Unofficial Transcript by Human Rights Voices

September 6, 2017

**384th Meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People**

CHAIR: Welcome, everybody. I declare open the 384th Meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The provisional agenda for the meeting has been distributed by the Secretariat. If I hear no objections, the agenda is adopted.

It so is so decided.

Let us now begin with the first item on the agenda, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and developments in the political process. I would like to give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine.

Excellency, you have the floor.

PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I thank you for convening this meeting and I bring greetings to this meeting and to all of my colleagues from the occupied land of the State of Palestine, in which I had the privilege of accompanying the Secretary-General of his first visit after assuming the position of Secretary-General of the United Nations. And by the occupied land of the State of Palestine I don’t only refer to the [indiscernible] and East Jerusalem but also to the Gaza Strip in which I was very happy to accompany the Secretary-General to that part of occupied Palestine, to the Gaza Strip.

Mr. Chairman, if you allow me, I would like to concentrate my briefing and basically [indiscernible] about the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Palestine, the State of Palestine. And, of course, with him there was a significant number of senior officials from the Secretariat including Mr. Jeff Feltman, Mr. Mladenov, Mr. Pierre Krähenbühl, and a number of other senior officials, including the spokesperson Mr. Piper from OCHA and others. It was a very impressive delegation.

The Secretary-General of course visited Israel first and on the second day, on the 29th, he visited Palestine. He started with Ramallah, in which he spent most of the day, from the morning until the evening, in Ramallah, and he covered many stops. He started with a program visiting an institution sponsored by one UN agency in which that institution looks after women facing domestic violence and minors, children, young boys, also facing physical abuse and preparing them to deal with these issues in the proper institutions. The center was very impressive, equipped with many things, including medical facilities for examining those physically abused, having medical assessment of their status and the level of abuse that they’re exposed to, before turning them to the police force in order to deal with the legal aspects of those who are causing such damage, particularly to women.

The visit impressed the Secretary-General and he was also impressed by the fact that among the Palestinian police force, in comparison to all the Arab countries, we have the largest number of female police officers, at also the higher level because in addition to the general, the head of the police force who was introducing us to the different part of that center, there was a lady with the rank of either major or colonel also in charge of that institution and dealing with all of the claims by the victims.

The second stop of the visit of SG was visiting the tomb of the late Chairman Arafat in which he laid a wreath accompanied by all the proper protocol, from honor guards and so on and so forth. Adjacent to the tomb of Chairman Arafat, there is a new museum which was opened recently, and I remember in one of the visits with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon he expressed desire to visit the museum. It was not finished, but now it has been open for some time and the Secretary-General and his entourage visited the museum, a very impressive museum that literally deals with the Palestinian narrative for the last 100 years, and the Chairman Arafat is the father of our national movement and he is—that this museum is about his life, is about his leadership, about the formation of the PLO, about the key stages in the struggle of the Palestinian people in different locations and the return of the homeland, and the formation of the Palestinian Authority but, before that, the formation of the PLO, and the First Intifada, the Second Intifada, the settlement enterprise, the construction of the wall, the coming back to the United Nations in ’74, the famous speech given by Chairman Arafat in the General Assembly in 1974, especially the line in which he said, “Don’t let the olive branch drop from my hand”, meaning that he was saying that I am here for peace.

And of course at the tail end of the visit to this museum is at the underground or under—the lower level, or what is equivalent to a basement in here, in which Chairman Arafat set his office for two years. It was more or less like a bunker with a simple bedroom in which he spent the last two years of his life surrounded with tanks and all of the military force of Israel to destroy his headquarter. They destroyed literally everything in al-Mukataa and leaders who used to come and visit him, they used to come to that small room which maybe it’s the whole compound of where he used to meet and to work and to sleep and to eat and have the bodyguards around him constitute maybe less than a quarter of this room where we are.

It was an impressive and moving sight to see it. People like Jeff Feltman, who was an official with the State Department, used to come with American delegations and meet with Chairman Arafat in that compound and it evoked memory to him and he was sharing with me. He said it looks like alive to me. I feel like the Chairman—I just am meeting with him and meeting with other people.

So that was the—this is the second stop on the itinerary of Secretary-General. Then after that he went to the office of our Prime Minister in which he was officially received with honor guards, and then we had the bilateral meeting, his delegation with our delegation, headed by our Prime Minister, and we had a good exchange about events.

And he was also sharing with us some observations about the situation on the Israeli side, whether they are ready or what with regard to opening doors for a meeting for a process. And also making some observation about what the Americans are possibly intending to do.

After that bilateral meeting, there was a well-attended joint press conference and then a state luncheon organized in the office of the Prime Minister for the Secretary-General.

After finishing that meetings in the office of the Prime Minister, Dr. Rami Hamdallah, he had a meeting with the youth from civil society, about eight individuals, teenagers, four women and four men, in which he listened to the concerns of the youth. You know, the youth is a big issue in the agenda of the United Nations and our youth, like many other youth, they suffer from a high percentage of unemployment, and then they were also critical about certain things, including about the Palestinian government. And I think that the Secretary-General was impressed by the boldness of such youth and speaking their minds freely and they were—they came two from Jerusalem, two from Hebron al-Khalil, and from other parts of the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem.

After that we had a meeting organized for the SG with group of Palestinian intellectuals and leaders of organizations, civil society organizations, and they engaged with the SG in a very frank and candid discussion about some of the statements he made, some of the things that he did not make and they felt that he should, and even they had a discussion with them about a written report by the—by him to be submitted to the Security Council as a result of the mandate given to him from Resolution 2334.

It was a very interesting discussion with people like Nabil Shaath, Dr. Mustafa Barghouthi, and Mr. Shaqaqi, who was a leading figure in opinion poll and things like that, professors from the academia, and so on and so forth. It was a very interesting also encounter because in the Israeli side, Secretary-General met with the opposition. In our side, the civil society leaders, more or less, they have their own independent thinking, not necessarily the official thinking of the Palestinian government.

After that meeting, there was another meeting with our chief negotiator Saeb Erekat and the Secretary-General in to which they exchanged views about the political moves, including the Trump administrations and their teams and what they are possibly contemplating, and the SG also made his own observations about some readiness or lack of it on the Israeli side over certain issues. And I believe also, that before that the SG met with members of the American team so that, from my point of view, this is a good development that the UN should not be not involved in the possibility of a political process and there should be a collective process that includes, among others, the United Nations.

