

Statement by Pakistan on behalf of the Asia Pacific Group
The Seventy First Executive Session of the Trade and Development Board
17 February 2022

Agenda item 5: Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people

Madam President,
Secretary-General of UNCTAD,
Chief of UNCTAD's Unit for assistance to the Palestinian People,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Asia Pacific Group expresses its appreciation to UNCTAD for its professional and well written report on its assistance to the Palestinian people. The report provides Member States and the international community with important updates on the worrisome economic and social conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The Group notes with concern severe consequences of the prolonged occupation on the Palestinian people, on their living conditions, on the environment, and on their opportunities for development. The Group echoes UNCTAD recommendation for action by the international community to take all measures necessary to stabilize the economy and support the fiscal situation of the Palestinian government to ensure that the Palestinian people can overcome the COVID-19 crisis and start the recovery process as soon as possible.

Madam President,

Palestinian territories represent the longest occupation in recent history. For the Palestinian people, these have been decades of de-development, suppressed human potential and denial of the right to development. There is no end in sight.

On top of it, the pandemic has made it the hardest time ever for the Palestinian people. According to the report, Palestinian GDP has contracted by 18%, two thirds of establishments have completely shut down and unemployment has soared to 39%. The crisis has engulfed all sectors of the economy, including tourism, construction, services, industrial and agricultural sectors.

Even before the onset of the COVID-19 shock, the Palestinian economy was in disarray and the overall politico-economic environment had been deteriorating in recent years. Prolonged occupation, the pandemic and the declining funding level exacerbated the economic situation. Today it has become hard for the Palestinian Government to meet its obligations towards public sector employees, private sector contractors and poor households.

Madam President,

Despite the severity of the coronavirus shock, the UNCTAD report maintains that the occupation remains the main obstacle to development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The Group notes that UN Security Council resolution 2334 affirms that the establishment of settlements in the West Bank constitutes a flagrant violation under international law.

The international community should assume its responsibility in ending the occupation and illegal settlements that are in violation of Security Council resolutions and have entailed devastating social and economic consequences for the Palestinian people.

Madam President,

Recovery in 2022 and beyond hinges on actions that will or will not be taken and the scale of donor support.

The Group notes with appreciation that UNCTAD has successfully delivered technical cooperation, training, and advisory services to the Palestinian people, and completed a project on developing Palestinian trade facilitation capacity.

The Group urges UNCTAD to continue to provide assistance to the Palestinian people in the form of advisory services, research and policy papers, technical cooperation projects and capacity-building and training for Palestinian professionals from the public and private sectors.

The Group also encourages UNCTAD to make all efforts to secure regular and extra-budgetary resources required for full implementation of the mandates approved by Maafikiano and Bridgetown Covenants as well as by the General Assembly resolutions which inter alia request UNCTAD to assess the economic cost of occupation.

Finally, Madam President,

The Group is confident that establishment of an independent and viable State of Palestine is the only viable route for prosperity and lasting peace in the Middle East in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Thank you.