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AFRICA'S SUPPORT, ANTI-APARTHEID STRATEGIES, ROLE OF DONOR AID IN ACHIEVING PALESTINIAN

INDEPENDENCE, SOVEREIGNTY SPOTLIGHTED DURING ADDIS ABABA MEETING

Participants Urge Africa to Create Regional Peace Initiative; 'Respond Vociferously' to Call to Boycott, Divest, Sanction Israel

ADDIS ABABA, 30 April — As the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine wrapped up its session today, experts urged African Governments to share their negotiating and institution-building tactics, create a continent-wide solidarity movement, and launch a regional peace initiative to help Palestinians remove barriers to statehood.

"We have a story to tell that we could share with our brothers and sisters of Palestine," said Ndumiso Ndima Ntshinga, Ambassador of South Africa to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

South Africans, who only 19 years ago were subjected to discrimination and oppression by their minority apartheid rulers, today reaped the benefits of freedom and reconciliation, including a well-developed civil service, after enduring hard, painful negotiations with their political opponents, he said.

Just as unity had played a key role in South Africa's independence, unity between Fatah and Hamas was critical for the future of Palestine, he said, urging Palestine's fractured leadership to permanently reconcile and hold broad-based Palestinian elections. The recent appointment of Tzipi Livni as Minister of Justice and Chief Negotiator for the Middle East Peace Process in Israel's new coalition Government, which Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas had called "a positive development", also could be an important move, he said, urging Palestinian leaders to pressure Israel to return to the negotiating table.

Mr. Ndima Ntshinga made his comments during the afternoon plenary session, which focused on the contribution of international organization, as well as bilateral, multilateral and civil society support for Palestine. Speakers during the morning plenary session, which was devoted to lessons drawn from ending colonization and achieving sovereignty and independence, echoed Mr. Ndima Ntshinga's sentiment.

"Africa's lessons are important for Palestine as it deals with its internal conflicts, particularly those which divide the polities of the West Bank and Gaza," said Collin Stewart, Deputy Head of the United Nations Office in Addis Ababa to the African Union.

In much of post-colonial Africa, the first few years of independence had been met with jubilation and hope, but economic development and political stability had posed many challenges, he said. Palestine too faced the uphill battle of generating common national objectives and confidence in national democratic systems as a way to resolve conflicts.

To achieve full sovereignty and territorial integrity, the Palestinians must form a national unity

Government, he said, warning that divisions only served to weaken and destabilize a nascent State already beset by enormous roadblocks, notably the physical separation of the West Bank and Gaza that made it nearly impossible to have one economic policy. Moreover, the lack of control over its borders and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods hindered Palestine's ability to quickly create infrastructure, an effective banking system and policies to attract investment — a constraint most independent African States fortunately had not faced.

African States had always strongly supported the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination, he said. The African Union supported Palestine's bid for full United Nations membership; 49 African Union members, the majority, now recognized Palestine as a State. Equally encouraging was the fact that most African States had full diplomatic relations with Palestine, which could generate political support for its recognition by other international organizations, as well as create opportunities for trade, commercial and cultural exchange.

While lauding Africa's strong show of support for Palestine, Naeem Jeenah, Executive Director of the Afro-Middle East Centre in Johannesburg, said the continent's civil society network could and should do more, starting with the creation of an Africa-wide solidarity network that could make the activities of national solidarity movements more effective.

Moreover, Africa should do its part to help the global community to expand the campaign for the world to boycott, divest from and sanction Israel, known as BDS, until Israel fully ended the occupation and recognized all Palestinian fundamental rights. "African civil society has been somewhat lacking in this regard and it is about time civil society groups on this continent responded vociferously to the BDS call," he said.

He hailed the BDS movement — which focused its attention on the Israeli State, institutions and companies linked to settlement activity and academic institutions — for achieving more success in the eight years since its inception than Africa's anti-apartheid movement had in 20 years. For example, last year global boycotts had forced the Israeli company Agrexco into bankruptcy. The University of Johannesburg had decided not to form institutional relations with Israeli institutions, churches and other civil society groups had divested, and South Africa and some European Governments were set to pass legislation to label settlement products.

Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine to the United Nations, backed Mr. Jeenah's call for a massive, Africa-wide solidarity movement to support Palestine, while calling on Governments to determine the source of products from Israel to make sure they were not produced in Israeli settlements.

It was not enough just to characterize Israel's settlements as illegal and an obstacle to peace, he said. "Friends", such as countries that provided financial and economic support to the Palestinians, must also implement legal instruments that held Israel to account. Settlers who committed crimes against Palestinians should pay a price and countries should deny entry to them.

