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Presentation of reports under item 7:

*Human Rights situation in Palestine and other
occupied arab territories*

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Mr. President,
Distinguished Members of the Human Rights Council,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, I would like to introduce two additional OHCHR reports, as well as offer some updates regarding the High Level Fact-Finding Mission tasked by the Human Rights Council to travel to Beit Hanoun.

The first report before you assesses the progress made in the implementation of Human Rights Council Resolution 7/1 on human rights violations emanating from Israeli military attacks and incursions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt), particularly in the occupied Gaza Strip. Following up with my previous report under HRC resolution S-6/1, this second assessment covers a two-month period from 25 February to the end of April 2008.

The report focuses on the closure of Gaza and its impact on the enjoyment of human rights. It describes the effects of violence against the civilian populations, as well as other human

rights violations. Actions taken by Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and Hamas during the reporting period continued to violate international human rights and humanitarian law. The report also notes that the recommendations made in my most recent report on human rights violations in the oPt, notably those concerning the establishment of accountability mechanisms and the closure of Gaza, have not been implemented.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I now turn to my second report, which concerns the implementation of Human Rights Council Resolution 6/19 on religious and cultural rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The report focuses on the question of access of Palestinians to religious sites in the oPt. It describes how obstacles to freedom of movement, such as the closure/permit regimes and the Wall, hamper such access. The report also covers issues related to the preservation of religious sites in the oPt and to religious charitable institutions or schools.

The section devoted to cultural rights deals with effects of the restrictions on freedom of movement on the enjoyment of cultural rights, as well as with the issue of damage caused to the cultural heritage of the oPt. As the report documents,

restrictions on freedom of movement of both people and goods in the oPt, which are implemented by Israel with the aim of providing security, severely impeded the population's access to religious sites as well as hindered cultural exchanges during the reporting period. While security undoubtedly is an important consideration, measures that limit access to religious sites and hamper cultural exchanges should be proportionate to that aim, and non-discriminatory in their application.

Mr. President,

I will conclude by drawing to your attention to the follow-up to Human Rights Council Resolution S-3/1 which dispatched a High Level Fact-Finding Mission to travel to Beit Hanoun in the Occupied Palestinian Territory of Gaza. The leader of that Mission, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, informed the Council at its seventh session of the Mission's intention to travel to Beit Hanoun via Egypt. At that time, Archbishop Tutu also informed the Council that the report of the Mission would be submitted to the Council at its ninth session in September 2008. The Mission was successfully undertaken from 26 to 30 May 2008. OHCHR provided secretariat services, as well as logistical and security support. This was done jointly with colleagues in the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and in the UN Country Team in Egypt.

This brief update concludes my presentation today. I wish you a fruitful discussion.

Thank you.