After that, the last meeting in Ramallah was with five mothers of political prisoners. One mother had four of her kids that served 16 years already in Israeli prisons and they are serving more, and families of martyrs. And each told the pain of those families’ suffering as a result of either the killing of their children or the imprisonment of their children.

And in the evening, we were able to finish that part of the visit to Ramallah. It was from the morning until after 7 p.m.

The following morning the SG and his convoy and I joined them outside the Gaza Strip. We entered the Gaza Strip in a UN convoy and, for me, I haven’t been in Gaza in a long time. The situation is very tragic. You see the devastation, the poverty, the lack of economic life. And we reached the first stop in one of the big schools of UNRWA in Beit Lahia. We entered from Erez-Israel crossing. I was amazed that that crossing was constructed in the form of a terminal of an airport. So I asked an Israeli officer what is this thing. He said it was constructed to handle 40,000 individual every day. I said how many individuals you handle these days. He said at best about 200, most of them UN staff, international organizations, Europeans, and few Palestinian families from Gaza or from the West Bank in and out. So it’s a huge—you can imagine like the main terminal in an airport in the United States and you see only a handful of people going through it and just there are Israeli officers and staff.

Be that as it may, we entered Gaza. It’s poverty everywhere, devastations everywhere. It’s a sad picture. But then when we reached the school in which hundreds of Palestinians are assembled there, most of them are employees of the United Nations. There are about 12,000 employees of the United Nations are in the business of serving our people in the Gaza Strip, the 2 million. Most of them are UNRWA employees, but there are also from other UN agencies.

So hundreds of them were assembled to receive the Secretary-General. To me, it was a moving sight to see those Palestinians. And then the SG and I, we were mingling among them, shaking hands, saying words, and for me it was—I was proud to see those people although they’re living in devastation and poverty, but they’re proud people brave people and determined people to seek their freedom and dignity in spite of the immoral and illegal blockade against 2 million Palestinians. The SG gave a good speech, and then I will come to the content of the speeches when I reach—when I come to the end of the visit to Gaza.

After that, after he gave a speech to those hundreds who were assembled there, we moved to meet with three families from Gaza, relatively large families of an average of five or six or even eight individuals, some of them. They don’t have jobs. They don’t have shelter. Their food is poor. They drink unhealthy water with germs in it. Some of their kids are having kidney problems. And their situation is beyond tragic. And Secretary-General was stunned and moved from listening to these stories and he looked at the senior staff with him, including Pierre Krähenbühl and the executive director of UNRWA in Gaza, and he said to them I know you can tell me that there is 200,000 like these in Gaza or maybe 50,000 cases of those who are suffering from kidney, or 60,000 who are suffering from lack of shelters. I know that you can tell me all these stories, but these families, they came to us asking for help. I want you to provide for them shelter, food, medical treatment, clean water, and all the thing—and employment, to make them live as decent as possible, and I don’t want any question about that. I want implementation.

And I said to the SG let me translate that. They have a translator with them, but I said I want to translate it with the spirit that you conveyed it, because sometimes translators, with all respect to all of you in the booths, when they do translation, they just translate the words, but sometimes when people speak there is more than the words. There are feelings, there are body language, there are empathy, and sometimes when we do translations in such tragic situation, one should do it with such intensity.

After that, we met with the elected body of students from UNRWA schools. In UNRWA schools, there are 271,000 students and those elected student government representing the 271. And those kids, they are 13, 14 years old, they’re so amazing. They were so polite. Each one who would speak first, then followed by the next one, the next one would say I want to thank my colleague, Ambassador Carmelo for his representation. And then the kid would give his speech. And then after the second one finish, the third one would say the same thing. I thank my colleague the Ambassador of Cuba for her representation and then they move to give their presentation.

And then there is issues, and they ask questions, intelligent ones. One of the remarkable presentation was by little girl who said that I am not like some political officials who have been appointed for their posts. I have been elected by my constituency, 271,000 students. Therefore, I can speak with authority because I represent a large number who have elected me. So therefore my position carries a lot of weight because I represent those who have elected me for this post.

The SG was amazed. He said that I started my life as a parliamentarian and I was part of so many parliaments, but I haven’t seen such politeness in parliaments. Usually in regular parliaments, the first speakers would say something, the second one would be attacking the first speaker, the third one would be attacking maybe the first speaker and the second speaker. He said that you are amazing and he said I am sure that some of you will be members of the future Palestinian parliament.

When I spoke after him to them, and in addition to saying that I am so proud of them and how bright they are, I said I am sure that many of you will be elected in the future Palestinian parliament and you will be great parliamentarians. You will be better than us because you’re smarter than us and you suffered maybe more than we did.

Then the SG went and had a press conference in one of the schools, attended by more than maybe 200 journalists. It was really packed. The SG gave only a statement. He did not respond to questions. In his statement he said, “When I was in Ramallah, I said I have a dream that one day we will have two states living next to each other, the State of Palestine next to the State of Israel, living in peace and security. And all the obstacles in the path of that dream to be removed, of course including settlements.”

He said, “In Gaza I have two messages for you. The first one, you Palestinians get your act together and get united because your national unity is an important element in the success of your national cause.” The second dream is—he said as the second message, “I have a second dream. I had one in Ramallah for the two states, but the one in Gaza, he said, my second dream is that I want to come and visit Gaza next time and to see Gaza as an integral part of the State of Palestine under the guidance of the Palestine Liberation Organization.”

In summation, I think the visit was a very positive one. It sent good messages to the Palestinian people suffering under foreign occupation, including our people in the Gaza Strip and I think it was a successful one. I did not have a chance to compare notes with the Secretary-General after we left Gaza, but soon I will, but spending a lot of time with him and from moving from one place to another place, especially in Ramallah because I was sitting with him in the same car, we shared so many thoughts and observations and he sincerely hope that there will be doors to be opened for a meaningful political process that would lead to the end of occupation, the independence of the State of Palestine, and with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to really open a new chapter in the relationship of people in that region.

I wanted to share with you these observations about this very important visit to the different parts of occupied State of Palestine and I am sure that the Secretary-General and the senior officials of the United Nations involved with our question, particularly the UNRWA team, I think that they have been energized by this visit. I am sure that the Palestinians who were privileged to be in these meetings with the SG and to listen to him were impressed and were encouraged that he will double his efforts for peace between us and the Israelis.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIR: I thank Ambassador Mansour for his most useful, informative, and very descriptive briefing. Are there any questions?

PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVE: Or observations or comments.

CHAIR: Or observations? Or comments? Yes, the Distinguished Delegate from OIC. You have the floor.

ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a question, actually, to the—to Ambassador Mansour, if he could brief us on the recent serious developments in Hebron and the decision of the Israeli government to grant the settlers a city council for themselves within the city that is populated of about 400,000 Palestinians and the number of settlers is just 600 or 800 settlers.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Ambassador Mansour, you have the floor.

PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, [Shahir] for asking me this question. This is truly a very dangerous development in al-Khalil Hebron. You know that this city is the largest, the most populated city in the occupied West Bank. The population is more than 200,000 and there are a few hundreds and less than—inside the city, less than a thousand settlers and there is a settlement adjacent to al-Khalil in which there are a few thousand, Kiryat Arba. And the new development is that the Israeli occupying authorities granted those settlers in the city a municipal structure of their own, meaning that they are challenging the authority of the municipal council of the city of al-Khalil, which is an indication of further fragmentation and segregation in the occupied Palestinian territory and in the cities such as al-Khalil in favor of the settlers.

In this connection, for example, we have in occupied East Jerusalem 300,000 Palestinians, and we have many municipal councils. But in the city proper, especially the old city of Jerusalem, the Israeli occupying authority will not recognize any structural formation of that nature, although we are talking about—like in the old city there are 50,000 Palestinians and 3,000 Jews in the old city of Jerusalem, inside the wall, and adjacent to it there are hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and then in the west side of Jerusalem in the settlements there are also hundred thousands of Jews. And even with that complicated situation, the Israeli occupying authority will not allow for any municipal formation or power for the Palestinian side in these cities.

Nevertheless, now in Hebron al-Khalil, they are taking that illegal step and a dangerous step against the municipal council of al-Khalil in Hebron and against the Palestinian people there in violations of the provisions of international humanitarian law that regulates the behavior of the occupying power and defends the rights of people who live under occupation. We will raise this issue as well with the Secretary-General and with the Security Council because the further escalation of attacks against the rights of our people and breaching international law should not be allowed to pass without first resistance from all of us in order to stop them from pursuing this illegal behavior.

CHAIR: And other questions? Comments? I see none. Thank you.

Our next agenda item is the consideration of the draft annual report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its 72nd Session contained in Document A/AC183/2017/CRP2 which you have in front of you.

For the information of the Committee, the draft report has been prepared by the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs and was circulated to the Bureau and Committee Members for their review and comments ahead of the meeting.

I have the honor of giving the floor to the Rapporteur of the Committee, His Excellency Mr. Carmelo Inguanez, Permanent Representative of Malta, to present the report.

DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ladies and gentlemen, I have the pleasure of submitting to the Committee a draft report to the General Assembly contained in Document A/AC183/2017/CRP.2 covering the developments on the ground and the work of the Committee since 5 October 2016. The draft report has been made available by the Secretariat to the membership after it has been reviewed and approved by the Bureau and the Committee Members.

Chapter one contains an introduction to the report. Chapter two covers the Committee’s review of the situation relating to the question of Palestine, including of events that have been taking place on the ground. Under chapters three and four, the report outlines the mandate entrusted to the Committee by the General Assembly and contains information on the committee membership and organization of its work during the year.

Chapter five contains the action taken by the Committee, including the Chairman’s participation in Security Council debates and the continued dialogue between the Committee and members of intergovernmental organizations. The chapter also informs about the various international meetings and conferences organized by the Committee, including this year’s United Nations forum to mark 50 years of occupation, as well as other mandated activities carried out by the Division for Palestinian Rights on behalf of the Committee.

Chapter six provides an overview of the Special Information Program on the Question of Palestine carried out by the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 71/22 of 30th November 2016.

Finally, chapter seven of the report contains the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee to the General Assembly, recognizing that 2017 marks 50 years of the Israeli occupation that began in 1967. The Committee, inter alia, urges the international community, including national governments, parliamentarians, and civil society, to redouble its efforts aimed at achieving without delay [an imposition 33:50] of a negotiated peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine in all its aspects through an end of the Israeli occupation, the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence, and achievement of the two-state solution in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions.

The Committee, furthermore, urges the Security Council and the General Assembly to play a constructive role in assuring full accountability and implementation of the long-standing parameters for peace reiterated in relevant UN resolutions for resolving the conflict, particularly Security Council Resolution 2334 of 2016, which most recently affirmed the illegality of Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and called for urgent steps to reverse negative trends on the ground which are steadily eroding the two-state solution.

In the context of paragraph 12 of Security Council Resolution 2334, the Committee requests that the Secretary-General present his next report to the Security Council on the implementation of this resolution in written format and not the oral format of the first two reports and to propose practical ways and means to hold Israel accountable for its illegal settlement activities and other violations.

In relation to Gaza, the Committee reiterates that the international community must demand an end to the 10-year-old Israel air, land, and sea blockade of Gaza and the lifting of all closures within the framework of Security Council Resolution 1860 of 2009. It also calls upon international donors to fulfill without delay all pledges in order to expedite the provision of humanitarian assistance essential for alleviating the distress of Palestinians, including women and children, and to support an urgent move from humanitarian assistance to development.

Recognizing that we are on the eve of the 70th anniversary of the expulsion of Palestine refugees from their homeland in 1948, remembered as the Nakba, the Committee emphasizes the importance of acknowledging this event and its impact upon the Palestinian people as a prerequisite for a viable and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians as well as future reconciliation.

The Committee strongly advocates for the right of return of the Palestinian refugees as provided for in paragraph 11 of General Assembly Resolution 194(3), and encourages all Member States to work collectively to secure sufficient and more predictably funding for [indiscernible] prevent deterioration beyond breaking points and to stop the [indiscernible] destroy-and-rebuild cycle. The Committee recommends shifting from a humanitarian to a political and human rights framework which would take into account the legal obligations of all stakeholders including in context of the Gaza Strip. It recognizes that a Palestinian unity government is also essential to take up governance and security functions in Gaza and exercise control over the crossings.

