



PERMANENT MISSION
OF MALTA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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2C – General Debate on access to natural resources in Syrian Golan and OPT

16 October 2026

Malta Statement delivered by Albert Grech, Counsellor

Chair,

As the fragile ceasefire in Gaza struggles to hold, Malta reaffirms the permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people and of the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources.

In its 2024 advisory opinion, the International Court of Justice recalled that an occupying Power is merely the “administrator and usufructuary” of the natural resources of occupied territory. It further found that the exploitation of those resources for the benefit of the occupying Power's own population, including settlers, is inconsistent with the Palestinian people's right to permanent sovereignty. The same principles are relevant for the occupied Syrian Golan.



The damage to Gaza's natural resource base since October 2023 is catastrophic. Only three per cent of its cropland remains both accessible and undamaged. Desalination capacity has collapsed, as untreated wastewater flows into the coastal aquifer and the sea. As an island state that relies on desalination for water security, Malta emphasises that water is a precondition for survival and development.

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Palestinian land continues to be lost to settlement expansion, including in the E1 area, to record levels of settler violence, and to measures extending Israeli civil authority over occupied territory. Attacks are striking directly at Palestinian livelihoods and food security. All measures that alter the territory's character and demographic composition must be reversed.

These resources belong to the Palestinian people, and may not be exploited, depleted or endangered by or for anyone else. Sovereignty over resources also means control over revenues: the continued withholding of Palestinian clearance revenues is threatening the Palestinian Authority's ability to deliver basic services and must end.



The same holds for the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan, where land and water continue to be exploited for settlement agriculture and energy projects. Malta calls for respect for the 1974 Disengagement Agreement and for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Chair,

Recovery in Gaza must restore Palestinian access to land, sea and water and it must be Palestinian-led. A viable Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel in peace and security, requires full sovereignty over its natural resources. Malta remains committed to the two-State solution, as set out in the New York Declaration, and to all efforts towards that end.

I thank you.