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Civil Consultative Forum on Relief and Recovery in Palestine Final Report and Recommendations

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Civil Consultative Forum on Relief and Recovery in Palestine: Final Report and Recommendations

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1. Introduction: From Relief to Recovery to Reconstruction Amidst a War of Extermination

Since the outbreak of the large-scale Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023, Palestine has entered an unprecedented humanitarian phase in terms of the scale of destruction, the scope of displacement, and the complexity of needs. While the emergency phase has exhausted the capacities of both local and international actors, fundamental questions have emerged regarding how to shift the response from a state of continuous emergency to a gradual recovery process based on realistic foundations and paving the way for a reconstruction phase that will span many years. These questions arise from Palestinian experts and civil society institutions, driven by their concern that the relief and recovery phase should be characterized by Palestinian ownership, clear community partnership, and planning that responds to evolving circumstances.

Accordingly, the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), in cooperation with PalThink for Strategic Studies in the Gaza Strip and using their own resources, launched a technical and policy consultative initiative aimed at creating an open space for closely examining ongoing response experiences and identifying possible pathways for recovery efforts. This initiative emerged from the need for coordination tools, guiding principles, and a unified vision. A series of six consultative sessions was organized during the first quarter of 2025, each gathering representatives of the Palestinian government, United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations, urban and development planning experts, and specialized Palestinian civil society institutions. The objective was to build a participatory understanding of priorities, identify gaps in coordination, and analyze ongoing interventions.

The series opened with the first session held on January 8, 2025, with the participation of Hanadi Brahema, Ministry of Social Development, and Mahdi Hamdan, Ministry of State for Relief Affairs, where speakers discussed institutional challenges in managing the response, the importance of building unified databases, and strengthening coordination mechanisms with civil society.

This was followed by the second session on January 15, 2025, with the participation of Jane White, Director of the World Food Programme, Hamish Young, UNICEF Humanitarian Coordinator, and Roland Friedrich, UNRWA Affairs Director, who gave detailed presentations on food assistance, the health impact of the war, and the collapse of education and water networks, with a focus on responses for children and women.

On January 21, 2025, the third session was held with Wisam Shweiki, Director of the Norwegian Refugee Council, Eyad Al-Araj and Omar Ghrieb, Oxfam, and Celestine Schorlimer, Head of Policy and Advocacy at AIDA, where they discussed field roles during the war, issues of governance, and the challenges of funding, registration, and coordination with Palestinian entities.

The fourth session, held on January 29, 2025, focused on regional and international post-war plans and visions, with the participation of experts Dr. Walid Habbas, Researcher at the Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies (MADAR), and Dr. Mandy Turner, Researcher of Political Economy of Development. This session shed light on the overlap of external agendas, the rise of what has been called “disaster capitalism,” and the decline of Palestinian decision-making centrality in reconstruction files and plans.

On March 12, 2025, the fifth session discussed the relationship between the Palestinian plan and the Arab Egyptian plan, with the participation of the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Dr. Wael Zaout, who presented details of the national plan and reviewed the challenges of spatial planning, private ownership, and reconstruction governance mechanisms.

The series concluded with the sixth session on March 25, 2025, during which representatives of the World Bank, the European Union, and UNESCO presented the damage and needs assessment report. Discussions addressed the lack of clarity of executive references, data limitations, and the necessity of integrating spatial planning and cultural identity in the upcoming tracks.

This report, in its following chapters, summaries of each session and its deliberations, serves as a primary reference for understanding structural challenges and obstacles. These summaries formed the basis for drafting a set of common policy conclusions and recommendations, along with five guiding principles, presented here as a reference framework for guiding humanitarian and development efforts in the Gaza Strip, grounded in sovereignty, efficiency, and effective participation.

2. Guiding Principles for Relief and Recovery Efforts

- **Humanitarian Centrality in Interventions**
All relief and recovery interventions must place human dignity and the multiplicity of needs at the heart of every plan, moving beyond the mere fulfillment of survival to the restoration of a dignified life, especially for the most vulnerable groups.
- **National and Community Ownership**
Palestinian plans should be the reference for any intervention, and relief and recovery actions must be formulated in genuine partnership with Palestinian institutions and civil society, while avoiding the imposition of external models that override the local context.
- **Accountability and Transparency as Preconditions for Action**
No effective intervention can be implemented without clear mechanisms for accountability to the population, and transparent platforms for monitoring performance and evaluating impact, to ensure the avoidance of repeated mistakes or the prioritization of factional interests.
- **Strengthening Community Participation Mechanisms to Accelerate Response and Set Priorities**
Equitable distribution of interventions and bridging critical gaps, as well as directing funding toward the population's priorities, require the enhancement of rapid community participation tools, including feedback platforms, local grassroots committees, and community-led monitoring mechanisms that transform affected communities into direct partners in recovery efforts.
- **Data-Driven and Updated Responses**
Every intervention must be grounded in real, continuously updated field data, including population maps, the scale of damage, and displacement patterns, to ensure that resources are directed to where the need is greatest.
- **Integration of Roles and Coordination of Efforts**
Given the multiplicity of local and international actors, effective coordination is essential to prevent duplication or conflict, and to maintain clarity and intersection of roles within a unified national work map.

3. Joint Policy Recommendations on Relief and Recovery in Palestine

1. **Integrate Relief and Recovery Tracks within a Unified Intervention Cycle** The discussions highlighted a recurring gap between emergency relief and early recovery programs. There is an urgent need to adopt an integrated response plan based on a tripartite linkage between: (1) humanitarian relief, (2) restoration of basic services, and (3) empowerment of local community frameworks. Interventions must be designed within a gradual timeframe (3 months – 18 months – 5 years), including defined objectives and quantitative and qualitative performance indicators with a realistic dimension.
2. **Establish a Regional-Local Multi-Stakeholder Governance Framework** Current relief efforts lack a unified administrative structure. It is recommended to establish a temporary coordinating body including representatives of the government, municipalities, international organizations, and local civil society. This body would set intervention priorities, audit aid, and identify priority areas. This body does not replace official frameworks but fills a transitional gap until the political and administrative pathway in the Strip becomes clearer.
3. **Ensure International Efforts Align with National Priorities, Without Duplication or Overreach** The sessions revealed discrepancies in international organizations' understanding of Palestinian priorities. It is recommended to prepare a unified Palestinian reference document including intervention priorities, guiding principles, and sovereign restrictions, to be adopted as a framework document by every international organization wishing to operate in the Strip.
4. **Establish a National Relief and Recovery Data System** Improving intervention effectiveness requires the development of a unified database for affected families and service providers, subject to ongoing verification and allowing for data intersection with the population registry, displacement maps, and field assessments. It is recommended to launch an interactive digital portal in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development and the Palestinian Monetary Authority to track transfers and aid and ensure fair distribution, and similarly with civil society organizations for relief operations.
5. **Strengthen Digital Payment Tools to Reduce Leakage and Brokerage** The high cost of cash exchange commissions and the proliferation of intermediaries emerged as a major challenge. It is recommended to generalize government-supported electronic wallets, expand contracts with digital payment service providers, link them to biometric ID cards where possible, and set an official commission cap within a tripartite agreement: government, Monetary Authority, and service providers.
6. **Align Aid with the Local Labor Market, Avoid Flooding it with Goods** Field experience has shown that excessive in-kind aid without planning leads to market congestion and marginalization of local producers. It is recommended to include the "local purchase first" principle in any relief plan, contracting local suppliers for food and supplies, and coordinating with chambers of commerce and professional associations to avoid negative competition over resources.
7. **Protect the Social Fabric in Designing Temporary Shelter Centers** Many shelter centers lack dignity and safety standards and contribute to the production of long-term social crises. Unified engineering and social standards must be adopted to ensure family privacy, separate sanitation facilities, safe spaces for women and children, and consideration of psychological and spatial dimensions in cases of prolonged displacement.

