

## **CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE UN PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE**

The UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has a mandate from the General Assembly "to extend its cooperation and support to Palestinian and other civil society organizations". A network of more than 1,000 civil society organizations (CSOs) from all regions of the world, active on the question of Palestine, has been established over the years. National, regional and international CSOs, organizations involved in political and humanitarian work, promoting human rights or economic and social development, solidarity-, charity- or action-oriented groups, women's and youth organizations, faith-based groups, academic institutions, trade unions and professional associations, and organizations that focus on children, refugees and detainees, are all part of the network. Recently the Committee reactivated its Working Group so as to strengthen its cooperation with civil society.

### **How to join the Committee's network of civil society partners**

To join the network, groups need to become accredited to the Committee. The accreditation criteria are as follows:

"The civil society organization should:

"(a) be a recognized local, national or international non-profit organization; "(b) support the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of international law and the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily its right to self-determination; "(c) have demonstrated that it has concrete programmes or the serious intent to establish such programmes in support of the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

"Organizations whose mandates preclude advocacy but whose work encompasses humanitarian ends and programmes, including development, benefiting the Palestinian people, are welcome to participate."

Interested CSOs are requested to submit an application form (available at: <http://unpfp.un.org/accreditation.html>) to the Division for Palestinian Rights of the UN Secretariat, which will submit it for approval to the Committee after review by the Working Group. Organizations that feel they cannot subscribe to the accreditation criteria, but have expressed interest in the activities of the Committee, can request to be recognized as observers.

### **The benefits and responsibilities associated with membership**

Accredited CSOs will be invited to attend all relevant international meetings and conferences held under the auspices of the Committee and participate in the discussions and to make statements, either orally or in written form. They may submit reports, written statements and other relevant documents for circulation among Committee Members and Observers. They will have the opportunity to display, after prior screening by the Secretariat, their own publications at such meetings. Accredited CSOs are also invited to make suggestions regarding the preparation and conduct of civil society events held under the auspices of the Committee or organized by its Working Group. CSOs will be put on the mailing list of the Division and receive information materials including the "NGO Action News" newsletter.

The international meetings can be used by CSOs as a platform to discuss their own initiatives, campaigns, views and ideas. They can network with each other, and meet representatives of Governments and intergovernmental organizations. They can attend panel discussions, where experts from around the world, including the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel, provide information and analyses on their own work, as well as on current political, and other humanitarian developments.

The reports of the international meetings and conferences are issued as publications of the Division. They are widely disseminated, not only to the network of accredited civil society organizations, but also to