Meanwhile, Ilan Baruch, former Ambassador of Israel to South Africa, called on Africa, drawing on its rich heritage of struggle against colonialism, to launch an African Peace Initiative modelled after the Arab initiative to help the parties to the conflict remove the barriers to Palestinian self-determination, sovereignty and statehood.

Then, instead of repeatedly condemning Israel on the world stage, which only exacerbated Israelis' sense that there was a cynical "automatic majority" against them, Africa and the Non-Aligned Movement should extend their hand to Israel "with a message of acceptance and recognition", he said. Such a move would resonate boldly in the Israeli peace camp, the Israeli civil society and hopefully with the Israeli Government.

Turning to the issue of donor aid, Iman Shawwa, Acting Head of Office of the Local Aid Coordination

Secretariat in Ramallah, said that, despite making impressive strides in creating a functioning State in key areas, the Palestinian Authority still suffered from a fiscal crisis, due in large part to the \$1 billion drop in donor aid in the last four years, coupled with continued restrictions on Palestinians' movement and access. She implored donors to ensure adequate, predictable funds to help the Palestinian Authority meet its estimated \$1.2 billion in financing requirements for 2013.

Also speaking during the sessions were representatives of Namibia, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the World Council of Churches.

Plenary II

Participating in the morning session, titled "From colonial yoke to sovereignty — lessons drawn from ending colonization and achieving sovereignty and independence", were Collin Stewart, Deputy Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union in Addis Ababa; Tuliameni Kalomoh, Special Adviser on Foreign Affairs of Namibia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ilan Baruch, former Ambassador of Israel to South Africa; and Iman Shawwa, Acting Head of Office of the Local Aid Coordination Secretariat in Ramallah.

Mr. STEWART welcomed the Palestinian Rights Committee's decision to hold the conference in Africa, as African solidarity with Palestine continued to be crucial to Palestinian self-determination. African States, drawing on their own anti-colonial experiences and post-colonial struggles to build effective Governments and sustainable economies, had much to offer. In much of post-colonial Africa, the first few years of independence were met with jubilation and hope, but economic development and political stability posed many challenges. Generating common national objectives and confidence in national democratic systems as a means to resolve conflicts were challenges Palestine faced as well. "Africa's lessons are important for Palestine as it deals with its internal conflicts, particularly those which divide the polities of the West Bank and Gaza," he said.

Forming a Government of national unity was vital for Palestinians to achieve full sovereignty and territorial integrity, he said, encouraging the Palestinian leaders' renewed efforts towards that end. Divisions only served to weaken and destabilize a nascent State already beset by enormous challenges, further complicating the economy. Any emerging State struggled with creating the structures and policies necessary to encourage growth. With its two physically divided and independently functioning polities in the West Bank and Gaza, Palestine's ability to have one national economic policy or strategy was nearly impossible. The reception and use of donor support could not be equally or effectively invested in improving Government services.

The challenges of an emerging State to quickly create infrastructure, an effective banking system and policies to attract local and international investment were more pronounced in Palestine because it had yet to free itself from its colonial legacy and exercise full control of its borders, he said. The constraint on the movement of persons and goods in Palestine was one that most newly independent African States fortunately had not faced. Moreover, the cantonization within Palestine itself that inhibited movement within State-controlled areas must be addressed if Palestine was to achieve full sovereignty. He pointed to other numerous challenges unique to Palestine, such as its reliance on a third State for the transfer of its own tax revenue. There were even limitations on how far fishing vessels could move off the coast of Gaza.

African States and the African Union had always strongly supported the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination, he said. In January 2012, the African Union General Assembly had affirmed its full support to the Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle to end the Israeli occupation and to establish an independent State, under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The African Union supported Palestine's bid for full United Nations membership. Forty-nine African Union member States, the majority, now recognized Palestine as a State. It was encouraging that most African States had full diplomatic relations with Palestine, which could generate political support for its recognition by other international organizations, as well as create opportunities for trade, commercial and cultural exchange.

Mr. BARUCH said that, as an Israeli diplomat to several African countries from 2005 to 2011, he

had witnessed those States' deep commitment to Middle East peace and a sincere concern for the Palestinian people. But he resigned his post "in pain and anguish" at the Netanyahu Government's decision to dismiss as superfluous any effort to achieve a lasting settlement based on the land-for-peace principle. Recent opinion polls showed that most Israelis and Palestinians desired a negotiated peace in line with the two-State solution, but hawks on both sides of the conflict had refused to compromise, capitalizing on the support of a fearful public. Rather than the peace process, Israel's Government was focused on self-reliant security and was primarily preoccupied with Iran's nuclear programme.