8. **Establish a Participatory Spatial Framework for Reconstruction**

The multiplicity of spatial plans proposed by different parties has created ambiguity and competing visions. It is recommended to launch a transitional urban plan based on a genuine field survey, respecting private ownership, preserving Gaza's visual and historical identity, and involving residents in shaping the future of their areas through community interaction tools.

9. **Enhance Psychosocial Response as Part of Essential Relief**

Humanitarian response has remained mostly material, despite the catastrophic psychological effects. Mental health and social support services must be integrated into the essential intervention package, including mobile psychosocial teams, group programs for children, and training local civil society counselors.

10. **Protect Symbols of Sovereignty and Political Significance in All Future Plans**

Any intervention affecting the port, camps, or historic areas must be subject to community consultations and sovereign approvals, as they go beyond the urban dimension to their political and symbolic significance. Preserving the symbolism of place is a fundamental condition for any future urban planning or engineering intervention.

4. Summary of the First Meeting – 8/1/2025

The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), in cooperation with PalThink for Strategic Studies, held the first in a series of organized meetings on relief and recovery in Palestine, attended by Ms. Hanadi Brahema representing the Ministry of Social Development, Mr. Mahdi Hamdan representing the Ministry of State for Relief Affairs, and a select group of relevant stakeholders, both in person at the Institute's headquarters and via Zoom. The meeting was opened by Mr. Raja Khalidi, Director General of MAS, who emphasized the importance of cooperation with both ministries to facilitate relief and recovery efforts in the Gaza Strip. He stated that the objective of the meeting was to foster as much shared knowledge as possible and to pave the way for civil society and influencers to understand what can be done under the current circumstances regarding unifying relief and recovery efforts in Gaza.

Dr. Omar Shaban, Director of PalThink for Strategic Studies, followed with remarks on the importance of the meeting to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people, especially in light of the difficult challenges and the accompanying emergence of further challenges, such as the theft of aid, black market trading, cash shortages among citizens, brokerage on financial transfers, and a lack of temporary shelter centers.

Remarks by Ms. Hanadi Brahema, Ministry of Social Development:

The role of the Ministry of Social Development has remained consistent as the leader of the social protection sector before and after the outbreak of aggression on the Gaza Strip and during various crises. What distinguishes the Ministry's role during this complex crisis is its continuity in providing its various services to all targeted groups under a national vision to achieve social protection. The Ministry continued to deliver 18 different services, including cash and in-kind assistance, social services for the elderly, persons with disabilities, women, and children in different circumstances, and psychosocial support and counseling for women exposed to violence and children in shelters, as well as orphan sponsorship in cooperation with local and international partners. These services were not limited to the Gaza Strip but extended to many families in the West Bank that have fallen into poverty as a result of the war's repercussions.

The Ministry of Social Development plays a pivotal role in delivering humanitarian and social assistance to affected families, relying on precise standards and databases to ensure aid reaches those entitled to it. Before the October 7 war, the Ministry had developed a database for targeted families known as the Cash Transfer Program (CTP), which includes data on about 120,000 families, 80% of whom are in Gaza. Additionally, the Ministry relies on the National Social Registry, which includes data on about 355,000 families from both the West Bank and Gaza, with an ongoing goal to expand it to cover 500,000 families to strengthen inclusivity and partnership.

The Ministry delivers its diverse services through staff deployed throughout the West Bank and Gaza, in addition to contributions from partners in the private and civil sectors to provide essential services for marginalized and vulnerable groups. During the recent aggression on Gaza, the Ministry, in cooperation with international organizations, distributed cash assistance to around 250,000 families, half of whom are headed by women in Gaza, and facilitated cash transfers ranging from 750 to 1,000 shekels for target families via electronic payment methods, in coordination with the Palestinian Monetary Authority.

The Ministry also contributed to the entry of more than 150 trucks of food and non-food assistance into Gaza.

To enhance communication with citizens, the Ministry dedicated the toll-free number 189 to receive complaints and inquiries and to act upon them as required. It also launched the “Saving Lives” initiative aimed at strengthening social cohesion and providing monthly assistance averaging \$250 to around 300,000 families, and formed a technical team to coordinate efforts among all stakeholders, including private sector institutions and NGOs, to set priorities, organize roles, and ensure aid is delivered transparently to those entitled. During this period, the Ministry faced major challenges, most notably limited financial resources and the closure of border crossings by the occupation authorities, which impeded the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza and, at times, resulted in the hijacking and theft of aid trucks by armed groups. Despite this, the Ministry succeeded in coordinating efforts with more than 40 international and local organizations to provide social protection services and continued its vital role in supporting affected families and strengthening Palestinian community resilience in the face of crises.

Remarks by Mr. Mahdi Hamdan, Ministry of State for Relief Affairs:

The Ministry of State for Relief Affairs was established to monitor the current situation and violations taking place in the West Bank and Gaza. Since its inception, the Ministry has worked to coordinate relief efforts with governmental, international, and civil institutions. In May 2024, the Ministry launched a comprehensive relief plan to serve as a reference for all governmental and non-governmental institutions supporting early recovery tasks, while also preparing emergency programs for citizens residing in Area C to support their resilience in various vital sectors, including agriculture, health, education, and others. In addition, coordinating relief efforts in Gaza is a top priority in the Ministry’s program through its contribution to shaping the priorities of governmental institutions toward providing relief services to citizens in cooperation with UN and international organizations, such as delivering health and education services, organizing shelter centers according to Ministry of Local Government standards—including water and sanitation services—and creating an effective coordination environment among all governmental and non-governmental institutions to support relief and recovery in Gaza. The Ministry is currently working on designing a dedicated humanitarian relief platform and implementing effective interventions in vital sectors to fill the gaps caused by the October 7, 2023, war, diagnosing the existing challenges, and presenting them to relevant partners for discussion and the development of effective solutions.

