



DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

Bulletin

on action by the United Nations system and
intergovernmental organizations
relevant to the question of Palestine

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The Bulletin can be found in the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) on the Internet at:
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I. STATEMENT BY UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR ON THE SITUATION IN GAZA

On 2 April, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nikolay Mladenov, issued the following [statement](#).

For the past year the United Nations has engaged constructively with Egypt and all concerned parties to avoid escalation, relieve the suffering of people in Gaza, lift the closures, and support intra-Palestinian reconciliation. I welcome the efforts of all sides to do their utmost to avoid escalation and any further unnecessary bloodshed and destruction.

To date significant headway has been made on the implementation of the package of urgent humanitarian and economic interventions endorsed by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) in September 2018 to stabilize the situation in Gaza, prevent an escalation, and support Egyptian-led reconciliation efforts. Since then, nearly USD 110 million for fuel, health, water, sanitation and temporary employment programmes has been raised.

The UN and its partners have mobilized nearly USD 45 million that will allow for the creation of approximately 20,000 temporary jobs in 2019. Discussions with the Palestinian and Israeli governments, and the private sector continue to support sustainable job creation, the expansion of Gaza's industrial sectors and generally improving economic conditions and movement and access. Improved electricity supply has positively affected the delivery of basic services and the operations of water and wastewater facilities.

Since September, approximately USD 4.6 million in support to the Humanitarian Response Plan has contributed to the delivery of large quantities of 15 types of essential drugs and the performance of some 9,500 emergency surgeries. To increase transparency and credibility with donors, the UN has developed a monitoring framework for medical supplies and drugs in Gaza.

An amount of USD 3 million has been pledged to support immediate needs in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector. Over the coming period it is expected that construction on the associated works of the Gaza Central Desalination Plant will also begin.

These efforts will continue in coordination with all stakeholders, yet at its core the crisis in Gaza is political. Significant progress on the lifting of the closures and advancing intra-Palestinian reconciliation remain essential. I call on all Palestinian factions to engage in earnest with Egypt on reconciliation efforts.

I welcome Israel's decision to increase the fishing zone to 15 nautical miles in certain places and urge for a substantial improvement of the movement and access for goods and people, including between Gaza and the West Bank.

I reiterate that there can be no state in Gaza, and there can be no state without Gaza. Ultimately, only sustainable political solutions will reverse the current negative trajectory and restore hope to Gaza's long-suffering population.

II. SECRETARY-GENERAL PAYS TRIBUTE TO EGYPT'S ROLE IN AVOIDING ESCALATION ACROSS THE GAZA-ISRAEL BORDER

At a press conference in Cairo on 3 April, the Secretary-General paid tribute to Egypt's role in de-escalating the conflict in the Gaza Strip. [Excerpts](#) are reproduced below:

...

In relation to Palestine and Israel, I want to pay tribute to the extraordinary work that Egypt has been conducting and is responsible for the fact that it was possible to avoid a dramatic escalation in Gaza.

Egypt's very strong commitment has allowed not only to avoid that escalation but to create conditions for more effective humanitarian aid to Gaza and is an integral part for the unification of the Palestinians, which of course is another very important political objective and we fully support Egypt's efforts. I think we see eye to eye in relation to the solution that needs to be based on two States with Jerusalem as capital of both States, and this is very clear for us that there is no Plan B - that everything must be done to guarantee that the resolutions that were approved by the organs of the United Nations one day will be implemented, and that we will have two States in Palestine and Israel, living together in peace and security, and we will be working together as much as we can for that objective to be achieved.

...

III. PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE HOLDS UN FORUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE ON THE THREAT OF DE FACTO ANNEXATION

On 4 April, the United Nations Palestinian Rights Committee convened a Forum on the Question of Palestine: "The Threat of de facto annexation – What's next for Palestine?" The [Chair's summary](#) of the Forum is reproduced below:

The United Nations Forum on the Question of Palestine "The threat of de facto annexation – What next for Palestine?" was convened in New York on 4 April 2019, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP). Ahead of the public Forum, on 3 April the Committee held closed consultations with representatives of civil society organisations from Palestine, Israel and throughout the world.

