

UNCTAD Deputy Secretary General
Introductory statement to the 63rd Session of the TDB
Agenda item 6 (b)

08 December 2016

Distinguished delegates,

Good morning.

This agenda item, on the report on UNCTAD's assistance to the Palestinian people, has been a permanent feature of the Trade and Development Board deliberations for more than three decades. It represents UNCTAD's unique contribution to economic development under complex conditions of conflict and occupation.

This year, the Report highlights the ongoing problems of de-agriculturalization and de-industrialization in the Palestinian economy. It warns on the persistence of the 2014 recession, which has weakened economic growth and the government's to improve socioeconomic conditions for the Palestinian people.

The report also reflects on the ongoing economic costs of occupation and of other obstacles to trade and development. It argues that reversing these costs is a prerequisite for:

- 1) placing the Palestinian economy on the path to sustainable development and,
- 2) the achievement of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The report also updates the international community on the dire situation in Gaza. And it puts emphasis on the electricity crisis and its heavy toll on every aspect of public and private life.

Finally, the Report highlights our ongoing support for building the capacities of the Palestinian public and the private sectors in the areas of UNCTAD competencies.

We look forward to your active deliberations on this agenda item and recommendations on how to strengthen this important work program.

Mr. Mahmoud Elkhafif, Coordinator of Assistance to the Palestinian people, will further elaborate on the report.