Participants’ Remarks:

Participants emphasized the need for a clear and unified political will to lead relief efforts in Gaza and to strengthen communication and coordination with government officials and international organizations to ensure their active participation in relief efforts, especially with UNRWA, which faces arbitrary challenges by Israeli authorities to hinder its operations in the occupied Palestinian territories. There was a call to redefine comprehensive relief content beyond traditional models to include both material and moral aspects, integrating them into a unified framework that ensures the minimum standards of capacity and dignity for the Palestinian citizen and enhances resilience in the face of various challenges. The participants also agreed on the necessity of urgently establishing regional and supportive partnerships to provide dignified shelter for displaced persons and families that lost their homes and to promote electronic payment systems in cooperation with the Monetary Authority to reduce brokerage on cash transactions—which can reach up to 30% of cash

value—and to strengthen civil peace within Palestinian society by working with all relevant parties to curb negative practices, such as the presence of armed groups that disrupt humanitarian work and exploit aid for commercial purposes.

Speakers' Comments:

Mr. Hamdan emphasized that the Palestinian government rejects any attempts to marginalize or replace the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), despite the presence of international and local institutions presenting themselves as alternatives. He also noted that humanitarian aid to Gaza suffers from significant gaps regarding the quantities permitted to enter the Strip, delivery mechanisms, and violations related to aid theft and the monopolization of coordination by a limited number of international institutions. In addition, Ms. Brahema clarified that the lack of full control by the Palestinian government over Gaza is a major barrier to its ability to impose accountability on the mechanisms for delivering and distributing aid to those entitled. The absence of feedback from some international institutions using the National Social Registry to distribute aid also limits the Ministry's ability to monitor aid distribution mechanisms and ensure the achievement of intended objectives.

5. Summary of the Second Meeting – 15/1/2025

The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), in cooperation with PalThink for Strategic Studies, held the second in the series of organized meetings on relief and recovery in Palestine, attended by senior officials from the World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), and a select group of relevant stakeholders, both in person at the Institute's headquarters and via Zoom. The meeting was opened by Mr. Raja Khalidi, Director General of MAS, who emphasized that the meeting aimed to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, discuss the multiple challenges undermining the ability of international organizations to respond swiftly to the needs of relief and recovery in the Strip, and to develop strategies for unifying early recovery and reconstruction efforts.

Representatives of international organizations presented their interventions regarding the efforts they are making to alleviate the humanitarian crisis, as detailed below:

Remarks by Ms. Jane White, Director of the World Food Programme:

Since the beginning of the aggression on the Gaza Strip, the World Food Programme has worked diligently to achieve food security for the most vulnerable groups in a context filled with complex challenges, particularly in Gaza and the West Bank. The Programme focuses on food security as a comprehensive concept based on four interrelated pillars: food availability, access, effective utilization, and the stability of these factors over the long term. In the Palestinian context, these pillars are central to understanding the current food situation, where economic, social, and political challenges overlap.

After the latest aggression on Gaza, the Strip experienced a severe crisis of food shortages due to import restrictions and weak local production, resulting in a sharp shortage of basic food commodities and skyrocketing prices, sometimes exceeding 1000% for certain goods. In response, the World Food Programme expanded the scope of in-kind assistance to include the distribution of basic foods such as flour, rice, pulses, and pasta, and collaborated with local bakeries to ensure bread production continued despite unprecedented shortages and high flour prices. Additionally, the Programme, as part of its response to citizens' difficulty accessing basic commodities and the lack of cash liquidity, increased the volume of cash assistance to reach approximately 600,000 people in Gaza and 186,000 in the West Bank.

Given the diverse challenges in Gaza, effective food utilization is an added challenge due to issues such as water scarcity and contamination, affecting food preparation and citizens' health. For this reason, the Programme provided cooked meals in cooperation with local and international organizations and operating kitchens in Gaza, ensuring residents, especially those unable to cook for themselves, received safe and healthy food. These initiatives give special support to the most at-risk groups, such as pregnant and lactating women and children under five, by providing high-energy food products to meet their nutritional needs. Moreover, children in temporary learning spaces benefit from the provision of snacks, in cooperation with UNRWA and UNICEF, to support their health and ease the burden on affected families.

The Programme continues to face ongoing challenges, most notably the restrictions imposed by Israeli authorities on the movement of goods, the lack of cash liquidity among citizens, and high food prices due to unavailability in markets. Despite these challenges, the Programme seeks to ensure food reaches affected areas more efficiently by monitoring

markets, analyzing vulnerabilities to guarantee intervention sustainability, supporting logistics capacity, improving supply chains, and coordinating with local and international partners, such as UNRWA and NGOs, to sustain and expand assistance to meet growing needs.

Remarks by Mr. Hamish Young, UNICEF Humanitarian Affairs Coordinator:

The recent war on Gaza resulted in widespread destruction across vital sectors, especially those directly linked to children's lives and their basic rights. Key infrastructure in health, water, education, and other sectors suffered severe damage, compounding the suffering of the population and making it even harder to meet basic needs.

In the health sector, the war destroyed 36 hospitals and numerous medical clinics and facilities, impeding citizens' access to primary healthcare services and sharply reducing the health system's capacity to deliver essentials such as vaccines and doctor visits. In the water sector, Gaza City's main desalination plant was completely destroyed, and the capacity of the other two plants dropped to less than 20% due to power outages and fuel shortages. In response, UNICEF provided backup generators to partially restore main desalination plant operations to about 80% of their normal capacity and worked to restart smaller desalination plants to meet the basic needs of residents.

On the psychosocial front, UNICEF's efforts focused on providing psychological support for children affected by the war's consequences. Despite the challenges of destroyed NGO offices and the loss or injury of many staff members, UNICEF, in cooperation with these organizations, implemented psychosocial support programs targeting children traumatized by the war, especially those who lost parental care due to the death of their guardians. In the education sector, UNICEF provided temporary learning alternatives to reintegrate students into the educational process, such as temporary learning spaces for around 100,000 children who were previously enrolled in Palestinian Authority schools, although these alternatives are still insufficient to compensate for the educational loss due to prolonged school closures.