The Forum brought together Palestinian, Israeli and international experts, representatives of the diplomatic community and civil society to address the question of occupation and annexation policies and measures in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and their impact on the viability of the two-State solution and on the prospects to find a peaceful resolution to the Question of Palestine. Panellists raised awareness of the Israeli measures of creeping annexation in the West Bank, including in and around East Jerusalem, and highlighted viable and practical strategies to end it. The Forum provided experts and civil society organizations with a valuable advocacy platform to inform policy and diplomatic action on the question of Palestine.

At the inaugural session, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, representing Secretary-General António Guterres, recalled that some of the

first decisions of the Organization had been aimed at resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and stated that the problem went to the heart of the Charter of the United Nations, according to which the annexation of territory by another State is inadmissible. Palestinians had endured prolonged occupation and the peace process had stalled, with security incidents and provocations continuing to escalate the situation in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. A new conflict would be devastating for the Palestinian people, he said, noting the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the military build-up by Hamas and other militant groups.

Stressing that Palestinian unity is essential for a politically stable and economically viable Palestine, he welcomed the tireless efforts of Egypt to continue dialogue with Palestinian factions and urged Israel to lift restrictions on movement of people and goods. In the occupied Palestinian territory, the construction of Israeli settlements continued unabated, he pointed out, emphasizing that settlements were illegal under international law. Both parties must avoid unilateral actions that undermine the two-State solution – the only way to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and lasting peace for Israel. Referencing the Secretary-General, he underscored that “There is no plan B,” and that the parties to the conflict owed it to their citizens as well as future generations of Israelis and Palestinians to break the cycle of violence.

The Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Cheikh Niang (Senegal), said the growth of Israeli settlements had profoundly fragmented Palestinian land and made realising the two-State solution on the 1967 borders harder. Even though Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) called for an end to the construction of such settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, more than 3,000 housing units were planned in Area C of the West Bank. As such, he called on Israel to cease the construction of illegal settlements and halt demolitions of Palestinian structures. Moreover, any unilateral moves to change the political, religious and cultural character of Jerusalem — a city sacred to three religions — would be detrimental to the cause of peace and stability in the Middle East, he observed.

He emphasized that all such outstanding issues should only be addressed as part of final status negotiations, adding that “we will continue to champion these objectives until there is a Palestinian State, side by side with Israel, with secure and recognized borders.” He also called on Palestinian leaders to constructively engage in reconciliation and resolve the current political impasse. The international community must stop the “laissez-faire attitude that turns a blind eye to Israel’s indifference to the broader questions of peace,” he stressed. Member States must hold Israel accountable for its actions by enforcing United Nations resolutions and international law.

The Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, Ambassador Riyad Mansour, described the tremendous frustration experienced by the Palestinian people and leadership over the diplomatic impasse and the ongoing Israeli violations. Israel’s protracted illegal occupation of Palestinian territories and its construction of illegal settlements must end, he said, expressing regret about the lack of progress from Israel in the Peace Process. He reiterated Palestinian proposals for a collective process led by the Security Council and called on the international community to muster the political will to implement its global consensus on the two-State solution in accordance with Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

He called on Member States not to wait for a “grand plan” on resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and called for practical ways to implement the international community’s will. Such

solutions might include legal options at the International Criminal Court or at the national level, compelling Israel to accept its obligations under international law. Palestinians also had obligations, among them to end the political division between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In that regard, he expressed gratitude to Egypt for its help. Yet, when it came to the Israeli occupation, “Palestinian people will not raise white flags,” he emphasized, “they will never surrender.”

Also speaking at the Opening Session, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia Retno Marsudi referred to recent unprecedented unilateral measures by the occupying Power, including the withholding of Palestinian tax revenues and the continued expansion of illegal settlements. “A gradual, inhumane and de facto annexation is unfolding before our eyes,” she said, adding that Member States had a crucial role to play given that disunity has paralyzed the Security Council. The Palestinian issue was at the heart of her country’s foreign policy, she said, and Indonesia would be persistent in raising that issue, including during the its presidency of the Council in May 2019 when it will organise an “Arria-formula” meeting on settlements.

Turning to the humanitarian situation in the occupied territory, she noted that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was again facing a challenging year in 2019 and announced that Indonesia would double its annual contribution to UNRWA’s core budget. Noting that it fell on the international community to assist the Palestinians she called for the recognition of Palestine as a United Nations Member State.

