



**Statement by Mr. Bilal Ahmad, Permanent Representative of Pakistan
71st Session of the Trade and Development Board
(16 September - 27 September)**

**Agenda item 8: Report on UNCTAD's assistance to the Palestinian people
(17 September 2024)**

**President of the TDB Ambassador Paul Bekkers,
Secretary General of UNCTAD Madam Rebecca Grynspan,
Excellencies and distinguished delegates,**

As this is the first time we take the floor during this session, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, for your election.

Pakistan aligns itself with the statements delivered by Cambodia on behalf of G77 and China and by Bangladesh on behalf of the APG.

At the outset, we express our solidarity with the people of Palestine and convey our condolences on the loss of more than 41,000 Palestinians in less than one year; 70 percent of whom were women and children.

While these figures reflect the tally of destruction only since October 2023; Palestinian people have continuously suffered through decades of occupation and daily acts of oppression.

We thank UNCTAD for its report which provides the international community with important factual and statistical updates on the debilitating socio-economic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Mr. President,

Daunting as it is to read statistics from afar, we cannot begin to imagine the agony and suffering of those afflicted by the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We would like to highlight the following alarming details:

First, multidimensional poverty has affected the entire population of Gaza, with three-quarters displaced and suffering from lack of the most basic necessities like food, potable water, and healthcare.

Second, the conflict has also spilled over to the West Bank and East Jerusalem with rising displacement and a declining economy. Unemployment in the West Bank rose to 32% by the end of 2023, with over 200,000 jobs lost.

Third, the expansion of illegal settlements in occupied Palestine, continues in blatant violation of international law and stymies any hope for future development.

This is exacerbated by lack of humanitarian aid entering Gaza, withholding of Palestinian tax revenue, donor aid reductions and restrictions on trade. The disruptive impact of the ongoing violence presents a massive challenge to economic recovery.

Mr. President,

We reaffirm our support for UNCTAD's mandate under the Bridgetown Covenant, Nairobi Maafikiano and several UN General Assembly resolutions to continue assessing the barriers to trade and development in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We specifically underline the following measures:

First, we urge UNCTAD to continue providing assistance to the Palestinian people through advisory services, research and policy papers, technical cooperation projects and capacity-building and training for professionals from both public and private sectors.

Second, we call attention to the need for UNCTAD to secure regular and extra-budgetary resources necessary to adequately staff and resource the Unit for Assistance to the Palestinian people in order to fulfill its mandate.

Third, we urge development partners to continue supporting the implementation of ongoing projects and the rehabilitation work required in the aftermath of recent tragedies.

Finally, UNCTAD's report clearly highlights tangible economic losses, but the generational losses of human capital need further attention. With the mass killing of Palestinian professionals such as doctors, engineers, teachers, journalists and social workers – a nation is being denied its future. We urge that future reports may also examine the cost of human resource mobilization to support the Palestinian economy.

This disastrous situation cannot be prolonged. Economic development in the Occupied Palestinian Territories requires immediate cessation of hostilities and an end to the occupation.

Mr. President,

We take this opportunity to reaffirm our enduring commitment to the Palestinian people to realize their dreams and aspirations of peace in an independent state of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its Capital.

I thank you.

Word count: 576

Speaking time: 4 minutes