In a historic visit to the region last month, United States President Barack Obama had told ordinary Israelis in Hebrew that they were "not alone, in isolation", Mr. Baruch said. But on the world stage Israel was consistently condemned, isolated and de-legitimized. The global narrative of anti-colonialism had skipped Israel, even though Israel too had fought for its independence. Instead, the Afro-Asian bloc, later the Non-Aligned Movement, had embarked on a marathon campaign to secure self-determination, sovereignty and statehood for the Palestinians, leaving Israelis feeling that there was a cynical "automatic majority" against them.

"The UN is the theatre where Israel's defeat repeatedly gets played out. That is [...] the way Israelis perceive multilateralism, not without reason," Mr. Baruch said. Aiming to change that, the Arab Peace Initiative had sent a message to Israel that once it completed peace negotiations with the Palestinians and resolved all pending disputes, Arab League countries would make peace with Israel and normalize diplomatic and trade relations. The Israeli Government had not responded to that offer, but Israeli civil society had, so much so that the "Israel Peace Initiative" campaign launched by one Israeli NGO to complement the Arab Peace Initiative had been well received internationally.

Mr. Baruch suggested that Africa, drawing on its rich heritage of struggle against colonialism, launch an African Peace Initiative modelled after the Arab initiative to help the parties to the conflict remove the barriers to Palestinian self-determination, sovereignty and statehood. Africa and the Non-Aligned Movement should then make a commitment. "Extend your hand to Israel with a message of acceptance and recognition, saying *atem lo levad*, you are not isolated, undermined, de-legitimized. This move, undoubtedly, will resonate boldly in the Israeli peace camp, the Israeli civil society and, so we should hope, with the Israeli Government as well," he said.

Mr. KALOMOH also emphasized the value and power of international solidarity. During Namibia's independence movement, supporters around the world had never lost faith in supporting Namibia's struggle for freedom, and that persistence had eventually prevailed on their Governments to impose sanctions on the South African regime. The same faith in solidarity should be applied to the Palestinian cause. Solidarity with Palestine should be further expanded to Africa to include the masses, especially university students. The oppressed must unite beyond individual affinity in order to mobilize ordinary people worldwide to put pressure on their Governments. The Palestinian people should unite behind the Palestinian Authority to force Israel to comply with resolutions and decisions of the international community.

In the Caracas Declaration, adopted at its special meeting in Venezuela in April 2013, the Palestinian Rights Committee had asked the General Assembly to proclaim 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, he said. This would be a great opportunity to send a message to people around the world to pressure their Governments to change their policies in support of Palestine. Moreover, the General Assembly should endorse a meaningful increase in the budget of the Committee to reinforce its activities during such a year.

Turning to donor aid, Ms. SHAWWA said that, despite its upgraded United Nations status, Palestine was not permitted full control of its territory, forcing it to rely heavily on outside funds. In 2005, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee had set up a Local Aid Coordination Structure so the Palestinian Authority could better set priorities and distribute aid, in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Thanks to impressive strides in self-governance, by September 2011, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations had deemed the Palestinian Authority's governmental functions sufficient for a functioning State in six key areas: governance, human rights and the rule of law; education and culture;

health; social protection; livelihoods, food security and employment; and infrastructure, water and sanitation. By 2012, most donors, except large ones, had fully untied their aid to Palestine.

Still, the peace process remained at a stalemate and the \$1 billion drop in donor aid in the last four years, coupled with continued restrictions on Palestinians' movement and access, had exacerbated the Palestinian Authority's fiscal crisis, she said. It also had caused the Palestinian economy to slow from 11 per cent real growth in 2011 to 6 per cent in 2012. Moreover, in 2011, the Palestinian Authority suffered from a \$200 million to \$220 million donor financing shortfall, while its 2012 budget finance gap was estimated at \$500 million. In March 2013, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee called on donors to ensure adequate, predictable funds to meet the Palestinian Authority's 2013 financing requirements of an estimated \$1.2 billion.

"It is important that this momentum be kept up and that key players in aid coordination continue to steadfastly support the [Palestinian Authority]," she said, pointing to the Authority's many challenges, among them programme fragmentation and duplication, and the lack of accurate data on funding. Donor aid must be in line with the Palestinian National Development Plan, coordinated through the Ministry of Finance's Aid Management and Coordination Unit, and monitored through such mechanisms as the Paris Declaration Monitoring Survey, the Gender Mainstreaming Survey and the Security Sector Working Group Survey. Additionally, donors should continue sharing information on their disbursements by updating the national aid information management system.