During the first panel, themed “From occupation to annexation — reality in the occupied Palestinian territory”, speakers described ways and means by which Israel was implementing a policy of de facto if not de jure annexation of the whole occupied Palestinian territory. Among those were measures to keep Gaza separated from the West Bank – through its blockade creating a man-made humanitarian crisis –, the ‘Judaization’ of East Jerusalem, entrenchment and expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and legislation of ‘apartheid’-style laws.

Internationally, the Israeli government was advancing the notion that territory occupied in “defensive wars” would belong to the victor, in clear violation of applicable international law and norms, such as the Charter of the United Nations and the Geneva Conventions as well as UN Security Council resolutions. While Israel publicly expressed a willingness to negotiate over the future of the West Bank, it had taken multiple steps to establish a sovereign claim, such as control over its water and the reconfiguration of transport routes to benefit the Israeli settler population at the expense of the Palestinian population and economy.

The current Israeli leadership had, through its actions over the past decade, created a legacy oriented against the two-State solution and for the establishment of an at best ‘separate-and-unequal’ situation, which even a different political leadership would find hard to overcome. For example, development of archaeological projects and tourist sites in the occupied territory had been given to extremist Israeli organisations, which systematically excluded Palestinians and advanced a purely nationalist Jewish narrative.

For Palestinians, while the focus on the two-State solution may have resulted in the current situation of being in limbo, a real one-State solution with civil rights for all its inhabitants – as originally envisioned by the PLO – was not an option, since Israel would not accept any outcome

that would not guarantee continued Jewish political and economic supremacy and thus calling for a one-State solution would be liable to be perceived as a call to destroy Israel.

As occupation was turning into annexation, or “occu-xation”, it was time to rethink the assumption that the ongoing occupation was not sustainable as claimed in Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). The ascendant Israeli right seemed comfortable with the current situation while denying Palestinian rights and taking Palestinian land. The international community had continued to play ‘diplomatic checkers’ while Israel was playing ‘diplomatic chess’.

Asked what actions Member States, private sector and global citizenry could undertake to give effect to Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) and its call on them to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967, some referred to the longstanding practice in international law for third parties to not engage economically with occupying Powers and for the need to at this stage to emphasise third States’ duty to implement Security Council resolutions and the Geneva Conventions. Others argued that Israel was too powerful, technologically and economically, to be affected by something like a worldwide boycott, even of its settlements. Further, any sweeping boycott of Israel would too easily be linked to anti-Semitism and the related discriminatory laws in Nazi Germany, and be used to rally the Israeli population and its allies.

The second panel, on “Viable and practical steps for the international community to stem annexation”, considered various viable and practical steps based on international legal norms that could help to halt the incremental annexation of Palestinian territory and contribute towards bringing an end the Israeli occupation.

Speakers stressed that there would have to be consequences for breaking international law. Since commercial activity was not divorced from political impact, Irish legislators had tabled a bill in Parliament that sought to ban the import and sale of goods produced in the Israeli settlements in occupied territories, the first of its kind in the European Union.

With this legislation, Ireland was seeking to give meaningful effect to the basic rules of international law and fulfil its obligations under existing international law. The bill attempted to address a fundamental disconnect in the national and international arenas, where settlements were repeatedly condemned as illegal, but continued financial support to and profit for them was tolerated. In the case of the European Union, this resulted in the bloc importing goods from Israeli settlements worth 15 times more than those imported from the State of Palestine. Apart from the bad political signal it sent, this also had a material impact on the State of Palestine’s ability to grow a functioning economy. The Irish Parliament was thus seeking a binding commitment on business and human rights. While the Irish Government had concerns over the compatibility of this law with EU commercial law, the sponsors of the bill were confident that competing EU human rights obligations of the Member States would override any such potential impediments.

It was stressed that the current initiative in Ireland’s parliament could and should be complemented by many others, for example in the Arab world and in Africa, that is among those Member States publicly supporting the rights of the Palestinian people.

