

62nd SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Statement by

Mr. Ilan Fluss

Counsellor

Second Committee

Agenda Item 43

“Palestinian natural resources”

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Check Against Delivery

Madame Chairperson,

My delegation has previously expressed our disappointment with the permanent placement of this item on the agenda. The issue is one of politics, unrelated to the competence of this Committee and contrary to its working methods. Its sole purpose is to give a platform for some Member States to criticize, condemn, and isolate Israel.

Moreover, the Secretary-General's report, A/62/75, issued in connection with this agenda item is highly problematic, both in content and context. For one, the report comes from such a conceptually narrow mandate, examining the impact of Israeli actions on Palestinian living conditions without examining the Palestinians impact on themselves, namely the internal Palestinian violence and other activities that destroy natural resources. The report is also the exact same report discussed during the substantive session of ECOSOC, just four months ago. As then, the report fails to reflect the reality on the ground, preferring to blame Israel for the deterioration of the Palestinian economy and environment, rather than identify the real trigger – Palestinian terrorism.

As such, my delegation continues to call on the Committee and the Secretary-General to consider the utility of the resources spent on these kinds of reports, and to exercise caution in transmitting reports that discredit the United Nations, undermine impartiality, and obstruct prospects for dialogue and reconciliation.

Indeed, Madame Chairperson, there are numerous other situations in the world at least as acute and as pressing as the one facing the Palestinians. According to the 2006 Human Development Report (HDR), the Palestinians rank 100 out of 177 countries on the human development index. Their literacy rate is at 92 percent; life expectancy at nearly 73 years of age. And yet no other country or people in the world – and certainly those ranked lower than the Palestinians on the human development index – have their own report issued for this Committee. In fact, the data from the HDR suggests that the Secretary-General's report is incompatible and inconsistent with other international documents.

Moreover, the report focuses on so many political and security issues, which are not part of the work of this Committee, including a lengthy political exposé on the security fence, connecting it with closures, alleged displacement, and other accusations, without a sole mention of the reason for the fence.

The security fence is the direct consequence of Palestinian terror. Were it not for Palestinian terror, there would be no need for a security fence. The Palestinian strategy of encouraging terrorism is injurious to Israel and its citizens, and destructive to the Palestinian's own interests. But a fence can stop the terrorists, where the Palestinian Authority does not. Thousands of Israeli lives – Jew, Christian, and Moslem – have been saved by the security fence, which has been operational in different areas for some time.

The numbers speak entirely for themselves. A similar fence in Gaza, agreed as part of Israeli-Palestinian Agreements, and which garnered no dissent from the UN, has successfully prevented the infiltration of terrorists into Israel. On the other hand, in a

mere three year span, without a fence, 121 suicide bombers from the West Bank carried out terrorist attacks in Israel. Since 2000, over 1000 Israelis have been murdered by Palestinian terrorists. This fence is absolutely necessary.

Similarly, on the issue of water, Israel is working with the Palestinians to address water sanitation and management. Water resources in the region are a serious issue for both sides, as Israel and the Palestinians share the same water sheds and aquifers. The report neglects to mention the shared challenge of water, and instead turns an issue of natural resources into a political one.

Lastly, the report mostly covers a period of time when Hamas, a terrorist organization, was in control of the Palestinian leadership. When Hamas was in power, Israel could not transfer the tax monies it collects on behalf of the Palestinians, or work with them, due to Hamas's refusal to abide by its international obligations as embodied in the Quartet principles. With a Palestinian government that meets the standards of the international community, Israel has resumed those transfers. This is a gradual process though, at the request of the Palestinian Authority, which should be completed by the end of the year. It is important to underscore that Israel is working with the Palestinian Authority and complying with its request on conducting the remaining transfers.

Israel and the Palestinian Authority are cooperating in other areas as well, including with agriculture, exports, and other economic-related matters, a reality the report does not reflect.

Madame Chairperson,

To be sure, the Palestinians face certain economic hardships, due in great part to leadership deficiencies and corrupt governance. Israel, for its part, is committed to the development of the Palestinian economy and the promotion and protection of natural sources in the region. Indeed, both are in our interest as well.

For nearly a decade and a half, dating back to the Madrid Conference and Oslo process in the early 90s, a great deal has been invested into growing the Palestinian economy. In those agreements and others, Israel and the Palestinians devised a plan to push forward the Palestinian economy, through institution-building, business ventures, sound economic policies, and sharing of resources, as well as Israeli investment in joint ventures for the benefit of both sides. The international community supported these initiatives.

During the Oslo process, the Palestinians became the largest per capita recipients of international development assistance in the world. From 1998 to 2000, employment was at 90 percent. Palestinians were enjoying some of the economic fruits of peace.

But instead of making good on their commitments, the Palestinians chose an aggressive and violent campaign of terror against Israel. Additionally, the Palestinians were unable to institute policies of good governance and oversight, apply the rule of law, and end

corruption and mismanagement. This led to an increased lack of confidence in the Palestinian leadership and little hope for economic growth.

The way forward today is very clear: in order to improve the Palestinian economy and alleviate the hardships of the Palestinian people, the two sides must work together, hand-in-hand, and promote policies of coordination and good neighborhood.

Madame Chairperson,

As mentioned, Israel is committed to a prosperous Palestinian economy. Just last month, on the sidelines of the General Debate, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee convened to discuss economic assistance to the Palestinians. It was a productive and fruitful meeting, where donor countries – Israel among them – agreed on the need and will to advance Palestinian economic development. It was a meeting solely made possible by the important choices of the Palestinians, namely the existence of a government today that meets the standards of the international community, accepts the Quartet principles, and is determined to lead its people to a better and more peaceful future.

Similarly, Israeli and Palestinian leaders have been meeting regularly, since early summer, to discuss the political and economic horizons. Indeed, today, coordination between the two parties is happening and an aura of promise and hope can be felt in the region – a sentiment one will surely not get from today's deliberations, nor from reading the Secretary-General's report published in advance of this debate.

The only enduring message to be taken away from this meeting is a disturbing reminder, once again, of the colossal gap between the rhetoric here on First Avenue and the reality on the ground.

Thank You.