Additionally, the destruction of water and sanitation networks led to a sharp deterioration in children's nutritional health, prompting UNICEF to respond rapidly to this crisis by providing food assistance for malnourished children, as well as medical and therapeutic care for those suffering from nutrition-related illnesses. These efforts reflect the magnitude of challenges imposed by the war on Gaza and highlight the vital role of UNICEF and humanitarian organizations in mitigating its impact on citizens.

Remarks by Mr. Roland Friedrich, Director of UNRWA Affairs:

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) is the primary provider of humanitarian services and aid during the many wars and crises experienced by the Palestinian people, making it the cornerstone of humanitarian relief operations, in coordination with other UN organizations such as UNICEF and the World Food Programme. UNRWA's services cover a wide array of vital sectors, including education, healthcare, social support, and infrastructure rehabilitation, especially in the refugee camps where Palestinian refugees reside.

Since the onset of aggression on Gaza, UNRWA has strived to provide humanitarian assistance for citizens in the Gaza Strip, taking responsibility for food distribution to two million people in cooperation with the World Food Programme, and providing 16,000 medical consultations daily through 23 primary healthcare centers that continue to operate

under dire conditions. Despite the destruction of many educational and health facilities, UNRWA continues to deliver emergency services to the best of its ability through its 13,000 staff, 5,000–6,000 of whom remain working in Gaza. These activities include providing fuel for vital operations, organizing temporary educational activities for affected children, psychosocial and social support programs, and shelter for hundreds of thousands of displaced people within Gaza.

While the situation in the West Bank is less severe than in Gaza, UNRWA faces major challenges delivering emergency aid due to restrictions on movement and coordination with Israeli authorities. Nevertheless, UNRWA continues to provide services in the West Bank with over 4,000 staff, serving more than 50,000 students in 100 schools, offering diverse health services to over half a million patients in 43 health facilities, delivering emergency and cash assistance to over 200,000 Palestinians, and improving living conditions in refugee camps through projects and initiatives, such as garbage collection and general maintenance, that greatly ease the suffering of residents.

In the current political context, UNRWA faces additional challenges due to Israeli laws and policies aimed at banning its work in East Jerusalem, which severely disrupts the delivery of basic services to Palestinian refugees there. Moreover, UNRWA faces uncertainty in planning for the future, as the continuation of its operations is largely dependent on the implementation of new Israeli laws that could halt humanitarian activities in the West Bank and Gaza, threatening unprecedented levels of human suffering. Some UN member states are working to freeze or counter these laws or to find alternative solutions to ensure the continuity of humanitarian services for Palestinians.

Audience Interventions:

International organizations face unprecedented challenges in dealing with the escalating humanitarian crisis in Gaza and experience a sense of powerlessness comparable to that of the Strip's residents due to restrictions preventing effective responses. With refugees making up around 70% of Gaza's population, the United Nations bears a central responsibility for supporting and rescuing these citizens as the international body in charge. This raises many questions, most importantly, the capacity of international actors to meet the urgent needs of Gaza's residents, given limited financial resources and political restrictions, theft of humanitarian aid, and the expected timeline to restore the minimum standards of normal life in Gaza.

To achieve effective relief and recovery in Gaza, comprehensive and clear strategies are needed, focusing on delivering broad-based relief encompassing both material and psychosocial aspects to ensure social stability and the reconstruction of essential infrastructure, including schools, health services, and more. International organizations must unify efforts for early recovery and relief in Gaza, apply pressure on Israel to comply with UN resolutions, and strengthen the role of UNRWA as an integral institution supporting Palestinian refugees and meeting their basic needs.

Speakers' Comments:

The speakers noted that international organizations place the utmost priority on effective communication with citizens to ensure their real needs are met, conducting detailed needs assessments, and developing modern registration systems in cooperation with UNRWA to ensure fair and effective distribution of aid. They provide multiple communication channels, such as digital platforms and hotlines, to receive beneficiaries' feedback and complaints.

These organizations also seek to overcome logistical restrictions on aid entry to Gaza by seeking alternative, safe routes to ensure timely assistance delivery. Furthermore, the speakers highlighted the need for international pressure on Israel to facilitate aid entry to Gaza and compliance with UN resolutions, the importance of integrated coordination with all stakeholders, and the need to enhance transparency and accountability to achieve long-term stability and recovery.

6. Summary of the Third Meeting – 21/1/2025

The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), in cooperation with PalThink for Strategic Studies, held the third meeting in the series on relief and recovery in Palestine. The session was opened by Mr. Raja Khalidi, Director General of MAS, who welcomed the representatives of international non-governmental organizations and highlighted the importance of understanding the mechanisms of these organizations and their vital role during the war, as well as learning about their work plans in Gaza for the coming months, especially in light of the escalating violence against Palestinians in the West Bank. Khalidi pointed out that this initiative is part of the efforts of civil society organizations concerned with relief and recovery issues in Gaza, aiming to enhance transparency among all parties, including civil society experts and relevant international institutions, to review the events of the fourteen months since October 7, 2023, and to develop a clear strategic vision for the coming phase.

Mr. Ali Abdel Wahab of PalThink followed, explaining that the session sought to create space for dialogue on relief and recovery tasks in Gaza and to find optimal ways to strengthen coordination between NGOs and civil society in the post-war period. Abdel Wahab stressed that PalThink is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to active participation in public dialogue and to the welfare of the Palestinian people. He explained that the institution focuses on conducting in-depth research and implementing projects aimed at empowering civil society, as well as providing a platform for dialogue and enriching the discussion around the Palestinian issue and Middle East affairs in general.

Remarks by Mr. Wisam Shweiki, Director of the Norwegian Refugee Council:

In recent months, the Norwegian Refugee Council has worked to enhance its field role in Gaza through its international and local teams, implementing a range of projects including the establishment of shelters, provision of potable water, dissemination of legal information, issuance of identity cards for citizens who lost official documents, and training local communities in resource management to enhance resilience under difficult circumstances and limited means. In addition, the Council implemented several effective interventions designed based on in-depth analysis of local market needs and economic conditions, most notably providing multi-purpose cash assistance distributed according to changing priorities in northern and southern Gaza in response to repeated population displacements.

The organization continues to monitor ongoing changes in Gaza, seeking opportunities to resume activities in areas such as Rafah and northern Gaza to bolster recovery and reconstruction efforts. It holds regular discussions with major donors regarding urgent issues, including debris removal and financial support for citizens, to ensure interventions are sustainable and impactful. Amid political fragility and ongoing challenges, the Council studies multiple scenarios to adapt to new realities on the ground and plans to expand its operational scope and staff to provide greater support and relatively safer spaces for the population. The Council also reviews future interventions to ensure their suitability for the local context, with an emphasis on continuing education and designing innovative programs adapted to the difficult situation in the area.