Speakers also urged vigilance towards any signs of ongoing annexation measures and practices; if the international community waited for formal, de jure annexation “it will have been

too late.” Every step further entrenching Israel’s presence in the occupied Palestinian territory and increasing its control over Palestinian lives constituted a stepping stone on the way to annexation. The protraction of Israel’s occupation had always been in its ability to make subtle, incremental changes that “fly under the radar” and that were anchored in sophisticated legal procedures.

Engaging Israeli courts could be critical to stem annexation and force the political-military system to contend with its inherent contradictions. In parallel, third States should also engage in legal and diplomatic efforts to remind Israel of the bounds of international humanitarian and human rights law. Such actions would send an important signal to Israel about the international community’s ‘red lines’ when it came to annexation and human rights abuses.

The media also represented a powerful tool, as Israel’s political class and military responded when the optics of their policies proved unsavoury. Recent and ongoing crackdowns on civil society voices highlighting Israeli human rights violations and calling for action to halt them – in Israel and abroad – were a sign that these discussions were becoming serious and had started to affect Israel’s ability to act with impunity. Human rights organisations in Israel had an impact on the public perception of the occupation, through use of sharper language (e.g. “confiscation laws” in reference to regularisation laws).

While using Israeli courts to fight violations posed the risk of setting bad precedents and further entrenching harmful policies, as well as legitimizing a legal system that had provided cover for occupation policies, carefully selected cases could be filed strategically to force the Israeli State to reveal its policies and respond to allegations of violations of international law. As such, this option provided a tool for the international community to organize other strategies to combat those policies.

Israel should be reminded and forced to respect its own commitments under the Oslo Accords, which remained vital. To do so, economic actions by the international community could yield results. Currently, Israel was profiting from the occupation and had no reason to leave the occupied Palestinian territory. It would not feel the burden of occupation unless there was resistance from inside the occupied territory coupled with an international boycott of the settlements. Some argued that, if needed, the latter could be elevated to a full boycott of Israel.

In this context, the role of the Security Council was under serious question. If the United Nations was not able to act, then its resolutions would become meaningless.

IV. SECRETARY-GENERAL VISITS CAMP IN JORDAN IN SOLIDARITY WITH UNRWA

The [press release](#) on the United Nations Secretary-General’s visit to a camp in Jordan on 6 April is reproduced below:

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, visited Baqa’a camp in Jordan today, where nearly 120,000 registered Palestine refugees live and engaged with staff and beneficiaries of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

On his visit, he met students from the UNRWA Agency-wide student parliament (ASP), camp representatives, including women, and engaged with young pupils during lessons on human rights and science. During a visit to a school in the camp, Jordan's largest for Palestine refugees north of Amman, the Secretary-General highlighted the importance of continuing to fund the vital services UNRWA provides to millions of Palestine refugees in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

“The stories I heard today were very compelling, both in showing the strength and courage of Palestinian refugees, and in conveying their concern about their future,” said the Secretary-General. “What remains with me are words of hope and determination of men and women, young and old.”

UNRWA faced its biggest financial challenge in 2018 following the decision by the United States to cut US\$300 million from its funding to the Agency. The global campaign #Dignity is Priceless, combined with robust internal saving measures, allowed the Agency to entirely overcome a deficit of US\$446 million in 2018.

A group of women of various backgrounds, connected to UNRWA through education or social services, told the stories of their transformation. “We started selling books in our small home,” said Rima Al-Sallal, co-founder of online bookstore Jamaloon. “Today, we are the largest online booksellers in the Middle East and it is time to give back to UNRWA,” she added, describing initiatives that her company implements to help promote the Agency.

UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl joined the Secretary-General in a lively discussion with a group of boys and girls from the ASP which promote a culture of respect and tolerance and play a positive role in schools and community-wide.

Mr. Krähenbühl reiterated his commitment to keeping the 122,000 UNRWA students in Jordan in school this year and said that the Agency is currently investing important efforts to rehabilitate and upgrade schools in the Kingdom, which will improve learning conditions for some tens of thousands of students.

“Every conversation with representatives of our school parliaments is a reminder of the journey that these young girls and boys have undertaken and proof of how they have grown into confident and ambitious youth who meet with the United Nations Secretary-General to discuss their hopes and aspirations ,” said Pierre Krähenbühl. “Nothing illustrates the success of a Palestine refugee like academic achievement. Maintaining the education in our schools is akin to giving these young men and women a passport that makes them global citizens. We will not compromise on that,” he added.

