Statement by Mrs. Somaia Barghouthi, Senior Adviser, Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, before the Committee on Information, 37th Session (28 April 2015):
(Check against delivery)

Mr. Chair,

At the outset, I wish to extend, on behalf of the State of Palestine, our sincere congratulations to you on your assumption of the Chair of this Committee as well as to the distinguished Bureau members. I wish also to express our profound appreciation to H.E. Ambassador Ms. Lyutha Al-Moghaire for her able and skilled leadership of this Committee in the last two years. We express our appreciation to H.E. the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his reports on the activities of the Department of Public Information and to the Committee on Information for its comprehensive report and valuable efforts in this regard. We also extend our sincere congratulations to Ms. Cristina Gallach, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information on assuming this post and commend her efforts in enhancing the role of DPI and for the informative, comprehensive statement she delivered before the Committee. We also express our appreciation to Mr. Peter Launsky-Tieffenthal and to Mr. Maher Nasser for their skilled leadership of the Department in the previous years.

My delegation aligns itself with the important statement made by H.E. the Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chair,

The delegation of the State of Palestine reaffirms its appreciation for the commendable efforts exerted in implementation of the Department of Public Information’s many important programmes, including the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine. We highly appreciate the General Assembly’s adoption of resolution 69/22 on 25 November 2014 regarding the programme on the Question of Palestine by an overwhelming majority, reaffirming once again strong international support for this programme. This programme is instrumental in raising the international community’s awareness of the Question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. It also raises awareness and support of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination.

In this regard, my delegation highly commends the Department of Public Information, especially the Palestine Section, for the various activities carried out in connection with this programme, including organization of the annual International Media Seminars on Peace in the Middle East, the latest of which was held in Japan in June 2014. We look forward to the next seminar to be held in Kazakhstan in June 2015. We also commend DPI for its valuable efforts in
updating and redesigning the permanent exhibit on the Question of Palestine at UN Headquarters in New York. We also commend the DPI for its efforts in the commemoration of the International Year and Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in 2014, along with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat. We also commend United Nations information centers and offices around the world for undertaking a variety of activities in this regard.

My delegation also wishes to reaffirm the importance of DPI’s continued provision of assistance to the Palestinian people in the field of media development through the annual training programme for Palestinian broadcasters and journalists from the Occupied Palestinian Territory. This valuable training opportunity effectively contributes to strengthening the media skills and abilities of those practitioners privileged to be selected to participate in this programme, despite the severe restrictions imposed by Israel, the occupying Power, on the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

In previous statements before this Committee and the 4th Committee, we emphasized the importance of the undertaking by DPI of the other activities requested by the General Assembly in relevant resolutions, including the expansion of the Department’s collection of audio-visual materials on the Question of Palestine and the organization and promotion of fact-finding news missions for journalists to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel. We hope that these activities will be soon undertaken with sufficient funding and staff to enable full implementation of DPI’s mandate vis-à-vis the Question of Palestine.

Mr. Chair,

Regrettably, the Israeli occupying forces and Israeli settlers continue to systematically and deliberately, and with impunity, commit acts of violence and provocation and against Palestinian and foreign journalists in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, to prevent them from conveying the grim reality about Israel’s illegal and aggressive policies and practices against the Palestinian people. In this context, we refer to the latest brutal Israeli military aggression in July/August 2014 against the Gaza Strip which lasted 51 days and resulted in the death of more than 2180 Palestinians, including more than 18 journalists. Simon Camille (Italian) photographer in the Associated Press, Ali Shehdeh, a journalist with Agence France-Presse, Najla Mohmoud Al-Haj, a media activists, and Abdullah Mortaji are some of the journalists who were killed by the occupying forces. The aggression also caused the injury of more than 11,000 people, including a large number of journalists and media personnel, in addition to the massive destruction of Palestinian buildings and property, including headquarters of media organizations and journalists’ homes.

Freedom of expression also continues to be suppressed by Israel through the ongoing campaign of arrests and detention and use of excessive force against Palestinian and foreign journalists and photographers, particularly those covering peaceful civilian demonstrations in the Palestinian towns and villages protesting the Israeli occupation, the colonial settlement campaign, the Apartheid annexation wall, the inhumane treatment of Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli prisons and detention centers, and ongoing incursions and attacks by the
Israeli occupying forces and settlers against Al-Haram Al-Sharif and Al-Aqsa Mosque in Occupied East Jerusalem.

In this regard, we refer to Israel’s non-compliance with General Assembly resolution 68/163 adopted on 18 December 2013 entitled “Safety of journalists and the issue of impunity”, as well as its continuing disrespect of all United Nations resolutions relevant to the Question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. This reflects Israel’s intransigence, as it continues to behave as a State above the law while the international community stands helpless in compelling Israel to implement those resolutions and holding it accountable for its violations, and hence fostering its impunity.

We reiterate our call to this distinguished Committee and international organizations concerned with journalists’ rights and freedom of the press to step up their efforts to protect Palestinian and foreign journalists and to demand a halt to Israel’s violations of international law and norms which provide for the protection of journalists and to ensure that they are able to work without the Israeli repressive censorship restrictions and the use of military force against them.

Mr. Chair,

The Telecommunications and Information Technology sector receives great attention from the Palestinian leadership as it plays a vital role in the development process. Serious efforts are being exerted in this regard, despite Israeli control of the communications sector in Palestine, including the Palestinian frequency spectrum, depriving our people of the right of direct access to communications services and information technology. In the effort to continuously strengthen our State institutions, we are working tirelessly to build communications and information technology networks to reach our people everywhere in the State of Palestine and to help them overcome the geographical and physical impediments to normal life and development caused by the occupation and its illegal settlements, annexation Wall, and suffocating sieges and closures imposed by the occupying Power.

Mr. Chair,

In closing, we reaffirm the importance of DPI’s Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine and its instrumental role in fostering support for the regional and international efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, Madrid Principles, including the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative. The Palestinian leadership has always affirmed its commitment to achieve peace that will end the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, and enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights, including to self-determination and a just solution to the plight of the Palestinian refugees according to GA resolution 194. We hope that with the support of the international community the independence of the State of Palestine on the basis of the 4th of June 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital will soon be realized allowing Palestine finally to take its historical and rightful place among the community of nations.