



**Statement by His Excellency Mr. Chad Blackman
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Barbados on behalf of the
Group of 77 and China at the 71st Executive Session of the Trade and Development
Board**

Draft statement on item 5: Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people

17 February 2022

President of the Trade and Development Board Ambassador Maimuna Tarishi of Tanzania,
Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Ms. Rebeca Grynspan,
Chief of UNCTAD's Assistance to the Palestinian People Unit, Mr. Mahmoud Elkhafif,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. At the outset the Group of 77 and China would like to express its appreciation to the UNCTAD Secretariat for its work in support of assistance to the Palestinian People, and for the work on preparing the report being considered at this meeting.

2. The latest report on UNCTAD's assistance to the Palestinian people themed, "*Developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory*", is very timely in that it sheds light on the compounded impact of occupation and the COVID-19 pandemic, which has resulted in 2020 being considered as the worst economic performance for the Palestinian people since the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority in 1994. The report highlights how the longstanding challenges experienced by the Palestinian people, including prolonged occupation, continue to severely impact their living conditions, environment, and opportunities for development. The also highlights how the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the socio-economic circumstances of the Palestinian people and economy.

Madam President.

3. We are deeply concerned that the Palestinian economy contracted by an overall 11.5% in 2020, thereby recording its second largest contraction since 1994. It is equally concerning that for the same period, unemployment rose to 26%, even as the rate of labour force participation fell by three percentage points from to 41%. If these trends are to reversed, the current socioeconomic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory will require immediate action. The Group of 77 and China therefore concurs with the Report in saying that recovery in 2022 and beyond, will largely depend on a change in the Occupied Palestinian Territory's circumstances in terms of occupation, a turnaround in the negative impacts caused by the COVID 19 pandemic, and an enhancement of the level of donor support received.

Madam President,

4. UNCTAD's report highlights the dismal state of the productive base, deepening geographical and market fragmentation, restrictions on access to factors of production and imported technology, which have resulted in a loss in productivity in the State of Palestine.

5. The loss of land and natural resources, leakage of financial resources and prolonged blockade, has significantly impaired the fiscal situation of the Palestinian government and the dire state of the overall economic environment, which in part had existed for several years before the onset of the coronavirus crisis.

6. The report suggests that the Palestinian government lacks the necessary policy space and is ill-equipped to cope with the extensive economic ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, we call on the international community to redouble its support for the Palestinian people in the aftermath of the pandemic.

7. Our Group thanks UNCTAD for its sustained support for the Palestinian people, government and other institutions through initiatives, advisory services, expertise and overall technical assistance. We commend UNCTAD Member States for their commitment to assisting the Palestinian people by renewing the organisation's mandate in the Bridgetown Covenant, and in so doing, instructed UNCTAD to continue assessing the economic development prospects of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, examine economic costs of the occupation and obstacles to trade and development, and strengthen its programme of assistance to the Palestinian people with adequate resources and effective operational activities, including relevant studies as part of the international community's commitment to building an independent Palestinian State, and with a view to alleviating the adverse economic and social conditions imposed on the Palestinian people, in line with the Accra Accord, the Doha Mandate and the Nairobi Maafikiano.

8. The Group of 77 and China reiterates its call for additional regular budget resources, as well as extra-budgetary resources to be dedicated to UNCTAD's programme on assistance to the Palestinian People.

9. The Group of 77 and China reiterates its solidarity with the Palestinian people, our commitment to just and lasting peace in the Middle East and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, in line with the relevant UN resolutions.

10. In closing Madam President, our Group wishes to inform you that in line with our statements under Agenda Items 2 and 3 of this executive session of the Trade and Development Board, we have submitted draft agreed conclusions under this agenda item for the consideration of the Board. We look forward to engaging on these in the remaining time we have available for this session.

I thank you, Madam President.