V. SECRETARY-GENERAL'S HUMANITARIAN ENVOY VISITS UNRWA INSTALLATIONS IN JORDAN

On 9 April, the Humanitarian Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General, Dr. Ahmed Al Meraikhi, visited UNRWA installations in Jordan. The [press release](#) is reproduced below.

Today, the Humanitarian Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General, Dr. Ahmed Al Meraikhi visited United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) installations in Amman New Camp, Jordan.

The visit aimed to provide a firsthand look at the needs and living conditions of Palestine refugees in Jordan. Dr. Al Meraikhi visited the Amman New Camp Health Centre, where he was briefed about the services provided by the Agency to the approximately sixty thousand residents of the camp. He then toured the UNRWA Amman New Camp Preparatory Girls' School, where he met with students and school parliamentarians. He conveyed to them messages about the importance of education as an opportunity for growth. He also visited Palestine refugee families in the camp and was briefed by UNRWA representatives about the daily lives of Palestine refugees in Jordan and discussed their social and economic situation. The visit also sought to ensure the humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees are communicated. Dr. Al Meraikhi was joined by famed Qatari composer and songwriter Dana Al Fardan. Her participation comes as part of an upcoming UNRWA and Qatar Red Crescent Society joint campaign called "Hope for Gaza". Inspired by Palestine refugees, Ms. Al Fardan composed a song entitled "Bloom" for the UNRWA Ramadan campaign."

Dr. Al Meraikhi underscored United Nations and global support to Palestine refugees and emphasized the importance of stability in Jordan and the greater Middle East. "We see the challenges that UNRWA has faced and have also observed the increased demand for services for the increased refugees in all fields. I encourage all Member States to rise to the challenge again this year as they have done in years past and continue to support the Agency and Palestine refugees," he stated.

Mohammed Adar, Director of UNRWA Operations in Jordan said: "As a son of the region and an envoy of the UN Secretary-General, Dr. Al Meraikhi's visit serves to highlight the importance of the Agency's work and impact on the well-being of Palestine refugees and to bring the messages from the refugee community itself to the donors and general public."

In Jordan, UNRWA provides basic education to over 121,000 students at 169 UNRWA schools. Students in fourth, eighth and tenth grades take national quality-control examinations in core subjects – Arabic, English, science and maths – and consistently achieve high results when compared to students from private or government schools.

Amman New Camp, known locally as Wihdat, was one of four camps set up after 1948 to accommodate Palestine refugees who fled as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The camp was established in 1955 on an area of 0.48 square kilometres, just southeast of Amman. The refugees were initially housed in 1,400 shelters constructed by UNRWA, and in 1957 the Agency built an additional 1,260 shelters. In the absence of a just solution to their plight, Palestine refugees have built on these initial shelters to improve their living conditions. The camp has grown into an urban-like quarter, reflecting the needs of its inhabitants.

UNRWA installations in the camp provide services for the refugees residing in the camp and for those living in its surroundings. In addition to thirteen schools and one health centre, the camp houses one community-based rehabilitation centre, one women's programme centre, one environmental health office and one camp services office.

VI. UN HUMAN RIGHTS SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS SAY ISRAEL MUST ENSURE PROTECTION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

On 10 April, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, Mr. Michael Lynk, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mr. Michel Forst, released the following [press release](#):

Israel must fully honour and implement the rights and obligations contained in the UN's Declaration on human rights defenders, and in particular end the use of criminal, legal and security tools to obstruct the legitimate work of human rights defenders, say two UN experts.

Their comments come after the latest hearing on 7 April in the case of Issa Amro, a human rights defender and founder of Youth Against Settlements, a Hebron-based group which seeks to end settlement expansion through non-violent civil resistance.

"Israel must provide for the protection of human rights defenders in the context of their work and ensure that, if charged with any offence, their right to a fair trial is respected," said Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, and Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

"The case of Issa Amro is emblematic of the sophisticated array of obstacles faced by Palestinian human rights defenders who engage in non-violent activities."

Mr. Amro was first put on trial in an Israeli military court in 2016 on 18 charges dating back to 2010, including incitement, entering a closed military zone, and participating in a march without a permit. He had been taking part in a peaceful protest calling for the re-opening of Shuhada Street, the former commercial centre of Hebron.

