Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People
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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
CABINET DU SECRETAIRE GENERAL

REFERENCE:

11 April 2008

Excellency,

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I thank you for your letter of 20 March 2008, inviting him to address the opening of the United Nations International Conference on Palestine Refugees, to be held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on 29 and 30 April 2008.

The Secretary-General appreciates your kind invitation. However, I must inform you that he will be unable to attend the conference, owing to prior commitments. He has instead designated his Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Ms. Angela Kane, to represent him at the conference and deliver a message on his behalf.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Vijay Nambiar
Chef de Cabinet

His Excellency
Mr. Paul Badji
Chairman
Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People
New York

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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE TO THE UNITED NATIONS
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PALESTINE REFUGEES
Paris, 29-30 April 2008

Delivered by Ms. Angela Kane
Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs

I send warm greetings to the participants of the United Nations International Conference on Palestine Refugees, held under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

This year marks the 60th year of Palestinian dispossession, an anniversary that underlines the importance and urgency of finding a solution to the question of Palestine and of addressing the plight of the Palestine refugees.

The Palestinian people's desire or right to live a normal daily life in their own sovereign land remains undiminished, as do the individual and collective rights of Palestine refugees. Each generation is born and grows up with the reality of life under the impact of occupation, with many Palestinians living a lifetime in refugee camps in the occupied Palestinian territory and in neighbouring Arab countries.

At Annapolis, the international community came together to support efforts that would lead to an end of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians; an end to the occupation that began in 1967; the creation of a viable, independent, sovereign and democratic Palestinian State in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; and the groundwork for a comprehensive regional peace. We give our full support to this process and to the negotiations under way between the parties. They are the only way to settle the conflict and address all permanent status issues, including that of the refugees.

I commend President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert for remaining firm in their pledge to reach an agreement in the face of many difficulties on the ground. They are not allowing violence and other negative developments to upset their talks. Negotiations are the only means of realising the legitimate aspirations of both parties – Palestinian statehood and self-determination, and security for Israel. Our goal is to achieve an agreement by the end of this year, and we will give the Palestinian and Israeli leaders our utmost support in their endeavour to reach this goal.

In the meantime, the situation on the ground today remains an urgent concern. In the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and in Israel, violence is still a daily occurrence and civilians are most

often the victims. In the West Bank, hundreds of checkpoints, obstacles to movement and the barrier impose tremendous hardship and suffering on daily life for ordinary Palestinians. Israeli settlements continue to expand. Settlement outposts remain; East Jerusalem is cut off from its West Bank hinterland. I continue to urge both parties to implement their Phase I Road Map obligations and build popular confidence in the negotiation process. I also call on both sides to comply with international humanitarian law.

The situation in the Gaza Strip requires our urgent attention. Shortages of food supplies, fuel and basic necessities further exacerbate the already dismal living conditions of the Gaza population. The United Nations now provides assistance to approximately 75 per cent of the population of the Gaza Strip. I therefore welcome efforts to end violence and re-open the Gaza crossings, which would allow all legitimate and necessary humanitarian and commercial supplies to reach the population. This will require an end to rocket fire and other attacks against Israeli targets and an end to Israeli incursions and military actions in Gaza, so that a re-opening of the Gaza crossings can be sustained and allow for genuine economic recovery.

For the past 60 years, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East has been entrusted with humanitarian and development services for registered Palestine refugees in camps in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. I express my gratitude to those Governments that have hosted refugees and closely cooperated with UNRWA over the years.

UNRWA's services are a vital lifeline for the refugees. Through health care, education and support to the poor, UNRWA addresses the needs of those who are most vulnerable. I salute the men and women of UNRWA who perform their tasks with true dedication under very difficult conditions.

We have also been heartened by the donors' tireless generosity over the years. They recognize the worsening humanitarian conditions of the Palestinian people, including refugees, and we thank them for strengthening their contributions this year. I reiterate my call on all donors to continue to invest generously and to support the Palestinian people and their efforts to build capacity and advance development.

A sustainable peace in the entire region will have to factor in a viable and just solution to the Palestine refugee issue, to be agreed upon in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 194. I shall remain personally engaged and committed to working towards peace within the agreed upon framework – an end to the occupation that began in 1967, based on the foundations of the Madrid Conference, the principle of land for peace, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2002) and the Arab Peace Initiative. This framework should lead to an end of the conflict, the creation of a Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with Israel, and a comprehensive peace in the region.

Please accept my best wishes for a successful Conference.

United Nations Nations Unies

Le Secrétaire général

Message adressé à la Conférence internationale des Nations Unies sur les réfugiés de Palestine

Paris, 29-30 avril 2008

Message lu par Mme Angela Kane,
Sous-Secrétaire générale aux affaires politiques

J'adresse mes salutations les plus chaleureuses aux participants à la Conférence internationale des Nations Unies sur les réfugiés de Palestine, organisée sous les auspices du Comité pour l'exercice des droits inaliénables du peuple palestinien.

