the destruction of cisterns, and noted that even refugees had been deprived of their most basic right and an essential element of life: access to water. Paragraph 50 described how, in the Jenin refugee camp assault, the Israeli army had left three blind youths handcuffed in the street for two and a half days. He wondered whether the Israeli authorities had done that because they thought the three blind youths were a threat to Israeli security. That was a simple example of Israeli practices.

44. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine) said that her delegation had not stated that terrorism was a standard issue. By saying that the Israeli representative had made a “standard issue statement”, she had meant that the Israeli delegation made the same statement concerning Palestine in every committee, regardless of the item under discussion.

**Agenda item 100: Globalization and interdependence**  
(A/58/94-S/2003/642, A/58/204, A/58/390-S/2003/916, A/58/394, A/58/413 and A/58/420)

45. **Mr. Khan** (Director, Division for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the United Nations in promoting development in the context of globalization and interdependence (A/58/394), said that globalization must be managed more effectively if it was to become a positive force for all, as called for in the Millennium Declaration.

46. The report stressed the linkages between trade, finance, technology, investment and migration and their impact on poverty eradication and sustainable development and urged the international community to make greater efforts to implement its commitments to gear globalization towards agreed development goals.

47. To that end, it called for arrangements for mutual reviews of policies and programmes at the subregional, regional and international levels and cited the peer review mechanisms of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development as an example to be emulated in other regions. Furthermore, the peer reviews on official development assistance of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development might be extended to all development policies. Finally, the Chief Executives Board should undertake mutual reviews of the impact of the work of the United Nations system organizations on the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals.

48. The report also addressed the increasing linkages between corruption, organized crime, trafficking, arms trade and terrorism and put forward measures to reduce their negative impact on growth and development.

49. Lastly, citing the need for more focused attention on specific aspects of globalization and the cross-cutting nature of the issue, he said that consideration might be given to discussing the item in the plenary.

*The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.*