"Although the nature of the charges against Mr. Amro is not serious, we fear that the sheer number of them might lead to a severe sentence," the UN experts said.

"Cracking down on individuals whose work is essential to denouncing violations and creating safe and peaceful societies, sends a troubling message that the Israeli authorities make little effort to abide by international human rights standards, including the right to a fair trial.

"The Palestinian population in parts of Hebron under the security control of Israel has been subject to attacks of increasing severity. Reports of aggression by settlers have been particularly prominent on Shuhada Street and in the Tel Rumeidah neighbourhood, where Palestinian residents live in constant fear of attack.

"We are very concerned that in January 2019 Israel did not renew the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH), an international observer force that was

instrumental in efforts to avoid violence – a decision which led to a group of human rights defenders, including Issa Amro, deciding to accompany children to school.”

The UN experts also expressed deep concern about the repressive working environment faced by Palestinian human rights organisations in recent years.

“People living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory need to be able to stand up for their rights without being punished for their courageous advocacy and calls for action. Human rights defenders like Issa Amro should be able to carry out their work without threats, intimidation, or abuse, and the Israeli authorities should stop prosecuting defenders in an attempt to silence them,” the experts said.

The Special Rapporteurs emphasised that Israel should take all reasonable steps to demonstrate respect for the work of human rights defenders in the OPT, and send an unequivocal message that it respects democratic values.

The two Special Rapporteurs, along with other human rights experts, have sent several letters to Israel seeking clarification about Issa Amro’s case.

VII. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR CONGRATULATES PRIME MINISTER ON THE FORMATION OF A NEW PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT

On 13 April, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nikolay Mladenov, issued the following [statement](#):

I congratulate Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh on the formation of a new Palestinian government and look forward to continuing to work closely with him and his team on improving the economic, humanitarian and social situation of the Palestinian people. At a time of significant financial and political challenges to the Palestinian national project, all must support the Government’s efforts and work to overcome internal divisions. Unity is essential to advancing the goal of a lasting peace. Elections, conducted in line with national laws and established international democratic standards can contribute to advancing reconciliation.

I thank former Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah for his leadership, engagement and cooperation. The adoption of the National Policy Agenda, ensuring financial stability, supporting Gaza reconstruction, and improving key social indicators, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, are important achievements at a time of severe restrictions.

The United Nations remains fully committed to working with the Palestinian leadership and people in ending the occupation and advancing their legitimate national aspirations for statehood based on UN resolutions.

VIII. UNSCO REPORTS TO AD HOC LIAISON COMMITTEE THAT VIABILITY OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY IS THREATENED BY MAJOR FINANCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CHALLENGES

On 25 April, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process issued its [report](#) to AHLC. The [press release](#) is replicated below:

In a newly published report, the United Nations noted that despite the relative temporary calm between Gaza and Israel since the end of March, the scope of the challenges facing the Palestinian people and government is unprecedented. A major fiscal crisis, coupled with growing humanitarian needs and the lack of a political prospect for a negotiated solution, threatens the stability of the West Bank and the very survival of the Palestinian state-building effort.

The report, issued by the office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) for the upcoming bi-annual meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) in Brussels on 30 April 2019, outlined a number of steps taken by the United Nations to facilitate the implementation of critical humanitarian and economic interventions in Gaza, which were supported by the AHLC in September 2018. These achievements include a more than doubling of the electricity supply to the Gaza Strip since October 2018, the creation of thousands of temporary jobs, and the provision of emergency medical supplies. It further details continuing efforts to find sustainable solutions for the energy, water and health sectors.

“Addressing the deteriorating humanitarian and economic situation in Gaza requires not only donor funding and project implementation, but bold policy decisions by all sides,” said Nickolay Mladenov, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. “The continued Israeli closures on Gaza, coupled with internal Palestinian division and more than a decade of Hamas rule in Gaza, has resulted in the breakdown of governance in the Gaza Strip and increased the risk of war.” he added.

With regard to the occupied West Bank, the report warned of the unprecedented financial, security and political challenges faced by the Palestinian National Authority. The report detailed the backdrop, which includes continued Israeli military occupation, settlement expansion and demolitions, territorial fragmentation, lack of jurisdiction, increased Palestinian protection needs, violence between Palestinians and the Israeli Security Forces and dwindling financial support.

