

Opening remarks

Date : 18 September 2017

For Isabelle Durant, Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD

Meeting: Trade and Development Board, 64th Session
Item 12(b): Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people
Palais des Nations
Geneva, Switzerland

Date: 19 September 2017

Time: 10h00 – 13h00

Excellencies,

Distinguished Panellists,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Welcome to this afternoon’s session, Item 12(b) of the agenda: UNCTAD’s report on its assistance to the Palestinian people.
- UNCTAD’s work in Palestine derives from three General Assembly resolutions, which mandated UNCTAD to systematically examine the Palestinian economy’s multifaceted development predicament.
- In response, UNCTAD established the Assistance to the Palestinian People Unit (APPU) in 1985 to investigate the social and economic impact of policies of the Israeli occupation authorities in the Palestinian territory.
- This overall mandate is periodically refined by Member States in UNCTAD’s quadrennial work programmes.
- Most recently, in the Nairobi Maafikiano, Member States called on UNCTAD to continue its study of the impacts of the occupation, as well as “to strengthen its programme of assistance to the Palestinian people with adequate resources and effective operational activities” (para 55(dd)).
- Part of the mandate from the GA requires UNCTAD to report periodically to the Trade and Development Board on the implementation of its assistance to the Palestinian people.
- This agenda item has therefore been a fixture in the agenda of United Nations Trade and Development Board deliberations for more than three decades, underlining its continued importance to Member States.
- This year, the report reflects on the impact of five decades of occupation, and argues that this prolonged occupation has driven the Palestinian economy into economic regression (*n.b. “de-development” in the report*), poverty and mass unemployment.

- Among other findings, this year's report notes:
 - Stagnation in income per capita high levels of unemployment among Palestinians;
 - Risky working conditions for Palestinians employed in Israel and its settlements; and
 - The negative impact of the expansion of Israeli settlements on economic activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
- Furthermore, the report updates the international community on the dire situation in Gaza, and argues that the recent decline in donor support will have serious socioeconomic and political consequences.
- The report shed lights on proposed and recent UNCTAD technical cooperation activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the challenges that the secretariat faces in their implementation.
- UNCTAD has done its best to respond to paragraph 55(dd) of the Nairobi Maafikiano, which calls for strengthening the programme of assistance to the Palestinian people, but this has not been possible under current budget conditions.
- We therefore ask member states to exert all their efforts to help us respond positively to this mandate.
- We also take note of the additional mandates extended to UNCTAD by General Assembly in resolutions 69/20, 70/12 and 71/20 which ask us to assess and report on the economic cost of occupation for the Palestinian people.
- Unfortunately, UNCTAD cannot fulfil this mandate without additional resources. We urge member states to help us secure the resources needed so that we can respond to what you have asked us to do in three General Assembly resolutions.
- I wish you a productive session and to receiving your recommendations on how to strengthen this important work program.