Il y a 60 ans cette année que les Palestiniens ont été spoliés de leur terre. Cet anniversaire est l'occasion de souligner qu'il est urgent de trouver une solution à la question de Palestine et de se pencher sur le sort des réfugiés de Palestine.

Le désir et le droit du peuple palestinien de mener une existence normale dans un État souverain restent intacts, tout comme les droits individuels et collectifs des réfugiés de Palestine. Chaque génération naît et grandit dans les réalités quotidiennes de l'occupation, et bon nombre de Palestiniens passent leur vie tout entière dans les camps de réfugiés, sur le territoire palestinien occupé ou dans les pays arabes voisins.

À Annapolis, la communauté internationale s'est réunie pour soutenir les efforts visant à faire cesser le conflit israélo-palestinien, à mettre un terme à l'occupation qui a commencé en 1967, à créer un État palestinien viable, indépendant, souverain et démocratique dans la bande de Gaza et en Cisjordanie, y compris Jérusalem-Est, et à jeter les bases d'une paix globale dans l'ensemble de la région. Nous appuyons sans réserve cette initiative ainsi que les négociations que mènent actuellement les parties. Elles constituent le seul moyen de régler le conflit et toutes les questions liées au statut permanent, notamment celle des réfugiés.

Je félicite le Président Abbas et le Premier Ministre Olmert de rester fermement résolus à conclure un accord malgré toutes les difficultés rencontrées sur le terrain et de ne pas laisser les actes de violence et autres incidents négatifs perturber leur dialogue. La négociation est le seul moyen de réaliser les aspirations légitimes des deux parties : l'autodétermination et la création d'un État pour les Palestiniens, et la sécurité pour Israël. Notre objectif est la conclusion d'un accord d'ici à la fin de l'année, et nous apporterons tout notre soutien aux dirigeants palestiniens et israéliens dans les efforts qu'ils font dans cette voie.

Entre-temps, la situation sur le terrain demeure extrêmement préoccupante. La Cisjordanie, la bande de Gaza et Israël restent en proie à des violences quotidiennes

dont les civils sont le plus souvent les victimes. En Cisjordanie, les Palestiniens ordinaires connaissent chaque jour des difficultés et des souffrances considérables à cause des centaines de points de contrôle, de la barrière et des obstacles aux déplacements. Les colonies de peuplement israéliennes continuent de s'étendre, les avant-postes subsistent et Jérusalem-Est est coupée du reste de la Cisjordanie. Je continue d'exhorter les deux parties à s'acquitter de l'obligation qui est la leur de mettre en œuvre la première phase de la Feuille de route et à renforcer la confiance de leurs populations dans le processus de négociation. J'appelle également les deux parties à respecter le droit international humanitaire.

La situation dans la bande de Gaza exige une attention immédiate. La pénurie de denrées alimentaires, de carburant et de produits de première nécessité aggrave encore les conditions de vie déjà déplorables de la population. L'ONU apporte maintenant une assistance à 75 % environ de la population. Je me félicite donc de toute initiative visant à faire cesser la violence et à rouvrir les points de passage de la bande de Gaza, ce qui permettrait à sa population de recevoir l'aide humanitaire et les produits auxquels elle a droit et dont elle a besoin. Il faut pour cela que les tirs de roquettes et les autres attaques contre des cibles israéliennes prennent fin, de même que les incursions et opérations militaires israéliennes dans la bande de Gaza, afin de permettre une réouverture durable des points de passage et une véritable relance de l'économie.

Au cours des 60 dernières années, l'Office de secours et de travaux des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés de Palestine dans le Proche-Orient a été chargé de fournir des services humanitaires et une aide au développement aux réfugiés immatriculés des camps de Jordanie, de Syrie, du Liban, de Cisjordanie et de la bande de Gaza. Je tiens à remercier les gouvernements qui ont accueilli ces réfugiés et travaillé en étroite collaboration avec l'Office durant toutes ces années.

Les services de l'Office sont d'une importance vitale pour les réfugiés. En assurant les soins de santé, l'éducation et l'aide aux démunis, l'Office répond aux besoins des plus vulnérables. Je rends hommage au personnel de l'Office, hommes et femmes qui s'acquittent de leurs tâches en faisant preuve d'un dévouement remarquable dans des conditions extrêmement difficiles.

Nous avons aussi été encouragés par la générosité dont les donateurs ont constamment fait preuve au fil des ans. Conscients de l'aggravation de la situation humanitaire du peuple palestinien, notamment celle des réfugiés, ils ont augmenté encore leur contribution cette année, et nous les en remercions. J'appelle de nouveau tous les donateurs à se montrer généreux et à soutenir le peuple palestinien dans les efforts qu'il fait pour se développer et renforcer ses capacités.

La région tout entière ne connaîtra une paix durable que si la question des réfugiés de Palestine est réglée de manière juste et durable, conformément à la résolution 194 (III) de l'Assemblée générale. Je reste personnellement déterminé à œuvrer en faveur de la paix dans le cadre convenu : la fin de l'occupation qui a commencé en 1967, sur la base de la Conférence de Madrid, du principe « terre contre paix », des résolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) et 1515 (2002) du Conseil de sécurité et de l'Initiative de paix arabe. Ce cadre devrait permettre de mettre fin au conflit, de créer un État palestinien coexistant avec Israël dans la paix et la sécurité et d'instaurer une paix globale pour l'ensemble de la région.