Of particular concern, is the financial crisis caused by Israel’s decision to partially withhold 6% of the clearance revenue it collects on behalf of the PA and the subsequent Palestinian decision not to accept any such revenue unless the full amount it is owed is transferred. As a result of these decisions, the Palestinian Government has been deprived of some 65% of its revenue and forced to take extreme austerity measures. The report warns that unless resolved, the impact of this crisis will take years to undo. It reiterates the United Nations Secretary-General’s call to both sides to engage in a constructive manner with the goal of restoring the revenue transfers in full, in line with the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations.

In conclusion, the report stressed the United Nations’ firm commitment to continue working with Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the international community to find a solution to the unprecedented fiscal crisis as a matter of urgency. It also provided an update on the urgent interventions for Gaza, as well as a number of steps to ease the economic stress across the occupied

Palestinian territory. The report further noted that these measures — while helpful — can only provide temporary relief, absent the required transformative and proactive steps outlined in the 2016 Quartet report to alter the deteriorating situation on the ground.

IX. UN HUMAN RIGHTS SPECIAL RAPORTEURS CALL ON ISRAEL TO OVERTURN DEPORTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH DIRECTOR

On 25 April, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, Mr. Michael Lynk, and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mr. Michel Forst, released the following [press release](#):

UN human rights experts have expressed grave concern at the revocation of the work permit for Mr. Omar Shakir, the Israel and Palestine Director of Human Rights Watch, urging Israel to reverse a deportation order and to allow him to carry on with his human rights work.

“This ruling threatens advocacy, research, and free expression for all and reflects a troubling resistance to open debate,” the UN experts said. “It is a setback for the rights of human rights defenders in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

“The grounds for revoking Mr. Shakir’s work permit appear to be tied directly to his human rights advocacy, and have nothing to do with any assertion of illegal conduct.”

On 16 April, an Israeli court upheld a deportation order against Mr. Shakir. Human Rights Watch will appeal the ruling of the District Court to the Israeli Supreme Court. The UN experts will continue to follow the case closely.

Israel had revoked Mr. Shakir’s work permit on the grounds that he had supported the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement in the past. The UN experts note that Human Rights Watch has stated that neither the organisation nor Mr. Shakir promotes the boycott of Israel. Human Rights Watch works to discourage economic support for Israel’s illegal settlement enterprise.

The UN experts do not take a position on BDS. However, they point out that expressing support for, or opposition to, BDS, is fully guaranteed by the rights to freedom of opinion, expression and association.

“The ability of human rights organisations and defenders to actively engage in civil society work to defend and advance the principles guaranteed in the International Bill of Human Rights is a litmus test for measuring the respect for democratic liberties in any society,” they said. “Stifling these liberties undermines any government’s claim to respect fundamental freedoms and values.

“We urge Israel to reverse the order, to allow Mr. Shakir and Human Rights Watch to continue unimpeded with human rights advocacy, and to fully respect its human rights obligations in its relationships with Palestinian, Israeli and international human rights organisations.”

X. UN UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL, ECOPEACE BRIEF SECURITY COUNCIL DURING MIDDLE EAST OPEN DEBATE

The Security Council, at its 8517th meeting of 29 April, was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo, on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The Council also heard a briefing by Co-Directors of EcoPeace Middle East, Ms. Nada Majdalani and Mr. Gidon Bromberg. Excerpts from their [briefings](#) are reproduced below.

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Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo: We meet today as the United Nations continues to advance efforts to address the continued humanitarian, economic and political crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory. Yet the continuing absence of a political solution to the broader conflict undermines and compounds our efforts. Under the pressure of violence, settlement expansion, unilateral measures, intra-Palestinian divisions and deepening mutual mistrust, the prospects for a just and lasting peace remains ever more elusive.

Hopes for the realization of a two-State solution continue to be replaced by the rising fears of future annexation. The possibility of establishing a viable and contiguous Palestinian State continues to be eroded by facts on the ground. The United Nations has repeatedly warned that the conflict cannot be managed in perpetuity. The status quo will lead only to further deterioration of the situation, radicalization on all sides, more suffering and conflict.

