



**African Group Statement delivered by
H.E. Kamal Gubara Deputy Permanent representative of Sudan on behalf of the
African Group on Item 12b
Report on UNCTAD's Assistance to the Palestinian people (TD/B/64)**

**Mr. President,
Her Excellency Ms. Abeer Odeh, Minister of National Economy, State of
Palestine,
Ms. Isabelle Durant, Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates.**

Mr. President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group. The Group fully associates itself to the statement delivered by the distinguished Ambassador of Tanzania on behalf of G.77 and China.

The African Group welcomes H.E. Ms. Abeer Odeh, Minister of National Economy, State of Palestine and thanks her for sharing with us the actual situation in Palestine. The Group also thanks Ms. Isabelle Durant, Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD for her opening remarks and Mr. Mahmoud Elkhafif, Coordinator, Assistance to Palestine People Unit, for presenting the Report.

Mr. President,

The African Group would like to commend UNCTAD for the insightful, informative, excellent Report on its Assistance to the Palestinian People. We concur with the report that occupation and the restrictions it imposes on the Palestinian economy are the root causes of the complex, multifaceted economic problems faced by the Palestinian people. More specifically, in line with the findings of UNCTAD outstanding report, the African Group is alarmed by the decline in foreign aid, Israel's expansion of its illegal Settlements in Palestinian land and the high unemployment level, especially among Palestinian youth.

Mr. President,

The illuminating UNCTAD report underscores the upsetting fact that in 2016 the productive capacity of the Palestinian economy continued to erode, economic performance was far below potential, and unemployment persisted at levels rarely seen around the world since the Great Depression. The African Group is concerned by the fact that real GDP per capita GDP in 2016 in Gaza was three quarters its level, almost three decades ago, in 1994, and was roughly at its 1999 level in the West Bank. These facts testify to the serious punishment and limitations imposed by the occupation on the Palestinian people.

Mr. President,

The African Group recognizes and appreciates the fact that the Palestinian National Authority has successfully reduced the fiscal deficit from 27 to 8 per cent of GDP between 2006 and 2016. Our Group concurs with UNCTAD's well researched report that any further fiscal austerity, under occupation, could lead to dangerous economic, social and political consequences, and will negatively affect the Palestinian ability to sustain the institution-building efforts required for the future sovereign Palestinian State.

The African Group agrees that there is a need to stem the leakage of Palestinian fiscal resources to Israel by establishing a mechanism whereby Israel shares with the Palestinian National Authority all trade data in a timely, transparent, and verifiable fashion. This is essential not only to put an end to Israel inappropriately acquiring Palestinian resources, but will also contribute to achieving Palestinian fiscal sustainability, enlarging fiscal space and improving the Palestinian capacity for sound budget planning and execution.

Mr. President,

The African Group is concerned by the declining donor support to the Palestinian people and its government after its impressive efforts to reduce the fiscal deficit, under extremely unfavourable conditions of occupation. As UNCTAD persuasive report maintains, the drop of 38 percent drop in donor-support in the last two years exacerbates the already existing cycle of increasingly belligerent occupation, falling aid and political discontent.

As UNCTAD's report clearly says the key reasons behind this drop is the fact that occupation has prevented aid in previous years from translating into tangible development gains. Most of the donor support has been used for

damage control, humanitarian interventions and budget support. The African group endorses UNCTAD's report recommendation that the international community should assume its responsibility towards the Palestinian people and the donors should stay the course with the State of Palestine and strengthen their support so as to prevent further deterioration in the already grim socioeconomic and humanitarian conditions.

Mr. President,

The African Group is deeply concerned by the fact that instead of the hoped-for two-state solution endorsed by the United Nations and the international community, today occupation is more entrenched than ever. We call for immediate lifting of the decade-long blockade and economic siege on Gaza and all restrictions on internal and external Palestinian trade, and ending the occupation of Area C in the West Bank so that sustainable development can take off in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Mr. President,

The African Group is concerned with the lack of implementation of paragraph 55(dd) of the Nairobi Maafikiano which states that UNCTAD "... should strengthen its programme of assistance to the Palestinian people with adequate resources ...", and recalls the UN General Assembly resolutions 69/20, 70/12, and 71/20 which request UNCTAD to assess and report to the GA on the economic cost of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people.

These resolutions attest to UNCTAD's proven expertise on the Palestinian economy and to its capacity to lead and coordinate the work of other UN entities to implement such an important task. The African Group urges UNCTAD to make all efforts to secure the regular and extra-budgetary resources required for full implementation of the abovementioned three General Assembly resolutions and paragraph 55(dd) of the Nairobi Maafikiano, which was adopted by the consensus of member States at UNCTAD XIV.

In conclusion, the African Group salute Palestinian people for their persistence in the face of such horrendous occupation conditions. Our Group is confident that this persistence will help them eventually overcome the occupation and enjoy their legitimate right for an independent state of Palestine.

I thank you Mr. President.