It also underscores the responsibility of states and private entities not to contribute to grave Israeli violations of Palestinian rights, particularly in respect of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. In this context, it looks forward to unequivocal support for the establishment of a database of all actors conducting business in areas under Israeli military occupation as mandated by the Human Rights Council.

I would like to remind you that, in keeping with established practice, the Division of for Palestinian Rights will continue to update the draft as necessary in consultation with the Rapporteur in order to reflect any new developments that might take place before the report is officially transmitted to the General Assembly. Minor editorial changes may also—minor editorial changes may also be made before it goes to print.

In closing, I would like to express the hope that the committee today will adopt the present draft for submission to the General Assembly.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIR: I thank the Rapporteur of the Committee for presenting the report. The Committee has now requested to consider and approve the draft report for submission to the General Assembly. We will go section by section to ensure the Secretariat can take down relevant comments. Before doing so, I would like to give the floor to delegations that wish to make comments of a general nature on the report. Any comments? If there are no comments … Distinguished Delegates from Venezuela have the floor.

VENEZUELA: Thank you very much, Chair. I’d like to take this opportunity to convey greetings to all members of the Committee; a pleasure to see you. Particular greetings go to our distinguished colleague, Ambassador Mansour of Palestine. May I take this opportunity, sir, to convey particular greetings to you but to all the Ambassadors present in the room as well.

I don’t know whether we’ll have an opportunity later to discuss the content of the report but before we get there, I wanted to make some general comments about said report, if I may. I’d like to begin by re-expressing Venezuela’s support to the work of the Committee and to the overall Palestinian cause. Our national position is well known and has never wavered and contains no double standards. It is our desire that all resolutions pertaining to the Palestinian question be dually complied with, in particular by Israel, the occupying power. That is our overall goal and we say it publicly, clearly, and loudly. We are very clearly up on that point. We are particularly concerned that Israel uphold the provisions of those resolutions at a time when Israel enjoys the support of the United States and other countries as it pursues its occupation. And spurred on by that, Israel seeks to occupy positions within the United Nations or to bring about political support for business within the United Nations which cut off any likelihood of supporter development prospect for the Palestinian people.

On the report itself, two points I’d like to raise. Firstly, to thank the Rappateur and the membership for the reference that is made to the activities that were being pursued in the Security Council’s beheaded by Venezuela when we had the honor to hold an elected post in that body. It also thanks Malaysia, Egypt, Senegal, and Angola for having convened an Arria-formula meeting to shed light on the situation in Palestine, which enjoyed great buy-in from Israeli civil society and participated in large numbers in that Arria-formula meeting. And I need to make it absolutely clear that there is no homogenous position within Israeli civil society when it comes to the occupation of Palestine. There are many civil society organizations in Israel who oppose that occupation. However, the main step that we were able to take during our time of membership in the Security Council was the resolution that we co-sponsored with Malaysia, New Zealand, and Senegal. Not just because it was the first resolution after more than a decade in the security council on this issue, ten years had elapsed without any reference made in a resolution to Israel and to Palestine. But in that resolution, we were able to reaffirm principles about the treatment of Palestine and the Palestinian question within the United Nations and the need to treat it as a—on the principles of fair and justice and to pursue and uphold the two-state solution, which had been being weakened over the years until we enacted that resolution to uphold that point. We had seen Israeli settlement activity, the destruction of homes and the erection of new homes so that settlers is a practice of colonization and the aim of that practice on the ground is to try and weaken the likelihood of the two-state solution.

So the resolution that we co-sponsored with Malaysia, New Zealand, and Senegal was very important and making, once again, loud and clear that the Security Council and the Secretary-General stood four square behind the two-state solution but it was also important by ensuring—by calling upon the Secretary-General to report under that resolution to the Security Council, in written form, his findings as to whether Israel is abiding by the Security Council resolutions or is continuing to hold Security Council resolutions in contempt. And that needs to be part of a written report. That needs to be a written report by the Secretary-General thanks to that resolution.

I’d also like to share some feedback on a conference that we participated in in Azerbaijan. The International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem which took place in Baku. We worked together with the OIC to set up that conference, and we enjoyed the full support of Azerbaijan who really stepped up to host that international conference. So I may take this opportunity to once again publicly thank the people and public of Azerbaijan who convened that conference in Baku, as I say.

We should also take this opportunity to thank the Secretariat Miroslav Jenča as well, in his role, lent us his full support in backing and indeed traveled to participate in that International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem. [Ali Tambor] was also there. Who also did a lot of work to make sure that that international conference could go ahead so smoothly. Thanks also go to Riyad Mansour and [Samiel Beck], the representative of the OIC who also worked tirelessly to make sure that we had a very successful conference.

Now that meeting in Baku took place against the backdrop of Israeli activity to pursue new forms of aggression to undermine the rights of the Palestinian people, particularly in Jerusalem, whereas I’m sure you will recall, there was that outbreak of violence in Jerusalem in the al-Aqsa Mosque. I have to confess that although we were capable—and I’m speaking here in a very personal capacity—although we were able to publish a communique in response to that violence in the situation, I think that it would have been nice to see more high-level participation representation of this committee at that International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem. And I’d like to feel that I’m making this point among friends because each time we meet on the issue of Palestine, it doesn’t seem to enjoy the full support of the members of the committee. We don’t see ambassadors participating in international conferences such as this one which further dilutes and weakens the importance of the Palestinian question. It seems that Palestine is no longer something important to the United Nations if we don’t see ambassadors in high-level participation in these international conferences. And so may I make an appeal to you? Again, as I say in what I hope is a setting among friends, that we all make an effort to participate at the highest possible levels in these international conferences that ambassadors do go, et cetera.

I had a conversation afterwards with our dear friend, the Ambassador of Senegal, who works hard to ensure that there is high-ranking participation, certainly here in New York in meetings of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People but I think we also need to translate that outside these four walls and ensure that we have high-level representation in the international conferences that we organize in countries that are so kind as to host us, such as Azerbaijan, to raise the profile of this issue and to make sure that it doesn’t go off the radar. I was able to go and for me, it was a great honor to be able to participate in the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem in Baku. But I think, as I said, speaking frankly and I hope you’ll accept my words in the spirit in which they’re intended, that that point is made, that more of us make that effort at the ambassadorial level as a very visible sign of our support for the activity that is currently underway within the Committee to pursue a delivery on the rights of the Palestinian people.

