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

Statement

352nd Session of the Governing Body of ILO

Enhanced programme of development cooperation for the occupied Arab territories (GB.352/POL/3)

Statement delivered by Chaudhry Salik Hussain
Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource
Development on behalf of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)
(31 October 2024)

Mr. Chairperson,

I take the floor on behalf of member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)*.

We thank the International Labour Organization (ILO) for the comprehensive document titled *"A Year of War in Gaza: Impacts on Employment and Livelihoods in the West Bank and Gaza Strip"* and for the **Office's unwavering support of the Palestinian people in the face of unprecedented challenges**. The comprehensive analysis provided in this report brings to light the scale of profound human suffering endured by Palestinian workers and their families as a result of the ongoing conflict, which has now entered its second tragic year.

Over the past year, real GDP in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) has been gravely weakened, with real GDP contracting by staggering 32.2%, with Gaza's economy witnessing a catastrophic decline of 84.7% decline. This staggering economic contraction is not just a statistic—it reflects the near-total devastation of livelihoods, critical infrastructure, and economic activity in Gaza.

Mr. Chairperson,

The destruction of over 70,000 homes, the displacement of nearly 2 million individuals, and the collapse of essential services have inflicted

* except Albania

immeasurable hardship and suffering for the people of Palestine. The lives of countless Palestinians, particularly Gaza, have been upended, their livelihoods extinguished, and their futures thrown into deep uncertainty. Gaza's economy, once a critical pillar of Palestinian resilience, has now been decimated, with per capita GDP plunging by nearly 85%.

The impact on the labour market has been equally devastating. Unemployment in the OPT has surged to 51.1%, with Gaza suffering an unprecedented unemployment rate of 79.7%. This crisis has left hundreds of thousands of Palestinians without work, and with it, without hope. Beyond the destruction of job, the war has forced many into precarious informal employment, where wages are low, conditions are harsh, and social protection is nonexistent.

Women and children bear the heaviest burden. As the report indicates, the increasing involvement of children in hazardous informal work is a tragic consequence of the widespread poverty that now grips Gaza. Women, already facing low participation rates, have seen their economic opportunities shrink even further, compounding the deep gender disparities that predate the conflict.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Group commends the ILO for its timely and comprehensive response to this crisis through its three-phase emergency programme focusing on relief, review, and recovery. This programme is essential for addressing the urgent needs of the Palestinian workforce while laying the foundations for long-term recovery. We fully support the ILO's vision of "building forward better", emphasizing decent work, social protection, and employment-intensive infrastructure development as key pillars of recovery.

The ILO's call for urgent financial support from the international community, development partners, and donors is critical to ensuring the success of ongoing recovery efforts. The "building forward better" approach, focusing on job creation, skills development, and inclusive economic growth, provides a roadmap for restoring dignity and hope to the Palestinian people.

The Group is concerned about the current focus on development in the Occupied Arab Territories, as reflected in the draft decisions, and believes that greater attention is needed to effectively address the challenges in the region. We urge the Governing Body to reinstate a dedicated focus on the OAT in upcoming sessions, including special sitting on OAT and regular updates through Director-General's reports to ensure sustained commitment to promoting decent work and social justice across the OAT.

We urge the ILO to continue its essential work in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and call on the international community to join us in supporting

the recovery and reconstruction efforts. The future of Palestine and the hope for peaceful, dignified and prosperous tomorrow rest on our collective resolve to stand in solidarity, to rebuild its economy, and to restore its people's faith in a better future.

With this, OIC Group supports the amendment to the draft decision point submitted by Libya on behalf of the Arab Group.