Plenary III

Joining the Meeting's final panel discussion titled "International efforts at achieving Israeli-Palestinian peace — Africa's support for Palestinian sovereignty and independence" were Ndumiso Ndima Ntshinga, Ambassador of South Africa to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); Ibra Deguene Ka, former Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; and Naeem Jeenah, Executive Director of the Afro-Middle East Centre in Johannesburg.

Mr. NDIMA NTSHINGA said the meeting was timely as it came a few weeks before the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Today, Africa was free, because it had managed to shake off the yoke of slavery, colonialism and apartheid. South Africa had supported global efforts to establish a viable Palestinian State based on pre-1967 borders and was deeply concerned about Israeli settlement expansion, especially in East Jerusalem. On various occasions, his Government had called on Israel to abandon all settlement activity, which made the two-State solution increasingly difficult to achieve. "The halting of settlement construction is seen by the South African Government as a commitment already agreed to by Israel during preceding peace negotiations," he said, citing the November 2007 Annapolis Conference.

During the Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh in May 2012, South Africa had reiterated its unwavering commitment to and called for recognition of the Palestinian State, he said. He condemned all acts of violence and expressed particular concern over the continued violence perpetrated by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and their property, including the uprooting of trees, assaulting of and firing on Palestinians, and the demolition of Palestinian homes, mosques, churches and cemeteries. South Africa had urged the Israeli authorities on many occasions to take action against the perpetrators.

South Africans, who only 19 years ago were subjected to discrimination and oppression by their minority apartheid rulers, were passionate about the Palestinian cause, he said. Their experience with dialogue and negotiation with their political opponents had been hard and painful, but they had reaped the benefits of freedom and reconciliation. "We have a story to tell that we could share with our brothers and sisters of Palestine," he said, pointing to the strong civil service that was built forming the birth of a democratic State in 1994.

Just as unity had played a key role in South Africa's independence, unity between Fatah and Hamas was critical for the future of Palestine, he said. A united Palestine and Palestinian leadership and the holding of broad-based Palestinian elections were critical for creating an independent Palestinian State, as was one of the agreed outcomes of the 2012 reconciliation talks in Doha, which would bring about a new, stronger mandate for negotiations with Israel. In that regard, the appointment of Tzipi Livni as Minister of Justice and Chief Negotiator for the Middle East Peace Process in Israel's new coalition Government, which Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas had called "a positive development", could be an important move. Palestine should now pressure Israel to return to the negotiating table.

Mr. KA said that Africa, with its shared geography and history of legitimate struggle, was at the forefront of the fight for Palestinian self-determination and independence. The future of Arab nations was inextricably linked to that of Africa, which was home to 60 per cent of Arabs and 40 per cent of Arab land. Since its inception in 1963, the OAU had unequivocally supported the Palestinian people's legitimate struggle in multilateral forums such as the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Since 1967 several African countries had strongly advocated Israel's withdrawal from Arab lands.

In 1973, African nations severed diplomatic ties with Israel after the Yom Kippur war at a time when Israel had invested heavily in several African countries, he said. A year later, under an African Presidency, the General Assembly adopted resolution 3236, which reaffirmed the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, independence and return. In 1975, the Palestinian Rights Committee was created, with Senegal as its first chair. Most recently, African nations had rallied behind Palestine's upgraded status in the United Nations.

For almost 40 years, the Palestinian Rights Committee had greatly helped advance the Palestinian cause and raised global public awareness about Israel's illegal and inhumane practices in occupied Palestine, which amounted to the collective punishment of the Palestinian people and offended the conscience of mankind, he said. The Palestinian Rights Committee had constantly berated in international forums Israel's unpunished violations of Security Council resolutions and rejection of any peace effort in the region.

Hadn't the dismantling of the segregationist apartheid regime helped South African society reconcile? he asked. Hadn't the end of the cold war, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War paved the way for the Madrid Conference and the Oslo agreements? The parties to the conflict must be pushed to save the peace process until peace reigned in the Middle East. Africa, drawing on its own victory against colonization, would continue to make every effort to bring peace and self-determination to Palestine.

Mr. JEENAH said that on 9 July 2005 about 200 Palestinian civil society and political organizations had called on the world to boycott, divest from and sanction Israel. Four days later, the United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Middle East Peace, held in Paris, had endorsed the call in its Action Plan 2005. Known as the "BDS" movement, the call demanded that Israel end its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantle its separation wall; recognize the fundamental rights of Israel's Arab-Palestinian citizens to full equality; and respect, protect and promote the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in General Assembly resolution 194.

