Aboul Gheit’s address at 31st ESCWA ministerial session

Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, gave a speech at the 31st ministerial session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

18 December 2023

Your Excellency Dr. Rula Dashti, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you in your home, the House of Arabs, and in this historical hall that witnessed meetings held over the past decades with the aim of protecting Arab national security and achieving integration and development across the board. I extend my sincere gratitude to Dr. Rula Dashti, Executive Secretary of ESCWA, for her invaluable efforts in advancing regional development. I commend the qualities I observed in her esteemed leadership – honesty, diligence, and a strong commitment to enhancing the existing cooperation between our two organisations. Under her guidance, ESCWA has achieved notable milestones, preparing and implementing joint initiatives, including the initiative we are pleased to launch today under the banner of "Arab Vision 2045."

While I recognise that your annual ministerial meetings comprehensively address various topics pertaining to ESCWA's activities and the formulation of policies and directives to realise its objectives, there is a common understanding among us that achieving these goals is closely tied to a crucial theme—peace. Development and stability are inseparable from peace, and regrettably, the Arab region has been marred by serious conflicts that hinder the developmental processes in some of its nations. I specifically refer to the Arab-Israeli conflict, a longstanding obstacle to regional stability.

The ruthless war waged by the Israeli occupation against civilians in Gaza, whose painful realities the entire world is witnessing, underscores a discernible plan—a plan marked by diabolical goals and objectives. The Israeli occupation's purported aim is not merely to suppress a movement but to obliterate an entire society, tearing at its fabric and obliterating the prospect of life in the Gaza Strip for an extended period. These objectives of the Israeli operation are no longer concealed from anyone.

This diabolical plan has a singular objective—to eradicate the Palestinian cause by severing the people from their land. This could be achieved either by extinguishing the possibility of life on this land or through the forced displacement and expulsion of the people through the use of military force—a prospect that will never come to fruition.

The leaders of the Israeli occupation show no hesitation in openly declaring these objectives. They assert, without ambiguity, that there will be no Palestinian state in the future. Time and again, they disavow the Oslo Accords and the resulting establishment of the Palestinian Authority, shamelessly declaring that the Palestinians will not have sovereignty over their own land.

This is an occupation that does not conceal its face or mask its goals; rather, it boldly announces them with unprecedented impudence. It is an affront to the peoples and nations that recently expressed their unequivocal stance in a United Nations General Assembly vote, where the overwhelming majority stood on the right side. History compels an immediate ceasefire—a swift end to the bloody massacre and collective punishment that has no place in our contemporary world.

With each passing day of this war, we drift farther away from the two-state solution that Palestinians, Arabs, and the global community have embraced—excluding Israel, which erroneously believes it can inflict a second catastrophe on the Palestinians. Even if it claims the lives of thousands of innocent civilians without guilt or crime, it will not extinguish their dream or coerce them into relinquishing their right to land and life.

Therefore, we emphasise once again our urgent appeal for an immediate ceasefire to safeguard the security and stability of the region. Our apprehension grows as we closely monitor the irresponsible actions that have evolved into a source of threats in the Red Sea, foreseeing their potential adverse effects on the economic conditions of Arab countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given our shared belief in the paramount importance of stability and security, the initiative crafted collaboratively by a team from ESCWA and the League of Arab States encompasses a fundamental pillar centred on security and safety. Today, we take great pleasure in unveiling this initiative, which aims to bolster regional integration and cooperation, fostering the realisation of development goals for Arab countries.

The choice of the year 2045 to materialise this vision is not arbitrary; rather, it aligns with the centennial celebrations of both the League of Arab States and the United Nations.

This initiative aspires to achieve development through a comprehensive and integrated perspective, embodying our collective hope for a luminous future where the aspirations of the diverse peoples and groups in the Arab region are fulfilled. We envision a future that elevates aspirations, activates energies, and encourages cooperation.

"Arab Vision 2045" comprises six interlinked pillars: security and safety, fairness and justice, innovation and creativity, prosperity and sustainable development, diversity and vitality, and cultural and civilisational renewal. These pillars were meticulously selected, taking into account the region's priorities and responding to the significant global changes underway.

The vision emanates from a firm belief in the benefits of Arab solidarity, guided by pertinent international and Arab charters and resolutions, and aligns with the United Nations' 2030 Plan for Sustainable Development. It prioritises the needs and trends of Arab countries and peoples, harmonising with national plans and visions, and integrates seamlessly with them, emphasising the youth's ownership of the future. The vision places a strong emphasis on the well-established system of human values in the region as the foundational element for human development.

In conclusion, united in purpose, we are poised to shape several tangible initiatives that will actively contribute to realising the core elements of this vision. These initiatives will align and intertwine with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals outlined by the United Nations, as well as with the previous plans of ESCWA and the League of Arab States. Furthermore, they will harmonise with the ongoing national efforts and development visions of Arab countries. I express my hope that, collectively, we will strive to cultivate the conducive environment essential for the success of this visionary undertaking. I reiterate, in this regard, the unwavering commitment and readiness of the League of Arab States and its specialised organisations to exert every effort necessary to transform this dream into reality.

Thank you.

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