



**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, CHAIR OF THE GROUP OF 77, ON THE DRAFT RESOLUTION UNDER AGENDA ITEM 16: "ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION ON THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, INCLUDING EAST JERUSALEM, AND THE ARAB POPULATION IN THE OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN", ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC) COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT MEETING, (New York, 20 July 2015)**

Thank you, Mr President,

On behalf of the Members of the Group 77 and China as well as the additional co-sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document E/2015/L.22, I am honoured to introduce the draft resolution on the "Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan".

As reflected in the relevant Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) report that was conveyed to the ECOSOC by the Secretary-General, as contained in document A/70/82-E/2015/13, Israel's 48-year occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Syrian Golan, continues to severely affect the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian and Syrian peoples. Developments during the reporting period exacerbated the socio-economic and humanitarian hardships being endured under Israel's occupation, especially in the Gaza Strip, where Israel's military aggression in July to August 2014 and its eight-year blockade have had a devastating impact, which continue to deepen the suffering of the Palestinian civilian population, with more than half of them being children.

As indicated in the afore-said ESCWA report, negative trends worsened, causing a deterioration of economic and social conditions. This includes high rates of unemployment, rampant poverty levels, widespread displacement and homelessness, numerous health-related problems, and rising aid-dependency for the most basic of needs. The figures recently confirmed in this regard by the World Bank should be cause for alarm - more than 43% unemployment in Gaza, with youth unemployment at 60%, a socio-economic calamity by any measure. Such figures are reflected on in the draft resolution before delegations, as is the grave impact of the July-August 2014 military operations on living conditions and the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, including the impact on the safety and well-being of the Palestinian civilian population, among which thousands were tragically killed and injured by the Israeli occupying forces, as well as the destruction of homes and vital civilian infrastructure, the massive displacement of civilians and continued presence of thousands of unexploded ordnance endangering civilian lives.

Mr President,

The urgency of addressing this dire humanitarian crisis and advancing re-construction in Gaza is addressed in the draft. Also, the call for the full opening of Gaza's border crossings, in line with Security Council resolution 1860 and international humanitarian law and to ensure humanitarian access and the sustained and regular movement of persons and goods, has been reiterated in the draft as in past resolutions on this issue.

In this regard, it should be underscored that the draft resolution before delegations is based on the 2014 resolution, with updates to reflect the current realities on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as in the Occupied Syrian Golan, and emergent issues since the ECOSOC last addressed this matter.

As in years past, the draft resolution also expresses grave concerns about the vastly detrimental repercussions of the illegal Israeli settlement campaign and related measures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the Occupied Syrian Golan, as reflected in the report. Israel, the occupying Power, is called upon to fully cease all settlement activities, including all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, legal status and character of the occupied territories and to comply with its legal obligations in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention and relevant Security Council resolutions.

Mr President,

All States and international organizations are called upon to continue actively pursuing policies that ensure respect for their obligations under international law with regard to all illegal Israeli practices and measures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly Israeli settlements.

Further, in addition to calling for a cessation of the construction of settlements, the occupying Power is called upon to cease the construction of the wall and to comply with its legal obligations as per the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), that was rendered 11 years ago, and to cease the destruction of homes and properties and to cease the exploitation of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Occupied Syrian Golan. The principle of the permanent sovereignty of peoples under foreign occupation over their natural resources is clearly reaffirmed. In this connection, Israel is called on to remove the obstacles to the implementation of critical environmental projects, including for a desalination facility and sewage treatment plant in Gaza, necessary for addressing sanitation and health issues and the well-being of the population, including access to water.

Mr President,

Moreover, the draft expresses deep concern at the rising incidences of violence, harassment, provocation, vandalism and incitement by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and calls for accountability for the illegal actions perpetrated in this regard.

Also of relevance to the well-being of the Palestinian people, the draft calls for urgent attention to the plight and rights of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, in accordance with international law. We stress here the vast societal impact of this problem and the immense suffering of the Palestinian people as a result.

The draft resolution expresses appreciation for the economic and humanitarian assistance being provided to the Palestinian people and urges continued assistance commensurate with increased socio-economic and humanitarian needs.

Mr President,

Lastly, I wish to point out that this draft stresses the urgency of achieving without delay an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement on all tracks, and reiterates the need for increased and renewed international efforts in this regard, objectives fully supported by the Group of 77 and China as co-sponsors of this important resolution.

We look forward to the adoption of this draft resolution, with strong hope that it will contribute to alleviating the economic and social hardships of the Palestinian and Syrian civilian populations living under Israel's foreign occupation and ultimately contribute to the international efforts to bring an end to this injustice, in line with the United Nations Charter and international law, including humanitarian and human rights law.

I thank you.

