



**Draft statement on behalf of OIC Group, to be delivered by Pakistan,
during the 74th Executive Session of the Trade and Development Board
21 November 2023**

Agenda item 6: Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people

**Mr. President,
Secretary General of UNCTAD,
Excellencies and distinguished delegates,**

I deliver this statement on behalf of OIC group of countries (with the exception of Albania).

We appreciate UNCTAD's work, which has benefited the Palestinian people for over 35 years through policy-oriented research, capacity-building, technical cooperation projects, and advisory services.

We recall several UNGA resolutions that have requested UNCTAD to report on the economic costs of the Israeli occupation.

In this regard, we affirm our support for the Bridgetown Covenant, which requests that UNCTAD assesses barriers to trade and development in the OPT to alleviate conditions as one of UNCTAD's priorities.

Within this context, we thank UNCTAD for its report on assistance to the Palestinian people.

The report paints a dismal picture of economic conditions in the OPT during the reporting period.

The report concludes, and I quote, "The year 2022 was one of the worst years for the Palestinians in recent history".

Mr. President,

Only if this reports authors knew that 2023 would beat all their imaginations.

We resolutely condemn targeted attacks in Gaza since October, resulting in a staggering loss of civilian lives, especially women and children, and destruction of livelihoods, the decimation of school buildings with civilians, including children, sheltered in them, and hospitals being bombed and squeezed out of function.

This carnage is no piece of fiction. It is no exaggerated account of some medieval conquest. It is happening before us in the 21st century.

It is out there for all to see, including those whose moral consciousness has taken a leave in calling out these crimes against humanity and war crimes and those who watch this mass murder and still struggle to agree with a ceasefire.

The Resolution of the Joint Arab Islamic Summit meeting held in Riyadh on 11th November rejected describing retaliatory war as self-defense, and called for the need to break the siege of Gaza to ensure immediate access of international humanitarian convoys including food, fuel and medicine. The Resolution also calls for the protection of Palestinian's right to development and the need for support from international partners for reconstruction of Gaza and mitigating the impact of massive destruction.

Mr. President,

The disruptive impact of the ongoing violence on the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory presents a massive challenge in the months and years ahead.

The UNCTAD's report points to the disturbing trends:

First, there is increasing economic dependency of Palestinians on the occupation regime including trade dependency, monetary dependency, and employment dependency.

Second, the vicious cycles of closures, restrictions, destruction, and reconstruction have ushered in a spiral of de-development in the OPT.

Third, the growth in settlement activity, with its illegal nature, also stymied the hopes for development.

Israeli authorities unilateral deductions of clearance revenues and decreasing external funding to the Palestinian Authority merit particular attention. The declining financial capacity of the Palestinian Authority adversely impacts its ability to support its rehabilitation.

As a result, over a quarter of the labor force is unemployed, and Palestinian livelihoods are increasingly at risk. Between 2006 and 2022, the population of Gaza has grown by 61 percent, while the real GDP declined by 27 percent, and an alarming two-thirds of the people in Gaza live in poverty, with a 45 percent probability of unemployment for those who seek work.

The report of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) states that nearly all of the Gazan population was estimated to have become multidimensionally poor (96 per cent) based on the national multidimensional poverty index (MPI).

Against these challenging circumstances, we appreciate UNCTAD's work and request the UNCTAD secretariat to adequately staff and resource the Unit for Assistance to the Palestinian people. We also call on Member States and development partners to continue supporting the implementation of ongoing projects and the rehabilitation work required in the aftermath of recent tragedies.

We would have appreciated if the UNCTAD annual report for 2022 had also included reference to the activities and reports of the "Assistance to the Palestinian People Unit". However, we commend UNCTAD for producing an excellent report that addresses the economic cost of the occupation in Palestine.

As one of its roles is to assist developing countries, we request the UNCTAD secretariat to address documentation of devastating economic and social consequences of the targeted attacks on the Palestinian People, in accordance with the Bridgetown Covenant and in line with the Accra Accord, the Doha Mandate and the Nairobi Maafikiano.

We look forward to reaching agreed outcomes on all agenda items, including Item 6 on Palestines report, by consensus, and especially in view of the extraordinary circumstances and its horrific economic and development impact.

We all owe it to the affected civilians, including women and children, to strengthen UNCTAD's hands in acting on its mandate given by us to assist the Palestinian people.

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

Thank you.
