

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

**REMARKS AT OPENING OF THE 2020 SESSION  
OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE  
OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

**New York, 4 February 2020**  
**[as delivered]**

I am very honoured to have presided over this first meeting of the year of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

I congratulate the Chair, Ambassador Cheikh Niang, and other members of the Bureau, on your election.

Last December, the General Assembly adopted all the resolutions on the Question of Palestine recommended by the Committee, including the one on its mandate.

This is a reaffirmation of how the work of the Committee is firmly rooted in the UN Charter and international law.

I commend this Committee for its unwavering dedication to the fulfilment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence.

The position of the United Nations on the two-State solution has been defined, throughout the years, by relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions by which the Secretariat is bound.

The United Nations remains committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis to resolve the conflict on the basis of United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements and realizing the vision of two States – Israel and Palestine – living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 lines.

We know that resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains key to sustainable peace in the Middle East.

Its persistence reverberates far beyond Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, and it continues to further radicalization across the region.

That is why we have been repeatedly raising alerts about actions that would erode the possibility of a viable and contiguous Palestinian State based on the two-State solution and that are contrary to international law and UN resolutions.

This includes expansion and acceleration of illegal settlement activities in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem as well as ongoing demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned property and evictions.

We also have repeatedly stated that Jerusalem remains a final status issue; the city's future can only be resolved on the basis of international law and through negotiations between the parties.

Meanwhile, we must never forget the human suffering that persists throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including the plight of the two million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip who continue to live under dire socio-economic conditions.

Projects implemented by UN agencies and other donors are bringing a measure of relief, but far more needs to be done.

On its own, no amount of humanitarian or economic support will resolve either the situation in Gaza or the broader conflict.

Gaza ultimately also requires political solutions. The restrictions on the movement of goods and people to and from Gaza must also be eased, with the goal of ultimately lifting them.

It is critical that the important Egyptian-led intra-Palestinian reconciliation efforts continue.

I call on Palestinian leaders to engage constructively with Egypt and others to advance intra-Palestinian reconciliation.

I also repeat my pleas to Member States to ensure reliable funding for UNRWA to fully continue its vital work on behalf of Palestinian refugees.

The holding of long overdue general elections in the State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, will be a crucial step towards giving renewed legitimacy to national institutions and reuniting the Palestinian people under a single, legitimate and democratic Palestinian national government.

As my Special Coordinator of the Middle East Process recently said to the Security Council, we are hopeful that the Palestinian President will very soon issue the decree scheduling legislative and presidential elections and that Israel will allow voting in East Jerusalem as well.

As we mark the 75th anniversary of our Organization, we need a renewed commitment to uphold the values of the Charter as our shared framework of cooperation for realization of the rights of future generations of Israeli and Palestinians.

Rest assured of my full commitment – and that of the United Nations – to a just and comprehensive peace between Palestinians and Israelis based on United Nations resolutions, international law and the two-State solution.

Thank you.