Despite significant challenges, such as restrictions on movement and access, difficulty reaching various areas of Gaza, and changes in international funding, the Council sees promising opportunities for idea exchange with donors, international organizations, and civil society, especially as there are moves toward long-term funding for Gaza. In the West

Bank, the organization faces additional challenges due to increased Israeli barriers and checkpoints, requiring program adaptation, with a focus on protection, education, and legal support for citizens.

Remarks by Mr. Eyad Al-Araj, Programs Officer at Oxfam:

Since the onset of aggression against Gaza, Oxfam has implemented several strategies to deal with the aftermath of the October 7 war, following three main stages. The first phase focused on continuity of operations during a war expected to last six months, but which has extended to fifteen, necessitating sustainable work within available resources and capacities. Medium-term interventions included strengthening food security, provision of non-food items, improving water supply, and protection for affected individuals. The second phase concentrated on early recovery planning, involving multi-faceted methodologies for delivering cash assistance via electronic services, collaboration with the private sector and local traders to supply and distribute essential goods, and effective coordination with local and international stakeholders. The third phase will focus on launching recovery operations, implementing long-term programs for reconstruction, infrastructure development, and stabilization in Gaza.

Remarks by Mr. Omar Ghrieb, Policy and Advocacy Officer at Oxfam:

Oxfam stresses the importance of continued support for the coalition established to push for a ceasefire in Gaza, strengthening the UN's role in working through humanitarian clusters by sector or geography to better coordinate humanitarian efforts in Gaza. Oxfam's working mechanisms are based on field-driven reports and facts, prioritizing urgent humanitarian issues such as food insecurity and water scarcity, which are among the main challenges directly affecting people's lives in Gaza.

With the commencement of the ceasefire, Oxfam emphasizes the need for continued advocacy and joint action with other organizations and local and international partners to pressure Israel to uphold the ceasefire and lift the blockade on Gaza. It is also crucial to monitor Israeli violations, including restrictions on freedom of movement and the ban on dual-use materials that severely impact daily life in Gaza.

Regarding post-war planning, reconstruction should be implemented ethically, focusing on the local community, avoiding centralization dominated by NGOs or the UN, and ensuring active participation from Palestinian civil society. This guarantees that the process is sustainable and in line with local needs and future aspirations.

Remarks by Ms. Celestine Schorlimer, Head of Advocacy and Policy at the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA):

AIDA highlights the need for new alliances to monitor the ceasefire in Gaza, enhance coordination with local and international partners to raise awareness about war crimes and settler violence, and revisit the structure of international NGOs dependent on donor funding, balancing advocacy capacity with the risks of office closure due to ongoing attacks on humanitarian work. The NGO network developed guidelines for leading recovery in Gaza in coordination with the Palestinian NGO Network to ensure alignment with ethical principles reflecting the aspirations of Palestinians and to avoid the pressures NGOs may face from donors.

Israel continues to obstruct NGO registration by imposing restrictive standards, exposing organizations to additional pressures and penalties. Therefore, it is necessary to follow up

on the registration standards for new organizations and prevent Israeli authorities from banning their operations, especially advocacy organizations. These issues must be clarified for donors, and collaboration with partners is needed to avoid the closure of humanitarian institutions, ensure their registration with the Ministry of Social Development to be part of the official Palestinian system, and seek registration in Israel to facilitate their operations and staff mobility in the Palestinian territories.

About 400 staff members of international NGOs face significant barriers to entering Palestinian territories or obtaining necessary permits, with some banned for up to five years, while others enter on tourist visas. Additionally, Palestinian employees often cannot obtain permits to enter Jerusalem, deepening the divide between the West Bank and Gaza.

Audience Interventions:

Participants agreed on the importance of NGOs and their role since the start of the aggression against Gaza, especially in providing basic needs during the war. Emphasis was placed on the need to develop future plans and work priorities aimed at restoring public services in Gaza, removing obstacles to private sector import mechanisms, and designing temporary shelters equipped with essential facilities such as toilets, sanitation, and solar energy for electricity generation. Participants also stressed the importance of information-sharing between NGOs and citizens to reinforce accountability and transparency, enhancing the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions and ensuring aid is distributed fairly and transparently to those in need.

Speakers' Comments:

Speakers underscored the importance of implementing special programs to provide safe drinking water for Gaza residents, though this faces many challenges, foremost among them the recurring displacement of the population and limited technical capacity to repair major and minor desalination plants that are vital for providing safe water. Furthermore, speakers pointed to difficulties NGOs face in bringing in non-food items needed for infrastructure reconstruction due to strict restrictions on Gaza, and obstacles facing the private sector in importing commercial goods into the Strip. In addition, NGO representatives warned against dealing with suspicious electronic links that seek to impersonate these organizations, to ensure data security and transparency in humanitarian operations.

7. Summary of the Fourth Meeting – 29/1/2025

The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), in cooperation with PalThink for Strategic Studies, held the fourth meeting in the series on relief and recovery in Palestine, attended by experts Dr. Walid Habbas and Dr. Mandy Turner. The session was opened by Mr. Raja Khalidi, Director General of MAS, who explained that the meeting aimed to discuss plans and visions for the Palestinian future, particularly in the Gaza Strip, including the “day after the war” vision concerning the phase following the ceasefire in Gaza. Khalidi noted that there are more than twenty different plans regarding how Palestinians will govern themselves, as well as various plans for the Palestinian Authority and the reconstruction of Gaza. Hence, the importance of including international and local organizations and civil society in these discussions is to ensure that future visions and plans are not limited to the interests of international and regional parties but rather focus on Palestinian rights and the participation of Palestinians in shaping their destiny.

Dr. Omar Shaban, Director of PalThink, emphasized the importance of organizing this meeting, reflecting the need to involve Palestinians in the process of preparing plans for the reconstruction of Gaza, and stressed the vitality of independent Palestinian action, including economic development and institution-building.

Remarks by Dr. Walid Habbas, Researcher at the Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies (MADAR):

The Israeli political vision regarding Gaza and its post-war position is characterized by a range of internal divisions among Israel’s political factions. The most prominent stances are held by the Israeli right, especially Likud under Benjamin Netanyahu, the religious Zionist wing led by Smotrich and Ben Gvir, the Israeli center represented by Yair Lapid and Benny Gantz, and finally, the so-called “Democrats” represented by Yair Golan.

