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**HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN PALESTINE
AND OTHER OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES**

**Written statement* submitted by the Association of World Citizens (AWC),
a non-governmental organization on the Roster**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[14 October 2009]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Human Rights in Gaza: Need for a Special Focus and Specific Policy Recommendations

1. The human rights situation in Gaza and the need to improve the standard of living there to meet basic needs requires a special focus and specific policy recommendations. The December 2008-January 2009 armed conflict as well as the continuing embargos have created a socio-economic and political context which demands particular attention. The trans-national aspects, involving several countries of the region as well as the impact of the policies of the United States of America and the European Union call for a trans-national approach.
2. From serious reports sent to the Association of World Citizens by persons living in the Gaza area and from international observers, we believe that there is not currently the appropriate political, social and economic order for meeting internationally-recognized human rights standards and that basic human needs are not being adequately met. Therefore what is needed today is a revised focus, one that views development as a sustainable process of expanding the capabilities of people; that seeks to mobilize all the human and material resources available in the economy. The overall approach should aim at generating growth that is environmentally enriching and capable of being sustained.
3. As there are specific political and socio-economic conditions in the Gaza Strip, it is difficult to predict the political future of Gaza both in terms of relations between Hamas and Fatah as well as the future relations with Israel and Egypt. What is certain is that the Israel-Gaza conflict and the long embargos have crippled and in some cases destroyed the manufacturing and agricultural sectors of the Gaza Strip where some one and a half million people depend on imports for most basic goods and on exports for livelihood. The economic and social situation in Gaza distorts the lives of many with high unemployment, poor health facilities, and a lack of basic supplies. It is important not to rule out in advance political and economic proposals even if at first sight, such proposals seem unlikely to be able to be put into practice. As Jean Monnet, one of the fathers of the European Common Market had said “Men take great decisions only when crisis stares them in the face.” Just as the first steps of the European Common Market had to overcome the deep wounds of the Second World War, so in the situation of Gaza, there is a need to break strong psychological barriers with cooperative economic measures.
4. One possibility for socio-economic recovery of Gaza would be a trans-national economic effort that would bring together energy, knowledge and money from Gaza, Israel, the West Bank and Egypt, creating conditions which would facilitate the entry of other investors.
5. A possible model is the trans-state efforts of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) of the US New Deal. The TVA was a path-making measure to overcome the deep economic depression of the 1930s in the USA. In May 1933, the Roosevelt administration and the Congress created the TVA. In his message to Congress, President Roosevelt suggested that the Authority should be a “corporation clothed with the power of Government but possessed of the flexibility and initiative of a private enterprise. It should be charged with the broadest duty of planning for the proper use, conservation and development of the natural resources of the Tennessee River drainage basin and its adjoining territory for the general social and economic welfare of the Nation...This in a true sense is a return to the spirit and vision of the pioneer. If we are successful here, we can march on, step by step, in the development of other great natural territorial units.”

6. The central idea of the TVA was that it should do many things, all connected with each other by the concrete realities of a damaged river full of damaged people. To do all these activities well, it had to be a public corporation: public, because it served the public interest and a corporation rather than a government department, so that it could initiate the flexible responsible management of a well-run private corporation. As Stringfellow Barr wrote in *Citizens of the World* “The great triumph of the TVA was not the building of the great dams. Great dams had been built before. Its greatest triumph was that it not only taught the Valley people but insisted on learning from them too. It placed its vast technical knowledge in the pot with the human wisdom, the local experience, the courage, and the hopes of the Valley people, and sought solutions which neither the Valley folk nor the TVA technicians could ever have found alone. It respected persons.”

7. Only a New Deal is likely to break the cycle of violence and counter-violence. A Gaza Development Authority, an independent socio-economic corporation devoted to multi-sector and trans-national planning and administration would be an important start in a new deal of the cards. Such a Gaza Development Authority would obviously have politically-representative members but also persons chosen for their expertise as well as persons from community organizations.

8. Strong socio-economic structures are needed which can hold during periods of inevitable future tensions. A Gaza Development Authority can be a framework for such strong measures of cooperative effort and lead to a society built on the respect of all human rights in the spirit of the Declaration on the Right to Development proclaimed by the UN General Assembly on 4 December 1986 which states in Article 1 “the right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.”
