

**Joint Stake-out following Security Council meeting on Gaza and latest developments by EU member states (PRs from France, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and UK, joined by PRs from Belgium, Germany and Italy) – 15 May 2018**

We are deeply alarmed by the sharp escalation of violence we witnessed in Gaza yesterday, resulting in a high number of Palestinians killed and injured.

While recognising the right to protect its borders, we expect Israel to respect the fundamental right to peaceful protest and the principle of proportionality in the use of force when defending its legitimate security interest.

We urge all parties to take immediate steps to de-escalate the situation and to act with utmost restraint to avoid further loss of life.

Israeli security forces must refrain from the excessive use of force against unarmed civilians. Lethal use of force should be exercised with maximum restraint, and only as a last resort to protect life. The use of force taken must be proportional at all times.

Hamas and those leading the protests in Gaza have a responsibility to avoid provocations and ensure that they remain strictly non-violent.

We underscore the EU's clear, consolidated position on Jerusalem as a final status issue and that we will continue to respect the international consensus on Jerusalem embodied in, inter alia, UN Security Council resolution 478, including on the diplomatic representations until the final status of Jerusalem is resolved.

Looking ahead, we underline the pressing need for a political solution, on the basis of internationally agreed parameters, leading to a two-State solution. The Security Council has a responsibility for the peace process. All credible efforts to restart the peace process must be supported.