1. **Likud and Netanyahu:** Likud, led by Netanyahu, represents the dominant voice in Israeli policy toward Gaza. Since the beginning of the aggression, Netanyahu has maintained a hardline stance focused on eliminating Hamas both militarily and politically and establishing full Israeli control over Gaza. This position entails complete disarmament—including Hamas’s military capabilities, tunnels, and technological assets—and insists that Gaza be free of both Hamas and Fatah, with the Strip managed by local Palestinian officials under strict Israeli supervision. As for reconstruction, Netanyahu conditions it on complete disarmament and the imposition of Israeli security control over all international aid entering Gaza.
2. **Religious Zionism and the Far-Right:** The religious Zionist parties and far-right factions, such as Smotrich and Ben Gvir, propose a drastically different vision. These leaders call for the resettlement of Jews in Gaza, considering the Strip an integral part of the Land of Israel, and advocate for encouraging the emigration of Palestinians and imposing direct Israeli rule. They reject any role for the Palestinian Authority in managing Gaza, labeling it as corrupt and terror-supporting, and believe Israel should act unilaterally without international intervention.
3. **The Israeli Center (Lapid and Gantz):** The centrist parties represented by Yair Lapid and Benny Gantz offer more pragmatic positions. While both support eliminating Hamas, they caution against the dire consequences of such action, including the creation of a security vacuum that could worsen the situation. Gantz, in particular, supports the idea of Palestinian Authority management of Gaza, conditional on serious reforms, and

both oppose Jewish settlement in Gaza while supporting an international role in Gaza's reconstruction.

4. **The Democratic Party (Yair Golan):** The position of the “Democrats,” led by Yair Golan, stands out significantly. Golan views the Gaza conflict as not solely a security matter but one that requires addressing the root causes of ongoing violence and Palestinian rights. He believes that continued bombardment will not achieve long-term peace and supports a two-state solution and ending the occupation and blockade, conditional on democratic reforms in the Palestinian Authority.

Polls show a division within Israeli public opinion—some Israelis in January 2024 supported recognizing a Palestinian state, while the Knesset voted against this in July 2024. Other polls indicate that a significant portion of Israelis oppose ending the war in Gaza, reflecting a wide divergence in internal attitudes toward Gaza's political future and the broader question of Palestine.

Remarks by Dr. Mandy Turner, Researcher of Political Economy of Development:

Dr. Turner referenced a number of plans developed post-war in Gaza, particularly those emerging from major Western think tanks representing various aspects of so-called “disaster capitalism,” where Western actors seek to profit from reconstruction funds and influence Gaza's governance through an international framework involving external intervention in Palestinian affairs.

Key proposed plans include:

1. **The Gaza Future Working Group:** This plan, a joint effort between the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs and the Vandenberg Coalition, proposes establishing an international reconstruction fund for Gaza overseen by the US, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Egypt, ensuring continued external control, particularly by Israel. One central component is the exclusion of Hamas from governance, creation of local Palestinian authorities under strict Israeli oversight, and channeling financial support and humanitarian aid solely through Israel, including “de-radicalizing” Palestinian curricula and media.
2. **Post-War Gaza Plan (Wilson Center):** This plan closely mirrors the “Gaza Future” plan but with some differences in implementation. The executive report is available in Hebrew and explicitly supports the Israeli government. It draws on figures with strong ties to Israeli or pro-Israeli institutions, such as Keith Dayton and Eran Lerman, reflecting the significant Israeli influence over these plans, which are based on experiences from Iraq and Afghanistan, particularly under “disaster capitalism” aiming for Western dominance.
3. **Emerging Palestine Plan (Portland Trust):** This plan differs by focusing primarily on rebuilding Gaza's private sector and seeks to foster economic growth by forming alliances with Western foreign companies, though it pays little attention to political issues. Notably, the Portland Trust enforces strict policies against Hamas, requiring Palestinian organizations to denounce the movement post-October 7 and suspending funding for Gaza.

Across all these plans, there is a clear trend toward creating international or externally supervised frameworks allowing Western and Israeli actors to control Gaza's reconstruction and determine who participates in governance, while largely excluding the views of Palestinians living in Gaza. These plans heavily emphasize the extraction of reconstruction funds into contracts and projects for international companies—an illustration of “disaster

capitalism.” Furthermore, the inclusion of international agreements such as the “Abraham Accords” in reconstruction efforts signals, for some, a new phase of normalization with Israel.

Audience Interventions:

Participants stressed the need to involve Palestinian society in developing future plans and visions for Gaza’s governance and reconstruction, away from externally imposed plans shaped by international interests or organizations. Questions were also raised regarding the participation of the Palestinian private sector in proposed plans such as the “Emerging Palestine Plan” and the role of the Palestinian government in ensuring the success of these initiatives. Other questions focused on the international community’s stance toward Palestinian-led plans, such as the “Phoenix Plan,” which faced acceptance challenges due to some international perceptions regarding Hamas’s involvement.

Speakers’ Comments:

Speakers noted that the increasing demographic dominance of ultra-Orthodox, settler, and religious Zionist communities has enabled the far right to consolidate its influence over Israel’s governmental, military, and media institutions, undermining the Israeli left, for whom the two-state solution is no longer a viable slogan. As for Palestinian-led plans such as the Phoenix Plan and efforts to rebuild Gaza, they struggle to gain international support due to the dominance of Israel and Western institutions imposing plans at odds with Palestinian interests, depriving Palestinians of meaningful influence over their own political future.

8. Summary of the Fifth Meeting – 12/03/2025

The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), in cooperation with PalThink for Strategic Studies, held the fifth meeting in the series on relief and recovery in Palestine. The meeting was opened by Maseef Jameel from MAS, who noted that it was necessary at this stage to ask questions about the overlap between proposed plans and reconstruction requirements, particularly the alignment between the Arab plan and the Palestinian plan, as well as prior plans and whether they were considered in the formulation of the Palestinian plan. He highlighted that discussing these plans is a complex matter that must be addressed with the Minister, and how to balance the national project with various plans, defining the roles of different actors such as the government, civil society, and the international community. Intellectually and developmentally, the official Palestinian government position remains foundational. The goal is to produce a press release and summary of key ideas for follow-up with relevant stakeholders (government and civil/local society). Mr. Omar Shaban, Director of PalThink, also emphasized that this initiative is voluntary and part of research institutions' commitment to the nation, and is being conducted with an independent agenda. This is the fifth such meeting, attempting to network and overcome barriers among the various actors. The central question posed to Dr. Wael was about the Palestinian role in the many international and regional plans, indicating that some of these plans lack genuine Palestinian partnership, and that the Authority's plans are developed without coordination with the private sector and Palestinian civil society, though there is some coordination and travel issues. He stressed the importance of Palestinian ownership of these plans.

