Statement by Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan, Member Pakistan Delegation on Agenda Item 91: Permanent Sovereignty of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab Population in the Occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources (November 10, 2004)

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to thank the Secretary General for submitting to the 59th session a comprehensive report on this important issue.

2. The report is a reminder to the international community of the deepening economic and social hardship to which the Palestinians have been subjected to by the occupying power in violation of their right to self-determination. The report provides a detailed account of persistent decline in the living conditions, continuing confiscation of Palestinian land, arbitrary detention, increased restrictions of humanitarian service, brutal military operation, and assassination of prominent political figures by the occupying power.

3. The Secretary General has concluded that the accumulated consequences of occupation have brought the Palestinian territory to “war torn economy” status and that its continuation has led to “new forms of dispossession and destruction of private and public assets of all kinds”.

Mr. Chairman,

4. The military operations conducted by the Israeli forces, over the past year, have negatively impacted on the lives of the Palestinian people. Some of the sterling facts provided by the Secretary General include:

i. Intensification of extra-judicial killings of prominent political figures, which has since March 2004, resulted in the death of 349 Palestinians, including at least 137 bystanders, among them 35 children and 25 women.

ii. Erection of West Bank separation barrier, which fragments the Palestinian land, sever links between communities from their land and further restricts the people’s access to their farms, jobs and services.

iii. Continued imprisonment of 8000 Palestinian in Israeli prison and detention centers, of which some 800 are being held without any judicial procedure or formal charge.

iv. Persistent construction or growth of settlements in blatant disregard to the Quartet road map. The total area confiscated for settlement, or designated as military zones in the Gaza Strip amounts to 45% of the Gaza territory, benefiting 7000 settlers.

v. Exploitative use of Palestinian resources such as water. Israel extracts 85% of the water from the occupied territories and has created a serious water shortage for the Palestinians.

vi. Incessant restrictions on the movement of Palestinian people. Curfew and job loss has severely affected the food production. Currently, the territory is not self-sufficient in food. Chronic malnutrition now afflicts nearly 17.5% of the Children in Gaza and 7.9% in the West Bank; and
vii. Depleting economy, which has lost all of its growth achieved during the preceding 15 years. About 47% of households have lost more than 50% of their income. As a result poverty is spiraling, with the rate having risen to 60% of the population.

Mr. Chairman,

5. The occupied people of the Syrian Golan are in no different situation. The unabated expansion and confiscation of land by the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights, crippling restrictions on movement of Syrian Arabs and eroding social infrastructure such as health centers has led to marked deterioration in the social and economic strata of the Syrian Golan including dismemberment of families.

Mr. Chairman,

6. Pakistan has steadfastly and unequivocally supported the just struggle for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people as it supports all those people suffering under alien occupation or foreign domination.

7. There can be no lasting peace in the Middle East without the attainment of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. As said by President Pervez Mushrraf, the international community particularly the United States must work to secure a fair and peaceful solution of the problem, realizing the vision of two states – Israel and Palestine – living side by side in peace, harmony and security. We hope that the faithful implementation of the Quartet’s “Road Map” and resumption of dialogue between the two parties would lay the foundations for a permanent peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Chairman,

8. A durable settlement of the Middle East question by definition must also include the restoration of the Syrian Golan. A durable peace in the Middle East is simply not possible in the absence of justice.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.