Je vous présente tous mes vœux de succès pour votre conférence.

Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian

Note to Ms Kane

United Nations International Conference on Palestine Refugees

Thank you for agreeing to attend the United Nations International Conference on Palestine Refugees, to be held on 29 April 2008 in Paris, and deliver a message on behalf of the Secretary-General at the opening ceremony.

Please find attached a copy of the relevant correspondence.

Vijay Nambiar
11 April 2008

cc: Ms. Annika Savill

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Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Vijay Nambiar
Chef de Cabinet

His Excellency
Mr. Paul Badji
Chairman
Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People
New York

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REFERENCE: CPR/IC/2008

20 March 2008

Mr. Secretary-General,

I have the honour to inform you that the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People will convene the **United Nations International Conference on Palestine Refugees.** The Committee has decided to hold this Conference on **29 and 30 April 2008** at the Headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris. The Meeting is being organized in keeping with General Assembly resolutions 62/80 and 62/81 of 10 December 2007.

The objective of the Conference is to assess the present situation of Palestine refugees and examine the role of the United Nations in alleviating their plight. It will also examine efforts at finding an agreed, just and fair solution to the refugee issue in keeping with relevant United Nations resolutions as a prerequisite for resolving the question of Palestine and achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

In three plenary sessions, participants in the Conference will discuss the situation of the Palestine refugees, the role of the United Nations, as well as international and regional efforts to promote a solution of the Palestine refugee issue. Invited to the Conference will be internationally renowned experts, including Israeli and Palestinian, representatives of United Nations Members and Observers, representatives of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, parliamentarians, representatives of civil society, as well as the media.

The opening session is also expected to be addressed by a representative of the President of the Palestinian Authority, and the Deputy Director-General of UNESCO. Invitations to join a panel of eminent personalities following the opening session will be extended to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, in his capacity as representative of the Palestine Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Secretaries-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States, and the Commissioner-General of UNRWA. The Conference will continue in plenary sessions, which will address the above-mentioned specific themes. The official languages of the Conference will be Arabic, English and French.

His Excellency
Mr. Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations

On behalf of the Committee, I have the honour to invite you to attend the Conference and to address the opening session. The Committee attaches great importance to your presence at this event. However, if your schedule of commitments does not permit you to attend personally, may I, on behalf of the Committee, request that you designate a Secretariat official at the highest level to represent you. The opening session of the Conference is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 29 April 2008, at 10:00 a.m. The provisional programme of the Conference is attached for your information.

In the hope of receiving a positive response, I have the honour, Sir, to convey the assurances of my highest consideration.

Paul Badji
Chairman
Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People

Enclosure

UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PALESTINE REFUGEES

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris
29 and 30 April 2008

Provisional programme

Tuesday, 29 April 10.00 a.m. - 11.00 a.m. Conference Room IV	**OPENING SESSION** *Statements by:* Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People Representative of the Director-General of UNESCO Representative of Palestine
11.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. Conference Room IV	**Panel of eminent personalities** Representative of NAM Palestine Committee Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Secretary-General of the League of Arab States Commissioner-General of UNRWA
1.30 p.m. – 3.00 p.m. Conference Room IV	**Film screening**

20 March 2008

3.00 p.m. – 6.00 p.m.
Conference Room IV

PLENARY I
Palestine refugees – The longest running humanitarian problem in today's world

Origins of the Palestine refugee problem - 60 years of dispossession and tragedy

The demographic distribution of Palestine refugees

Socio-economic problems facing Palestine refugee communities

Presentations by experts

Discussion

Wednesday, 30 April
10.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.
Conference Room IV

PLENARY II
The United Nations and Palestine refugees

The rights of Palestine refugees in international law and the role of the United Nations as a guarantor of international legitimacy

The role of UNRWA in providing relief, social services and development assistance to Palestine refugees

The rights of the Palestinians displaced as a result of the June 1967 hostilities

Presentations by experts

Discussion

3.00 p.m. – 5.30 p.m.
Conference room IV

PLENARY III
International and regional efforts to promote a solution of the Palestine refugee issue

The settlement of the refugee problem — A prerequisite for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East

Lessons from past efforts to achieve a solution

Civil society efforts to uphold the right of return

Presentations by experts

Discussion

5.30 p.m. – 6.00 p.m.
Conference Room IV

CLOSING SESSION

Statements by:

Rapporteur of the Committee presenting the Final Document

Representative of Palestine

Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

* * *

ACTION COPY

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TO: Mr. Vijay Nambiar
A: Chef de Cabinet

FROM: Yuri Gourov
DE: Chief, Division for Palestinian Rights
Department of Political Affairs

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RETURN		RETOURNER
FOR INFORMATION		POUR INFORMATION

MESSAGE:

cc: Mr. B. Lynn Pascoe
Ms. A. Kane