Raja Khalidi, Director General, MAS:

By way of background, any plan must be based on spatial planning, and Palestinian spatial planning, particularly in the West Bank, is a challenge. There are visions for Gaza regarding spatial distribution. This is the basis for reconstruction, regardless of the different plans. The Egyptian plan's significance is less about reconstruction itself and more about the political context. For example, there are three different proposals for the location of Gaza's port, and similar debates about residential cluster locations. Amid these differing visions on spatial distribution, there are many architectural and spatial concepts in the various plans, and this may be the source of complications—we do not yet know which planning approach the final plan will adopt.

Dr. Wael Zaqout, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation:

A national team was formed over the past three months to prepare Gaza's recovery and reconstruction plans, consisting of a core team and representatives from all relevant ministries and other institutions. Work was carried out with the World Bank and the European Union to assess the damage, and community consultations were held with different groups of Gaza residents—some who stayed in Gaza, others in Egypt—as well as consultations in Ramallah, culminating in a two-part Gaza Reconstruction Plan. The Egyptian plan was issued before this report and was presented by Egypt at the Arab Summit; it was reviewed for alignment with the Palestinian plan. Given the critical political situation, the Egyptian plan was advanced as an alternative to the Trump plan for Gaza reconstruction, with the involvement of Gaza residents. For this reason, the Palestinian plan was not released, to avoid appearing as an alternative to the Egyptian-Arab plan, which has been adopted by the Palestinian government as the main reference. The Egyptian government requested a technical team of Palestinians to go to Cairo to discuss and ensure alignment with the Palestinian plan; implementation planning will reflect the Palestinian perspective 100%.

To clarify the distinction between the Palestinian and Egyptian plans, the Palestinian plan focuses on material needs, complementing the World Bank's work, and is to be presented at the donor conference for funding. The Egyptian plan, however, introduces three new issues absent from the Palestinian plan. First is the political or structural aspect; the Palestinian plan is strictly about reconstruction and does not address governance, though a separate governance plan was prepared by the government for negotiators. Second is the security or policing sector. The Arab plan is a political one, advanced by Arab states as an alternative to the Trump plan. The Palestinian plan's approach to governance assumes spatial planning will evolve post-ceasefire to determine the extent of destruction, thus necessitating access to Gaza and community discussions to reach societal consensus, critical for effective replanning. The Egyptian plan is political, but there is space for discussion, which is why the government is headed to Cairo for further talks.

Audience Interventions:

Audience interventions focused on the details of the Egyptian plan, raising questions about its negotiability and the possibility of changing certain elements, particularly issues of governance and spatial planning. Attendees discussed the diverse published plans and the complexities of spatial planning. Several critical issues were highlighted: the need to respect private property to ensure social fabric stability; preserving Gaza's cultural and visual identity during reconstruction; and ensuring that reconstruction reflects Gaza residents' vision for their region.

One participant noted that the Egyptian plan is a roadmap, yet it contains key areas where intervention and the development of an executive program are possible. The plan is an attempt to thwart the Trump administration's displacement plan, but there is an important role for civil society alongside the government in establishing the main principles guiding the plan. For example, when overlaying the Palestinian aerial plan with the Egyptian spatial plan, key roads (Salah Al-Din and Al-Rasheed) are shifted eastward, as if creating new cities. The Egyptian plan is based on 21 urban blocks, which places the industrial area at the center of Gaza's residential areas, while the agricultural lands in Al-Mawasi (Khan Younis, Rafah, and northern Gaza) would become high-rise residential zones. Presidential Decree No. 1 of 2000 defines the area and boundaries of the port—these and other sovereign principles must be upheld. The same applies to Yasser Arafat Airport. A proper road network must be built, as some villages and camps have been omitted from the plan (perhaps unintentionally). The goal of civil society is to reinforce Gaza's geographic, historical, and cultural depth to build for future generations, not just to reconstruct as after past wars.

Further questions were raised regarding the governance of reconstruction, institutional structure, the powers of the agency, and the nationality of the companies that will implement reconstruction. Attendees also asked about the governance of Gaza, its relationship to funding for recovery, relief, and reconstruction, and the international position on various governance scenarios. Civil society's current efforts in Gaza were commended, particularly its role in providing relief, and its expertise should be utilized in recovery and reconstruction. The role of the Palestinian diaspora in discussing the Egyptian plan and participating in reconstruction was also highlighted.

Participants also inquired about the inclusion of rebuilding productive agricultural and industrial bases, and the environmental destruction caused by the aggression, since the focus is largely on infrastructure and reconstruction engineering. The relationship with Israel post-ceasefire and during recovery and reconstruction was also discussed, especially the

feasibility of returning to prior arrangements for electricity and water supplies, and the evolving relationship with Egypt and the trade regime with both countries.

As Palestinians, there is now a commitment to the Arab plan, which relies heavily on the Palestinian government's efforts. The challenge is to move from the Arab plan to an actionable plan with short-, medium-, and long-term goals. The current priority in Gaza is not reconstruction per se, but material relief, including all forms of assistance (education, psychosocial, health, etc.) necessary to restore life and dignity in Gaza. There are challenges in funding as priorities shift due to the Arab plan; thus, the focus should be on practical, non-political plans.

There was a call for prioritizing comprehensive relief within the operational plan for reconstruction, meaning provision of the minimum basic needs, and restarting key sectors such as education, health, and social services, given their total collapse and the lack of effective government legitimacy or access to set priorities inclusively.

Remarks by Dr. Wael Zaqout – Minister of Planning and International Cooperation:

Private property must be respected; any reconstruction that does not respect private ownership will not succeed. The master plan in the Egyptian plan should not be regarded as a *fait accompli*. The plan was prepared quickly, and there is an understanding with Egypt that it is a roadmap, not a final blueprint. When execution begins, many factors—such as private property, agricultural areas, and industrial zones—must be considered to ensure a plan supported by all Palestinians, not imposed without public consent.

The Minister emphasized that relief and provision of basic needs are the top priority at present, noting that the government has coordinated relief from an operations room, but Israel is impeding current efforts by closing crossings and using relief as a political tool. Upon a ceasefire, the Palestinian plan includes three phases: the first is divided into two sub-phases—six months to secure proper shelter for every family and re-establish basic services; the second, from six months to three years, is to rebuild most destroyed buildings, roads, and infrastructure; the third phase, within five years, is the complete reconstruction of Gaza.

There is no definitive answer regarding the future relationship with Israel; it depends on the outcome of the ceasefire agreement. If the outcome is a governance structure recognized internationally, matters will be different. Both plans envision an airport, port, and desalination plant, with Gaza achieving self-sufficiency and access to resources, but the government structure remains paramount. According to international discussions, if the same governance structure—i.e., Hamas—remains, there will be no reconstruction; if a structure recognized internationally is established, reconstruction will be possible.

