Aboul Gheit's address at the opening of the 115th ordinary session of the Economic and Social Council at the Ministerial Level, General Secretariat headquarters

13 February 2025

Your Excellency Youssef Abdullah Al-Hamoud

Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance and National Economy of the Kingdom of Bahrain,

President of the Current Session of the Economic and Social Council,

Your Excellencies, Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, allow me to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your country’s assumption of the rotating presidency of the Economic and Social Council. This coincides, in a remarkable alignment, with Bahrain’s presidency of the current session of the Council of the League of Arab States at the summit level, placing the sisterly Kingdom of Bahrain at the helm of joint Arab action across its political, economic, and social dimensions during this crucial phase. I wish your country, Mr. President, every success in this significant endeavour.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to the United Arab Emirates for its outstanding leadership in steering joint Arab economic and social action during its presidency of the previous session of this notable Council over the past six months.

Mr. President,

Our meeting today takes place against the backdrop of rapid and successive developments that continue to shape the Arab region. No sooner had the long-awaited ceasefire agreement in Gaza—nearly a year and a half in the making—begun to take effect than the Israeli occupation resumed its expansionist plans in the West Bank, repositioning its military forces and persisting in its war crimes against the Palestinian people. At the same time, renewed Israeli and American voices are once again advocating for the forced displacement of the rightful Palestinian inhabitants, seeking to uproot them from their homes and lands in a blatant violation of international law and fundamental human rights.

In this regard, I reaffirm the steadfast position of the League of Arab States, as the collective institutional framework representing all Arab nations, in its unequivocal and absolute rejection of any attempt—under any pretext—to forcibly displace Palestinians from their land. Such actions constitute a grave violation of the fundamental principles of international law upon which the modern international order is founded. Moreover, they inflict a flagrant injustice upon the Palestinian people and pose a direct threat to the liquidation of the Palestinian cause, which remains the central and unshakable cause of the Arab world—embraced by both its peoples and governments alike.

Gaza is not for sale. For the Palestinian people and the Arab nations, it is an inseparable part of the territory of the future Palestinian state within the borders of 1967, standing alongside the West Bank in an indivisible unity. This is the essence of the two-state solution, a framework that has been endorsed by the Arab world and the international community as the only viable path to a just and lasting peace.

Mr. President,

The brutal war waged by Israel since October 2023 has yet to reveal the full extent of its devastation. Beyond the staggering human toll—by far the most harrowing cost—there exist immense material losses and profound moral wounds that have left indelible scars on the collective Arab conscience and historical memory. The road to recovery from such profound suffering will span years, if not generations.

This dire reality necessitates the continuation of effective Arab action across all international and regional platforms—politically, economically, and socially—to mitigate the catastrophic repercussions of these Israeli crimes.

In light of this, I urge this distinguished Council to adopt emergency relief plans aimed at providing immediate and sustainable assistance to our Palestinian brethren, who have borne the brunt of Israeli aggression. Furthermore, I call for the establishment of concrete mechanisms to ensure the comprehensive implementation and follow-up of these relief efforts, with a focus on coordinated Arab assistance to maximise their impact and effectiveness.

I draw particular attention to the emergency response plan developed by the State of Palestine to address the devastating repercussions of the ongoing Israeli aggression—a plan acknowledged by the Bahrain Summit, which called for its funding and implementation in coordination with the Palestinian government and the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States. Likewise, I highlight the "Life Saving" project for the most vulnerable in the Gaza Strip, which was adopted by this distinguished Council in its previous session. This initiative prioritises the groups most affected by the brutal Israeli onslaught, including the elderly, persons with disabilities, and female-headed households, alongside the emergency cash assistance programme for families impacted by the war.

Furthermore, presented before your notable Council today is a crucial agenda item on supporting small and medium enterprises in the State of Palestine—an initiative that aligns directly with the objectives of the emergency response plan, fostering resilience and economic recovery amidst the ongoing crisis.

Mr. President,

Beyond these urgent matters, our meeting today also addresses a range of other critical issues, including preparations for the economic and social dossier of the upcoming regular session of the Arab Summit, to be hosted this year by the Republic of Iraq. This comprehensive file encompasses all economic and social topics submitted to the summit for deliberation. In this regard, I urge you to ensure that the dossier reflects the highest-priority issues across various economic and social sectors—issues that have become ever more pressing on the Arab development agenda, particularly in light of the mounting complexities surrounding sustainable development efforts. Addressing these challenges requires a strategic reordering of Arab priorities to achieve urgent, equitable, and inclusive development while reinforcing a more effective humanitarian response that acknowledges the distinct characteristics and dimensions of our region. In this vein, I underscore the pivotal role of Arab ministerial councils and specialised organisations, which serve as the technical pillars of our collective Arab framework, advancing its objectives and bolstering its effectiveness.

Mr. President,

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the establishment of the League of Arab States—an enduring home for the Arab world. Over these eight decades, both the League and its member states have confronted profound, existential, and structural challenges—challenges that were neither minor nor easily surmountable. Yet, through unwavering determination and resilience, Arab nations have preserved this unifying institution, steadfastly defending Arab causes, safeguarding national identity, and upholding the collective interests of our people.

Today, we find ourselves at a juncture no less perilous than those that prompted our predecessors to unite, integrate, and establish this comprehensive Arab entity—an entity conceived to preserve and defend Arab rights, uphold our shared values, and protect our fundamental interests. It is therefore incumbent upon us to honour this legacy, to remain resolute in our commitment to confronting every threat facing our nation, and to reaffirm our pledge to safeguard the trust placed in us by our peoples.

In conclusion, I extend my sincere wishes for your success, Mr. President, in presiding over this session of the Council. May our deliberations today be fruitful and our decisions serve the higher interests of the Arab world.

Thank you, and may God’s peace, mercy, and blessings be upon you.