The longstanding restrictions on the movement of people and goods to, from and within the Gaza Strip have continued to undermine the living conditions of 1.7 million people. Many of the current restrictions, which were originally imposed in the early 1990’s, were intensified in June 2007, following the Hamas takeover of Gaza and the imposition of a blockade by Israel. Some of them have been subsequently eased since 2010. These restrictions have reduced access to livelihoods, essential services and housing, disrupted family life, and undermined the people’s hopes for a secure and prosperous future.

Despite some economic growth in recent years, Gaza’s productive capacity remains extremely weak. The restrictions on external trade, including with Israel, and on transfers to and from the West Bank prevent the realization of the Gaza Strip’s economic potential. This is compounded by the restrictions on access to agricultural land and fishing waters, and the chronic shortage of electricity. Current constraints discourage investment, prevent sustainable growth, and perpetuate high levels of unemployment, food insecurity and aid dependency.

Import restrictions have led to a sharp increase in tunnel activities under the border with Egypt. These restrictions, particularly on the import of basic construction materials, combined with the lack of employment opportunities and the huge reconstruction needs, have pushed thousands of workers, some of them children, to risk their lives every day in the “tunnels industry”.

The quality and availability of some infrastructure and essential services has deteriorated. The long-term restrictions have worsened pre-existing gaps in key services such as health, education, electricity, water and sanitation. The situation has been compounded by rapid population growth and damage to infrastructure during recurrent hostilities. International organisations working to address these gaps continue to face impediments stemming from the restrictions on the import of construction materials and the related approval system.

The restrictions on movement of people and goods between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are part of a “policy of separation” adopted by the Israeli authorities. As a result, people in Gaza are denied access to West Bank universities; cannot market their products or seek work in the West Bank; and cannot maintain normal family or cultural ties with Palestinians in the West Bank.

The UN has repeatedly condemned in the strongest terms the firing of rockets at Israel by Palestinian armed groups. Israel has the right and the obligation to take measures to address this and other security threats. However, such measures must be in conformity with international law: they must be proportionate to a specific threat, temporary, and must not be punitive in nature.
The ability of people to gain a living from fishing activities has been severely undermined as a result of the gradual restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities on the access of fishermen to sea areas along Gaza’s coast.

### Access to fishing areas

The import restrictions have impeded the expansion and upgrading of Gaza’s sewage infrastructure. Nearly 90 million litres of untreated or partially treated sewage are discharged into the sea every day. The contamination of seawater poses a serious health hazard.

### Sewage

The blockade has led to a proliferation of tunnels, where thousands of workers risk their lives every day smuggling restricted goods. The volume of construction materials entering through tunnels is over three times larger than through the official crossing.

### Access to farming land

Despite the recent improvement in access to areas as close as 300 meters from the fence, due to the lack of clarity on the scope of current restrictions and the ongoing risks, farmers are reluctant to invest.

### Exit of goods from the Gaza Strip

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