The basis for South Africa's anti-apartheid campaign had been armed struggle; the internal underground; international solidarity and international isolation of the South African State; and mass mobilization within the country, he said. But it had taken decades to make gains. By the time South African liberation movements had been unbanned, many Western countries, in particular, had still staunchly been refusing to adopt sanctions. "Over the past almost eight years, the Palestinian BDS campaign has achieved more successes in various parts of the world than South Africa's campaign had in about 20 years," he said.

When the occupier was strong militarily, economically and diplomatically, as was the case in apartheid South Africa and in Israel today, strategies to isolate it were wise, he said. The BDS campaign,

which focused its attention on the Israeli State, institutions and companies linked to settlement activity and academic institutions, had scored many victories. For example, the Israeli company Agrexco had filed for liquidation in 2011 and Ahava closed its main London store after being boycotted by retailers in the United Kingdom, Norway, Japan, Canada and South Africa. In 2011, the University of Johannesburg had decided not to form institutional relations with Israeli institutions. An increasing number of artists and writers worldwide had refused to perform in Israel, while churches and other civil society groups had divested. South Africa and some European countries' Governments were poised to pass legislation to label settlement products.

A group of South African Jews had set up an organization called "Stop the JNF" to convince their countrymen not to support the Jewish National Fund, which supported settlement building in Palestine and which was active in agricultural projects in South Africa and other parts of the continent, he said. While many African countries had Palestinian solidarity organizations, they had failed thus far to develop a continent-wide solidarity network that could make their activities more effective. The global community should broaden and deepen the BDS campaign. "African civil society has been somewhat lacking in this regard and it is about time civil society groups on this continent responded vociferously to the BDS Call," he said.

Closing Remarks

RIYAD MANSOUR, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine to the United Nations, said the adoption of General Assembly resolution 67/19 had been vital for the Palestinian struggle for freedom. Palestine's status as a full Member State or an observer State was not as important as the fact that the international community had recognized the existence of a Palestinian State. Now the pillars of that State must be strengthened. The notion that self-determination could not be accorded to Palestinians until negotiations with Israel were finalized was completely unacceptable. "When Israel declared independence, it did not ask for permission by other countries. When the US declared independence, it did not negotiate with the British. They just exercised their right," he said, adding that the Palestinians were ready to negotiate with Israel on all issues, as long as Israel was ready to do the same in good faith.

The Palestinians were grateful to African countries, most of whom, with the exception of Eritrea and Cameroon, had recognized the State of Palestine, he said. While South Africa's civil society had a very strong basis, civil society in Africa as a whole was not united as a strong regional force. African civil society players should build a massive popularity movement in support of Palestine. For things to improve, the State of Palestine needed to join United Nations agencies and international conventions and utilize any available international instruments.

It was not enough to characterize settlements as illegal and an obstacle to peace, he said. Practical steps must be taken. "Friends", such as those countries that provided financial and economic support to Palestinians, should implement legal instruments that held Israel to account. He called on countries to determine the source of products from Israel to make sure they were not produced in Israeli settlements. Settlers who committed crimes against Palestinians should pay a price, and countries should deny entry to them.

Participation in the Meeting was not just about listening to good speeches, he said. "You are going home with a responsibility — not only to advocate for freedom and independence, but also to show to the world that occupation is ugly," he told the audience, adding that "it is the collective responsibility of the international community to make the world a better place, by eradicating occupation, by eradicating apartheid from this world". The State of Palestine needed support when it attempted to join United Nations agencies and exercise international legal options. It needed support in every possible way so that the occupation ended in the near future and so Israelis and Palestinians could live in peace and security in two independent States, free from hatred and resentment.

Formally closing the Meeting, ABDOU SALAM DIALLO, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said the historic adoption of General Assembly resolution

67/19 last November that had granted Palestine observer State status in the United Nations had created a new dimension to the search for a solution to the question of Palestine and had been an important first step. Still, Palestine faced a difficult path ahead to full membership. Moreover, the Palestinian Authority's precarious financial situation endangered the sustainability of its institution-building programme. "The Palestinian people and leadership need our continued and increased support," he said, warning that "mere criticism of Israel's occupation and colonization policies will not stop their continuation".

He welcomed ongoing meaningful talks facilitated by third parties aimed at resuming negotiations between Israel and Palestine. A major global effort, including by regional parties and the Quartet, that included practical steps to force Israel to reverse its detrimental policies and accept coexistence with all its neighbours was needed to drive the peace process forward. He was also convinced of African States' support for the Palestinian people, particularly their important role at the United Nations as part of the African Group and the Non-Aligned Movement.

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