We will continue to work hard. We look forward to the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People throughout the 72nd Session of the General Assembly. Venezuela will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Palestinian people. We will continue to be evermore active in the work of the Committee and continue to do all that we can to deliver on this noble cause. Listening to Ambassador Mansour’s feedback of the visit of the Secretary-General and the current situation in Palestine and plight of the Palestinian people depicts a terrible and bleak picture that we really need to grasp, and which is largely due to those permanent members of the Security Council who work tirelessly to block any initiative which will deliver a brighter future for the Palestinian people. And given that that’s what’s happening at the Security Council. There is this foot tracking and this blocking, then this Committee has a much more key role to play, to step into the breach, as it were.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: I thank the Distinguished Permanent Representative for Venezuela, and now I give the floor to the Distinguished Permanent Representative of South Africa.

SOUTH AFRICA: Chair, thanks very much for giving me the floor, and thank you for convening this meeting on the inalienable rights of Palestinian people. And also, I want to thank my friend, the Rappateur. You see, it’s time for general remarks so I will keep myself at general remarks, but thank you for the manner in which you bring the report and lifting out the bleak, kind of, questions that I think you will be asked to reflect on when you come to chapter by chapter a report. And thanks to my distinguished colleague from Venezuela; I cannot emulate his eloquence when covered in such a huge and vast area he did on Palestine.

But can I pay homage to my colleague behind me, Ambassador Mansour, on the report you gave, and that it was really justified to the territory. Secretary-General, it’s clear, Chairperson, from what you were saying and from an observation made by my colleague from Venezuela, that things are getting tougher and more difficult for Palestinians. The day we thought of a free Palestine will be near is moving very far and far away from our eyes and from the common aspiration of mankind. We have thought [indiscernible] that when you mark these important anniversaries that this report reflects because this reflection is punctuated by various anniversaries, very historic but very painful anniversaries that marks the lives Palestinians have gone through, so difficult, over seven decades, plus.

Now as you might be saying, oh, that’s 50 years of occupation, only 70 years—it’s a reminder of the torturous journey our people have gone through in Palestine. And I think it reminds us and mankind of our inability and shortcomings to forcefully react to the oppression of Palestinian people. I think it’s a common indictment to all of us that in our lifetime, we saw a people systematically being denied their right of self-determination, and we are grown to slowly and continuously shrinking to a point where you will doubt if you can have a viable Palestinian State. It’s knowledge of Palestine that is an issue for all of us and I think we need to reflect deeply on these questions.

On broad terms, I’m very, Rapporteur, I’m very satisfied with the far-reaching recommendations contained in your report and what you ought to do as a UN, at least to accompany Palestinians in this torturous journey before—because I don’t think Palestinians really want us to put on uniforms and fight. What they need is solidarity, is for us to accompany them in this journey and we’re doing that in South Africa. Our people in South Africa have taken this cause, I think, almost as their own cause. You can you see the wave of boycott movement in South Africa. We can see the wave of our solidarity meetings in South Africa because they understand the right to self-determination.

Chair, I saw in this report, the very graphic descriptions of the casualties, the loss of Palestinians. I want to thank the Rapporteur and the Committee for giving us a pictorial. A very pictorial picture of the report. For me, it speaks volumes. It’s very clear if you go from chapter to chapter, you see the pie charts. You see the charts that are illustrating the agony of Palestinians, I think for me is a call to renewed action. It is a call to renewed effort to make sure that those grass don’t grow taller and taller with time because of the toll they take on Palestinian people.

Chair, certain things could be done and I’m sure at the end of the report we’ll be able to reflect more accurately on the recommendations before us, but my colleague from Venezuela have made a very profound observation. It seems I’ll begin to feel on the ground at the UN. I was just counting a number of empty chairs around here on this very important question, Chair. Given the gravity of the situation and given the problems Palestine is going through, we are floored that the meeting you have convened would be over-subscribed to reflect with the Palestinian. But sometimes isn’t the number, sometimes the quality of participation. I think that’s where we draw comfort that the soldiers who are still around need to make sure that they move on.

Chair, there is something that we cannot compromise on, is the right of return to your motherland. We can do everything possible—we can do everything possible but we cannot sacrifice, we cannot negotiate the right to return. So I’m thinking like this because I was a refugee myself. I was a refugee for about 20 years and I know the urge to go back home. The urge to go back to your motherland. There is nothing, nothing you can exchange with that. Even if it means go back with no limbs, you go back with no hands, you go back crazy. But you cannot substitute that with going back. Palestinians deserve no less. I’m grateful that the Rapporteur, he bring this thing up. And I think it’s an area, those of us who are hosting Palestinians, to make sure that at a given time we allowed them to go back to the fatherland. So then they can see their orientation. I’m worried. I’m worried, Chair. The ground is shrinking. Where will they return to? Where will they return to? That’s the question.

Chair, thanks so much. We’ll be very specific on the other issues going forward but I just want to thank the Rapporteur for this. I know it’s not a very easy thing but thanks for, my friend, for—and your committee, and [indiscernible] leadership chair for their committed to hard work on this issue. We understand there are so many pressures. We understand there are so many things, but thanks for keeping the fort. And, Mansour, we want to assure you that you can count on South Africa going forward all the time, every time, any time.

Thanks, Chair.

CHAIR: I thank Distinguished Permanent Representative of South Africa. Any other comment of a general nature? The Distinguished Permanent Representative of Cuba, you have the floor.

CUBA: [indiscernible] As a general comment, first of all—well, we have translation. We have interpretation. I’ve just been reminded by my colleague from Nicaragua. Thank you very much for the pro tip, sir.

A very general comment, building upon, or rather motivated by the two statements we’ve just heard from the Ambassadors of Venezuela and South Africa. We also listened very attentively to the very in depth and comprehensive briefing provided to us by Ambassador Mansour on the recent visit of the Secretary-General to Gaza, to Palestine, to Ramallah. And we also followed that visit very closely as it was taking place, reading the news daily, reading the updates and the bulletins from the Secretary-General and from his office, the press releases. We were delighted that he was able to come out that visit and that he was able to visit face-to-face our brothers and sisters, the Palestinians, that he went there himself and it seems that it was a positive successful visit, that it reaped its benefits. We hope that it will be a promising visit, that it will lead to something and will enable us to take tangible steps forward in terms of progress towards finding a solution to the long-running Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

And here, I turn to the report. And may I take this opportunity to thank the Rapporteur for the report. And I thank you for this opportunity to make comments thereon. It’s often useful to be able to make comments in this meeting. We, as a member of the Bureau, participated actively in the consultations and the negotiations that went into the drafting of the report, and so we can speak from first-hand experience in saying that it is a very comprehensive, full report. And our thanks to the Secretariat and to the division to all the effort that went into this and, of course, thanks to the Rapporteur as well. There was a lot of blood, sweat, and tears that went into the preparation of this document and it’s come out very well.

