



SOUTH AFRICA'S STATEMENT
UNCTAD ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE
64TH SESSION OF THE UNCTAD TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD

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GENEVA

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Mr President

South Africa aligns itself with the statement delivered by Tanzania on behalf of the G77 and China, as well as the statement delivered by Sudan on behalf of the African Group. We wish to commend UNCTAD for being one of the leading international organization to address the socio-economic development of the Occupied Palestinian Territories with the urgency that the situation warrants. This is particularly laudable in view of the lack of meaningful action by the international community to address what is, without a doubt, a blemish on the conscience of the United Nations.

Mr President

The state of Israel's 50 years of occupation has been devastating to the economic and social development of Palestinian people, leading to de-development in Palestine. This has a bearing on the Palestinian right to self-determination. The occupation is illegal and contravenes international law. Thus, the report's analysis, that this illegal occupation perpetuates a vicious cycle of economic collapse, falling aid, leading to political discontent, which leads to further tightening of the occupation, is both horrific and apt. Unemployment is among the highest in the world, poverty is increasing at an alarming rate and GDP dropped a drastic 71% as a result of the blockade since 1990. In this way, the report demonstrates a causality between Israel's draconian and oppressive measures, and the pitiful economic situation of the Palestinian people, which demands that the world to pay attention and act accordingly in the current era of sustainable development. In terms of the right to development, there is an urgent need to allow for free movement of Palestinians to allow them access to opportunities for their socio-economic development and self-determination. It is in this context that we argue that a robust Palestinian economy would be essential for a viable Palestinian state for establishing a two-state solution. Enablers, such as basic services, water and sanitation, access to education and health services need to be ensured, in order to enhance the development of the

people, allowing them the chance to lift themselves out of poverty through engagement in economic activities.

Mr President

A recurring theme throughout this session has been around the growth potential that trade offers economies, thus ensuring inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development of the people. Many of us can see how this has or could be used in our own countries. I doubt very much that Palestinians can see the same possibilities because their reality is so starkly different to those of other developing countries. The concerted effort of Israel to suppress any development in Palestine ensures that Palestinians development trajectory is effectively blocked. Every step forward towards development that the people of Palestine take, is impeded by this system of foreign occupation. This is recognized by our leaders in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by our heads of state, which acknowledges the particular constraints by people living under foreign occupation to realize the sustainable development goals. The de-development, de-industrialization and de-agriculturalization, exacerbated by Israel's control of the Palestinian productive base, from the elimination of marketing opportunities, the shrinking of land and natural resources and the destruction of infrastructure, will continue to have a devastating effect on the hopes for recovery of the Palestinian economy and meaningful improvement on the lives of Palestinians. This, therefore, demands that UNCTAD's assistance to the Palestinian people is strengthened and expanded commensurate with the needs of the economy and the people.

Mr President

As you may know, South Africa's policy positions on Palestine in all international forums is based on a recognition on the inalienable right to the self-determination of the Palestinian people. In this connection, my Government places high premium on

the kinds of partnerships and advocacy that allowed our people's right to self-determination to become a reality, ending oppression and ensuring human rights and fundamental freedoms, including economic, social and cultural rights for all. As a measure of support for the Palestinian people, it should be noted that the South African Cabinet, on 21 August 2012, approved that a notice in terms of the Consumer Protection Act, 2008 be issued by the Minister of Trade and Industry, requiring the labeling of goods or products emanating from Palestinian occupied Territories, thus preventing consumers being led to believe that the goods come from Israel. This is in line with South Africa's stance that recognises the 1948 borders delineated by the United Nations, and does not recognise occupied territories beyond these borders as being part of the state of Israel. We will continue to support the Palestinian struggle for self-determination through capacity-building and intergovernmental cultural exchange programmes. South Africa continues to support Palestine through financial assistance and development projects in the context of South-South cooperation. It is our hope that Member States will continue to provide political and economic support to the just cause of the people of Palestine.

Thank you.