Environmentally, the Minister highlighted extensive destruction affecting Gaza's environment, a key issue in the recovery, as well as the need to "Build Back Better," though a decision must be made on the best approach. He acknowledged ongoing work on a spatial plan for Gaza, but it has not yet been approved. What is clear is the need to restore Gaza's original spirit, noting that some areas (such as Gaza's old city) should be rebuilt as they were, while others could be developed differently, and still others (like Al-Rimal) only require restoration of existing buildings. The Minister also addressed the question of the camps, as some have been totally destroyed—whether to rebuild or improve them, while maintaining their political symbolism, is an issue requiring detailed planning.

Regarding maximizing all possible efforts, the Minister stated that reconstruction cannot succeed without the return of Palestinians who left Gaza, not only those displaced by the war, and that a global volunteer campaign to rebuild Gaza is included in the plans. On the donor conference, the Palestinian Authority is heading to Cairo next week to discuss donor requirements. Drawing on previous donor conference experience, the Minister affirmed that a lasting ceasefire and agreement on a governance structure leading to stability are prerequisites—donors will not come without stability, making this crucial before launching the donor conference. Regarding governance, Dr. Zaqout clarified that donors and the international community will not fund reconstruction so long as Hamas remains in power; this is the position of the international community.

A part of the Palestinian plan is the creation of an independent, financially and administratively autonomous authority in Gaza to oversee reconstruction, but plans must be approved by the Palestinian government. The authority is an executive body, not responsible for planning, and the Ministry seeks to bring in a global advisory committee, seeing Gaza's reconstruction as an international responsibility. An implementation plan is being prepared, establishing an independent body in Gaza; reconstruction plans will be developed but must be approved by the government and an advisory council, with the World Bank acting as a trust fund.

Regarding sectors covered by the plan, all economic sectors are addressed, particularly those that can be quickly restarted, such as agriculture, fishing, and construction (including rapid restoration of the 60,000 partially destroyed housing units to return people to their homes). There is also consideration of rental subsidies for those whose homes were destroyed. Other sectors, such as trade and industry, will take longer to revive.

9. Summary of the Sixth Meeting – 25/03/2025

The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), in cooperation with PalThink for Strategic Studies, held the sixth meeting in the series on relief and recovery in Palestine. Raja Khalidi opened the session by welcoming the attendees and speakers, noting that these meetings are organized to open discussion on plans, visions, and various roles related to relief and recovery, in order to bridge the knowledge gap within Palestinian civil society regarding this process. Khalidi briefly reviewed the topics of the previous five sessions, stressing that the discussions held in these meetings have raised several questions, some concerning methodology, some about political challenges, and others about the relationship between the different plans.

Presentations by the World Bank, the European Union, and the United Nations:

The World Bank representative opened the three-part presentation by emphasizing that these outputs aim to support the development of the Palestinian Authority's recovery plan and that the World Bank will continue to provide technical assistance to the Palestinian Authority in developing this plan. The assessment was prepared jointly by the World Bank, the European Union, and the United Nations, using a methodology previously applied in post-conflict and post-natural disaster contexts, with attention to the unique features of the destruction in Gaza, as well as questions of governance and institutions after the war. The speaker acknowledged that the current situation is constantly changing and remains unclear regarding reconstruction and resettlement, and certainly inapplicable as long as hostilities continue.

Following this introduction, a summary was presented of the Damage and Needs Assessment Report, focusing on its objectives, methodology—including the time frame for losses, destruction, and needs—as well as data sources, verification of credibility and accuracy, and its limitations, such as limited field data and the lack of standardized data across sectors due to the ongoing conflict. The presentation confirmed that the report provides an evidence-based recovery plan and informs diverse strategies, such as the Palestinian Authority's early recovery plan and the Arab Plan for the Reconstruction and Development of Gaza. The World Bank also reviewed the main findings in the four key sectors addressed in terms of losses, destruction, and needs in detail. The UNESCO representative then addressed the human impact of the aggression, focusing on displacement, poverty, mental health, injuries, access to essential services such as health, housing, social protection, and employment, emphasizing the importance of good governance to create the right conditions to overcome these challenges. The presentation then reviewed essential considerations for relief. Finally, the European Union representative presented the Gaza Recovery Framework, which included the rationale behind developing a recovery framework for Gaza, the timeline and main sectors this framework targets, and the key pillars upon which it is based.

Audience Interventions:

The interventions varied in topics and focus, but all speakers agreed on the importance of rigorous, scientifically validated data for damage assessment to inform the proposed recovery and reconstruction plans. The audience specifically raised questions about who will bear responsibility for managing and governing reconstruction and recovery, especially within the ongoing debate on the governance of Gaza, which was absent from the report. The audience identified this as a foundational issue for planning. One participant stressed

the importance of national unity and the need to focus efforts on achieving it as a prerequisite for recovery.

Additionally, the audience commented that the time frame covered by the physical damage assessment in this report extends only to the first year of the aggression and does not include the last six months (from October 8, 2024, to March 2025), thus highlighting the need for updates to these figures and forecasts regarding recovery and reconstruction needs.

Other topics the audience agreed were missing from the report included spatial planning for Gaza, especially given the existence of other spatial plans proposed by different parties. In this context, several issues were discussed, including debris removal and environmental impact, resettlement of the population, and the importance of preserving the spatial and cultural identity of Gaza during reconstruction.

Speakers' Comments:

On the limitation of the time frame, the World Bank representative explained that the level of destruction in the first year of the aggression was so massive that it left little room for further deterioration—in fact, as of October 2025, based on satellite images and reports, more than 95% of health facilities, for example, had been destroyed, a pattern repeated across other sectors. Nonetheless, the report aims to provide the most accurate possible estimate under the circumstances, using a robust methodology with a low margin of error for such cases. Therefore, the UNICEF representative stressed that the published assessment is not the final word on damage evaluation, but rather a comprehensive starting point for future planning.

Regarding spatial planning, the speakers noted two main issues: first, where the population will be at any given moment and where they will go, and thus where neighborhoods will be planned. It is important to consider the obstacles to movement and the shrinking number of safe locations. Still, one speaker acknowledged that the different plans are somewhat harmonious. The EU representative emphasized the need for spatial and urban reconstruction plans to be rooted in the community, enabling community participation and ownership to ensure their value.

The EU representative further stated that the Gaza Recovery Framework is not merely an informational document, but an ongoing process enabling the identification of the necessary steps for ensuring early recovery when conditions permit, regardless of the length of the transition period or practical issues such as who implements the policies. As for the debate over who will bear responsibility for implementation, it is certainly the Palestinian Authority, even while recognizing the limitations to its capacity. The three institutions are working to provide support and technical expertise to the Palestinian Authority and recommendations to enable it to take a leading role in the recovery effort.