But off the back of that, I do want to make the point that we are currently at the point of stagnation when it comes to resolving the conflict. Despite all the effort that’s been made by all of us here around this room, by the Bureau, and by the overwhelming majority of the international community have sought to push forward a solution, but we are at a stalemate. And what is abundantly clear is that given bodies of the United Nations are not playing the role they should play on this issue, they’re shirking their responsibilities. And I may as well call a spade, a spade; I’m talking of the Security Council. We pinned a great deal of hope in Resolution 2334, which we hoped would shake off the moribund attitude of the Security Council and was passed without a vote against, even though there was one abstention, but despite that, Palestine continues to be occupied as do other Arab countries. There is still the blockade imposed upon the Gaza Strip. The settlement policy continues unchecked. The separation wall is still there, dividing the occupied Palestinian territories. Destruction and confiscation goes on, again, unchecked, of the property and of the land of the Palestinians. There are millions of Palestinian refugees. Regrettably, this year we weren’t able to engage in all of the consultation process that went into the resolution on UNRWA, although we followed it as much as we could, the General Assembly resolution on UNRWA, but we all know that despite the Herculean efforts that went into getting that resolution through, a lot of pressure was put on people behind the scenes to try and drop this resolution and this noble effort and to try and prevent it going anywhere.

And so I took the floor, firstly to thank everybody who was behind us for the work they put into this report. Again, an excellent report that will go forward to the General Assembly, which speaks very faithfully of the long tireless work of the Committee and, indeed behind the work of the Committee, the work of the international community. And I think we do need to recognize that. And I’m grateful that that will be recognized and seen by the General Assembly. But I think we also need to recognize reality, that we’re in a place of stagnation, of stalemate, and that should spur us on rather than to giving up but to spur us on to new efforts towards our final goal, which is the two-state solution of a sovereign independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as the capital, living side-by-side in peace with Israel. Thank you very much.

CHAIR: I thank the Distinguished Permanent Representative of Cuba and I’ll give the floor to the Distinguished Delegate of Nicaragua.

NICARAGUA: Thank you very much, Chair, and a good afternoon to one and to all. Dear President, dear Chair, after having listening to all the comments we’ve heard around the room from yourself as well as from our colleague and friend, the Ambassador of Palestine and the Ambassadors of Venezuela, South Africa, and Cuba, they have spoken so eloquently, there’s not a great deal that I can add. But I did want to pipe up and say that we share their sentiments, your sentiments as well. We share to the letter the sentiment of all the words that have been uttered here, and particularly that point raised by our dear friend, the Distinguished Representative of South Africa, made about the ongoing struggling of the Palestinian people and the fact that that struggle goes on over the last 70 years and the price that continues to be paid, therefore.

We also listened very carefully to all that Ambassador Riyad Mansour had to say and to his report and all of it makes it abundantly clear, sadly, that the situation is not getting any better. Rather, sadly, it is getting much worse day-by-day. We share fully everything that was said by Ambassador Rafael Ramirez of Venezuela and we also call for us to pause and reflect about what are we doing in this committee. I know that huge efforts are made, Herculean efforts, by the Secretariat, by the members of the Bureau, by the members, but I think it’s important, nonetheless, to pause and to take stock and understand that in the committee, beginning with the Bureau, we need to be better organized. We need to be more streamlined. We need to think in more depth and in more detail about how we organize our work in order to ensure that what the Ambassador of Venezuela had to say doesn’t continue to be the fate of our work on the Palestinian question going forward. In other words, it’s not visible. It’s ignored.

There needs to be one thing that is center stage. The Palestinian people are unwavering in their determination to seek justice. They continue to struggle to reverse their current devastating state of affairs, that current injustice. And that should motivate us as a committee to come and stand, refreshed, shoulder to shoulder, with them in that struggle. And to make sure that every event that we put together as a committee, everything we do as a committee effectively and efficiently contributes to that struggle which is born day-by-day by the men, women, and children of and in Palestine as they seek to achieve their national independence, their status as an independent nation. So we need to improve and streamline the work that we have to do to do comply with and fulfill the mandate that was conferred upon us. That’s the great hope cherished by Nicaragua and we will do all that we can, pull out all the stops within this committee to support to the hilt our brothers and sisters of Palestine.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: I thank the Delegation of Nicaragua. I give the floor to the Distinguished Permanent Member of Namibia.

NAMIBIA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me the floor [indiscernible]. I take the floor to join the colleagues who have spoken so eloquently before me and who have reminded all of us about the seriousness of the case of the Palestinian people that we are the custodians of to find and to promote a lasting solution for. As members of the Bureau, we have certainly our own responsibility in terms of supporting our work and I do want to recognize the incredible role that the Bureau and the Secretariat has played in putting together this important report for the General Assembly. Certainly, as members of the Bureau, we are familiar with the hard work that goes into preparing such a report but as is often the danger, and the problem at the United Nations, beautiful and powerful reports end up being reports only and that the follow-up, the implementation, the publicization of reports lack the necessary impetus and necessary support that we need to give it.

I know that we are preaching to the choir because if we look around this room, it is the people who have still the case of Palestinians with them and in their heart who are here. And all we can do, as Namibia, as we continue in our own country to keep the people of Palestine in our daily minds and as we push for the day that we will see true justice being done to the Palestinian people. We would like to assure the Committee that Namibia continues to support its efforts. We want to remind all of us that those of us who have gone on this journey remembers that an injury to one is an injury to all, and we would certainly renew our vigor and our determination to continue to support the work of the Committee. To our Rapporteur, thank you very much for the excellent presentation and for summing up the report in this excellent manner. Thank you very much.

CHAIR: I thank the Permanent Representative of Namibia. I now give the floor to Ambassador Mansour.

PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVE: Thank you, Mr.—Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I assume that there are no other speakers from—other than my colleagues who have spoken because if there are, I yield to them before I speak. Let me begin by expressing the gratitude of the Delegation of the State of Palestine to the Rapporteur, to the Bureau, to the Division at Baku. Okay. I’ll yield.

CHAIR: I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Nigeria. You have the floor.

NIGERIA: Thank you very much, Ambassador. I want to apologize for my late intervention, but I think it’s important to also underline joining my voice with the voices of people who have identified very passionately with the Palestinian people. It is very important that Nigeria, as one of very supporting country for the Palestinian cause. As always, they need [indiscernible] to ensure that at every foray, at every occasion like this where we try to underscore the importance of defending as well as protecting the rights of the Palestinian people within the context of the global rights, of the fundamental human rights that we also prescribe to. So I want to thank the Ambassador, the Chair, for the concise report that you introduced to us. And for the way you presented the report, we are now able to identify with the situation, especially the need to enhance the human rights of the Palestinian people, and Nigeria has always presented itself as a good ally in this regard. We have, since our independence, we have always seen that the independent of Nigeria—the independence of Nigeria is not total until and unless it is tied to the independence of other countries that are still being occupied, or territories that are still under one occupation or the other.

So within this context, we have always ensured that we take the issue of the Palestinians very, very important to us and has been one of the cardinal issues that our government has always felt passionate about and that is why we find it quite important that this forum is one important forum that our voices must be heard in times of ensuring that we begin to bring the situation of the Palestinian people within the context of leaving no one behind as we race toward 2030. Because if we are to achieve the SDG, we also need to ensure that we do deliver in times of ensuring that thousands of women and children that are going—that are going one sovereign or the other in that territory. We are interested in actively taking care of.

So in this context, I want to say that we align very substantially with your report and we also—I also want to re-echo what Namibia has just said, that’s it’s not only what’s in the report that is important. What is important is the implementation of the some of the vital recommendations that we have seen because they—not only that, they will go a long way in enhancing the interests and rights of thousands, of millions of people that are under subjugation in the occupied territory but that we also go a long way in ensuring that we don’t leave anyone behind. And it is our implicit belief in Nigeria that we should begin to resonate this issue of the Palestinian people in a more critical way so that we begin to see what, how we can try to put a stop to some of the [indiscernible] that are going on in that area. So in this context, I want to say that we are very much a soapbox for the sentiment that has been raised here. We’re in support of the effort of the Bureau. I will begin—I will implore you to continue with the impact context of solidarity with millions of these people in the occupied territory. And I can assure you have Nigerian support at any point in time, and I assure you have the federal government of the Government of Nigeria’s commitment to assuring that we scale up substantially the human right as well as the interest of the Palestinian people.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Nigeria. Ambassador Mansour, now you have the floor.

PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I was saying that I want to express the gratitude of the Delegation of the State of Palestine, to the Rapporteur, to the Division, to the Bureau, to all those who are involved in producing this comprehensive and accurate as possible as one can be in submitting this Report to the General Assembly. And we were very actively involved in the language, and I believe that we—that the Report is a good report. It is acceptable to us.

And I am sure that since it has been approved by the Bureau of all of the countries that are in the Bureau, then you know I am sure that it will reach the satisfaction of all members of the Committee. And we are grateful for that and we thank you for that. And also, we are very grateful for all of the solidarity and worth that was conveyed through the briefing and the presentations of all the speakers who spoke before me, and we thank you for that sentiment. And we thank you for your work. We thank you for solidarity. And we understand your frustration, because after 50 years of occupation, 70 years of Nakba, 100 years of Balfour Declaration, and the situation is not moving from bad to better, it is moving from bad to worse. That is the reality.

But in order to make your feeling—to cope with your feeling, can you imagine that we are a Committee of about 50 countries, half full members, other observers, and significant ambassadors who are here who spoke, conveyed frustrations or the sense of failure that we were unable, you know, to find yet—to implement a solution to this protracted, long conflict? But yet, can you imagine the frustration of the millions of the Palestinian people who live the tragedy on daily basis? If the Ambassador of South Africa is sort of upset with himself that he was not able to contribute with the rest of the members of this Committee a solution to this conflict, can you imagine those who live this tragedy for 50 years, for 70 years, and yet there is no solutions?

My job is so difficult when I try to explain to them, we are doing something very meaningful, very good thing at the United Nations. Some of them, they explode in my face. They say, okay, wonderful. You give me resolutions. You bring me large number of countries voting in favor. But have you liberated Palestine? Have you ended the occupation? Have you stopped the settlement? These are powerful position of people who are very frustrated, and it is very difficult to argue with them. Of course, you understand the frustration, but I am not about, you know, to work less than what I have been doing. On the contrary, I am going to double my efforts.

I am sure that all of you are in the same boat with me. We are at—as our people are not relenting, I don’t expect any one of you to relent or to show less resolve in continuing the solidarity, the support, and the work for that noble cause.

But let me also just tell you, remember the story about 100 years ago of a famous American journalist who wrote a book about *Ten Days That Shook the World* after the Bolshevik Revolution? If you want some inspiration, in Jerusalem just in July, 12 days of our people from all ranks, rich, poor, Muslims, Christians, practitioners of religion, not practitioners, infidel, not infidel, those who pray and those who drink, all of them were united in one outside the gates of al-Aqsa Mosque and al-Haram Sharif. And in 12 days they shook the foundation of the government of Netanyahu and he had to yield to their just demands and to remove all of the obstacles in the path of those who were determined to go and exercise their right to pray in al-Aqsa Mosque.

I think that this is a small inspiring story, but I think that it’s inspiring to all people and it should be inspiring to all of our friends. Even the exercise for almost one year in negotiating a draft resolution on solving the finances of UNRWA in which we were able to have the support of the G-77 and China, although this exercise is not finished. But I saw the result of this collective work when the SG in Gaza in the press conference announced exercising his authority to allocate some of the money at his discretion, and he donated $4 million to UNRWA, and he did it in the Gaza Strip. If he was able to allocate $4 million from what as—what is available at his discretion, he could possibly allocate more money. And those who were opposing through the exercise were forced to say—and I was in meetings when one key ambassador opposing this process repeated twice that if the SG has extra money and wants to allocate it for whatever, we will not object to it.

