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**Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN
Geneva**

Statement

349th Session of the Governing Body of ILO
Agenda Item POL/4

Enhanced Programme of Development Cooperation for the Occupied Arab
Territories (GB.349/POL/4)

Statement delivered by Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, Permanent
Representative on behalf of Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC)
(02 November 2023)

Chairperson,

On behalf of the OIC, I would like to start by reading out the first sentence of the constitution of the ILO. It states and I quote, “*Whereas universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice*”- End Quote.

Mr. Chairperson,

These opening words of the ILO’s constitution provide the common ground that holds us together. The values of social justice, humanity and yearning for enduring peace are at the foundation of our work in ILO- and as of today, targeted destruction of Gaza and its people is the biggest threat to these values.

In this context the OIC countries would like to express grave concerns on the devastation, staggering loss of lives especially women and children and destruction of livelihoods as a result of targeted attacks on Gaza.

The disruptive impact of on-going violence on workers in the area presents a huge challenge in the months and years ahead.

What we are witnessing on television screens is an affront to humanity.

Mr. Chairperson

We thank the Office for presenting the updated report outlining the progress of ILO's 'Enhanced Programme of Development Cooperation for the Occupied Arab Territories'.

We also thank the Director General for his report on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories at the 111th session of the International Labour Conference.

Both these reports present a sobering picture of Palestinian economy and its impact on employment, social welfare and sustainable livelihoods.

With no surprise, and in line with analysis by every other United Nations agency, the report points at continuing occupation as the primary root cause of the dismal social and economic situation.

Chairperson,

To quote from the updated report itself, *“A quarter of the labour force is unemployed and Palestinian livelihoods are increasingly at risk. Women and young people fare worst, with unemployment rates standing at 40.4 per cent and 36.1 per cent respectively in 2022. At 45.3 per cent, Gaza’s unemployment rate continues to be among the highest in the world. Even more concerning is the rate of Gazan youth who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs), standing at 32.9 per cent for young men and 38.1 per cent for young women. The outlook for 2023 remains bleak.”*

The workers continue to suffer the socio-economic consequences of the 56-year occupation and remain trapped in poverty.

The latest events have only added to the woes of the Palestinians in general and Gazans in particular.

Declining financial capacity of the Palestinian Authority adversely impacts its ability to support employment. In this regard, the report's findings on unilateral deductions of clearance revenues by Israeli authorities and decreasing external funding merit attention.

Under these circumstances we affirm the importance of ILO programme of development cooperation in the occupied Arab territories in contributing to outcome of the second and third Palestinian Decent Work Programme

We would like to appreciate all those countries who have contributed to the ILO's development cooperation program in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

In the wake of on-going violence and its impact on the people in Gaza and West Bank, we urge these countries to continue their valuable partnership with the ILO.

We would also like to encourage concerned member states to build partnerships with the ILO as one of their empathetic responses to people of occupied territories who are being deprived of everything- from their dignity to their lives.

The updated report provides ample manifestation of how our joint efforts and collaboration with the ILO in occupied territories can help in creating and providing access to economic opportunities that are sustainable, resilient and inclusive.

Chairperson,

We join the Office in its call for Member States, development partners and donors to provide financial support for the implementation of ongoing projects and the rehabilitation work required in the aftermath recent tragedies.

We renew our full solidarity with people and workers of occupied Arab Territories and reiterate our support for international calls for immediate cessation of hostilities as well as ending the illegal Israeli occupation.

Finally, we call upon the Office to chalk out a strategy to address the ongoing crisis facing the social partners in Gaza, West Bank and other occupied territories and share a detailed follow up report in the next session of the Governing Body.

Mr. Chairman,

We started this statement with a reminder from the ILO's constitution and would like to end it with the concluding observation in the Director General's report on the occupied Arab territories which resonates the same point. The report states and I quote, "*Social justice requires equality, freedom and dignity. These values, upon which international labour standards are built, are undermined by the occupation and the increasing violence*"

I thank you.