So in our—in our work, there is no silver bullet. In our work, it’s a cumulative struggle. It’s like the work of our people on the ground. If you go to a village in Palestine by the name of Bil’in, they have been demonstrating with the support of Israeli anti-occupation forces and international supporters of the cause of Palestine; they demonstrate every week. And during the last six years, they succeeded in pushing the wall one kilometer away from their village closer to the green line, and they liberated 5,000 dunams of their land from the Occupation. Those, they do it every week tenaciously, patiently. Some they get killed. Some they get injured. They do it peacefully, but yet they are determined to liberate all of their land, which was confiscated as a result of the—of the construction of this illegal wall.

I think these stories should inspire all of us. And if there is somebody that will be frustrated, I think that the Palestinian people who live under this ruthless occupation are more qualified than all of us to be frustrated, depressed, and almost trying to give up and they don’t give up.

Therefore, I think that we have a lot of—a lot more to do, more work to do. We have to be creative, and I agree with Hymie, and I agree with the Ambassador of Venezuela. Our job is to be creative, to do things in a different way, and to do—to think outside the box, because we are determined, as the Palestinian people determined that we will not stop until this occupation to end and until the Palestinian people to live in freedom and in dignity in their own independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital and the refugee question to be resolved on the basis of relevant UN resolutions, including Resolution 194.

I tell our people that this committee is working day and night for you. They know some of your names. They make sometimes promises that they want to name streets and squares after names of ambassadors in this committee. This is how much they love you. For Nelson Mandela in Ramallah in a very prominent square, we have his statue there. He is an inspiring figure for us, as the Committee is inspiring for our people, and I am sure that the struggle of our people is inspiring for you to continue the struggle. And as you say in Spanish, la luta continua.

CHAIR: Thank you, the Distinguished Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine. Do we have any other comments? If—no? Okay. If there are no further comments, we will now move to the consideration and adoption of the draft report chapter by chapter.

Let us begin with Chapters 1 and 2, Introduction and Review of the Situation Relating to the Question of Palestine. Are there any comments on these first two sections? If there aren’t comments, I take it that the Committee approves Chapter 1 and 2.

It is so decided.

We move on to Chapters 3, 4, and 5, Mandate of the Committee, Organization of Work, and Action Taken by the Committee. Are there any comments on this section? If there isn’t any comment, I take it that the Committee approves Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

It is so decided.

Chapter 6, Action Taken by the Department of Public Information in Accordance with General Assembly Resolution 71/22. Are there any comments? There is not any—there isn’t any comment? May I take it that the Committee approves Chapter 6?

It is so decided.

Chapter 7, Conclusions and Recommendations of the Committee. Are there any comments? I see none. I take it that the Committee decides to approve Chapter 7.

It is so decided.

The Committee has thus concluded the consideration of the Draft Report. If there are no other comments, may I take it that the Committee wishes to adopt the Draft Report for submission to the General Assembly?

It is so decided.

I would like to take this moment to request all governments and organizations to extend their full cooperation and support to the Committee in the performance of its tasks, particularly in implementing the recommendations at the end of the Report just adopted, and to continue to support and assist the Palestinian people in the early realization of their right to self-determination and an independent State of Palestine.

In accordance with established practice, the adopted Report will be transmitted to the Secretary-General for submission to the General Assembly. Additionally, in accordance with Paragraph 10 of the General Assembly Resolution 71/20 of 30th of November 2016, the Chair will request the Secretary-General to circulate the Report to all the competent bodies of the United Nations, urging them to take the necessary action as appropriate.

We shall now move to the last item on the agenda, which is Other Matters. There are a number of upcoming events of which you should be aware. The Committee’s Bureau will hold its third annual retreat on the 11th of October, where among other things it will discuss key aspects of its program of work for 2018. On the 2nd of November, the Committee will host a lecture on the occasion of marking the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration and the impact it has had on the Palestinian people. The lecture will be delivered by Professor Rashid Khalidi, Edward Said Professor of Arab Studies at Columbia University, and will be open to the general public. A save-the-date notice was circulated to all members and observers in August, and a more detailed invitation will be sent out in due course.

The Committee will hold a meeting in mid-November where the draft resolutions related to the question of Palestine will be presented to the Committee for its approval. On 29th of November on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Committee will convene a special meeting, which will be attended, among others, by a representative of the Secretary-General, and President of the General Assembly and Security Council. The special meeting, this year marking the 50th anniversary of the military occupation of this and 70th anniversary of the GA’s adoption of the Partition Resolution 181, will be held in the Trusteeship Council chamber from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The invitations to attend this meeting will be sent out to all member states and observers this week. A copy of the invitation in English may be found in the envelopes before you. In view of the special importance attached to this annual event, and in keeping with established practice, I would like to request all members and observers of the Committee to be represented at this meeting at the ambassadorial level. The consideration by the General Assembly of the Question of Palestine will take place in the afternoon of the same day on the 29th of November.

Finally, on the evening of the 29th of November, an exhibit will be inaugurated by the Committee and a cultural event will be organized, both under the theme of The Palestinian People: Everlasting Roots, Infinite Horizons. Additional details on this will be conveyed to you later on. In addition to the Solidarity Day activities here at UN headquarter in New York, I would encourage you to also participate in similar activities at other UN offices including in Geneva, Nairobi, and Vienna, as well as to organize similar events in your respective capitals.

On 28th of November, His Excellency Ambassador Carmelo Inguanez, Committee Rapporteur and Permanent Representative of Malta, will represent the Committee in an event in Paris marking the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The event, entitled in French, [Lui,] des aimes de la Palestine, is being organized by the Réseau **de** Coopérations Décentralisées avec **la Palestine**, a network of French local government authorities, which is part of [City Uni Hommes], the French section of the Global Network of United Cities and Local Governments. Finally, in early December, a Committee delegation plans to visit East Africa. More details on this will also be relayed in due course.

Before I open the floor for questions, I also wish to draw your attention to a letter dated 7th of August in your folder encouraging members and observers of the Committee to expand their capacity-building programs with the government of the State of Palestine in the context of the framework of South-South and triangular cooperation. The deadline to share information in this context with the Committee and to spearhead or simply brainstorm a particular initiative on the 15th of September 2017.

As there are—are there—are there any questions or additional items under Other Matters? There being none, I now close the 384th Meeting of the Committee.

The meeting is adjourned.