Before addressing recent developments on the ground, I would like to congratulate Palestinian Prime Minister Shtayyeh on the formation of a new Palestinian Government. I wish him every success and urge all Palestinian factions and political leaders to work together, in good faith, to unify Gaza and the West Bank under a single, legitimate Palestinian Government.

I also want to congratulate the Israeli people on their democratic general election on 9 April. On 17 April, President Rivlin asked Prime Minister Netanyahu to form a new Government. We stand ready to continue working with the new government when it is formed.

The prolonged absence of a political solution to the conflict has coincided with the steady deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. During the reporting period, Israeli authorities advanced at least 2,100 housing units in Area C settlements and issued tenders for some 950 additional units. One of the plans advanced would retroactively regularize, under Israeli law, the illegal outpost of Haresha by incorporating it into the existing Talmon settlement. Settlements have no legal effect and constitute a violation of international law.

Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures also continued across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israeli authorities demolished or seized 37 structures, displacing 49 people, mostly on the grounds that they lacked Israeli-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain. In addition, on 31 March, the Israeli District Court rejected three appeals challenging demolition orders submitted by Palestinian residents of the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem.

The situation at Jerusalem's holy sites has remained relatively calm in the past month. I would like to take the opportunity of the overlapping holidays of Judaism, Christianity and Islam to wish peace and prosperity for the peoples of Palestine and Israel, but also to urge sustained calm, particularly in the holy sites, which can be achieved only by respecting the status quo and relevant agreements.

Regrettably, elsewhere the cycle of violence continues. On 30 March, Palestinians in Gaza marked the first anniversary of the Great March of Return protests, which was commemorated by 50,000 Palestinians demonstrating at the perimeter fence. While the vast majority of the protesters remained peaceful, a small number ignored the calls for restraint and engaged in acts of violence against Israel and attempted to breach the fence. During the reporting period, seven Palestinians, including four children, were killed in Gaza by the Israel Défense Forces (IDF) and 1,316 were injured. I reiterate the previous calls by the United Nations that children should never be the target of violence, nor should they be put at risk of violence or encouraged to participate in violence. I also reiterate the call on Israel that lethal force should be used only in response to an imminent threat of death or serious injury and as a last resort.

During the reporting period, Palestinian militants fired 30 rockets and mortars from Gaza towards Israel. The indiscriminate launching of rockets and mortars towards Israeli civilian populations is prohibited by international humanitarian law and must immediately cease. Several incendiary balloons were also launched from Gaza into southern Israel. These must stop. Hamas must also ensure that protests remain peaceful and prevent provocations near the fence, including attempts to breach it.

Meanwhile, in the West Bank, three Palestinians were shot and killed by Israeli forces, and 63 were injured, including 18 children. On 27 March, a 17-year old Palestinian paramedic was shot by the Israeli security forces near Al-Duheisha refugee camp in Bethlehem, and later died of his wounds. The shooting occurred during clashes following two arrest operations undertaken by the Israeli security forces in the camp earlier that day.

Settler-related violence also continued during the reporting period. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), one Palestinian was killed and 19 were injured or had their property damaged by others. On 3 April, two Israeli civilians opened fire in Nablus, injuring two Palestinians, including a 23-year-old man who died later in hospital. On 24 April, following the arrest, tying and blindfolding of a 15-year-old Palestinian boy for allegations of stone-throwing, IDF soldiers shot him twice in his lower body as he attempted to escape while still blindfolded. The IDF said that it was responding to massive stone-throwing and that one of the rioters was shot as he tried to flee after being arrested.

In the same period, OCHA recorded 14 Palestinian attacks against Israeli settlers and other Israeli civilians in the West Bank, where Palestinians threw stones at vehicles traveling on roads near Bethlehem, Hebron and Ramallah. One injury and damage to 13 vehicles were reported.

The reporting period also saw a worsening Palestinian financial crisis. Despite the austerity measures announced and the recent pledges of support by Arab States, the risk of a financial collapse of the Palestinian Authority is growing. A sustainable resolution of the Palestinian Authority's funding crisis is urgently required. Both parties should address the causes of the crisis through dialogue, implement their bilateral agreements and avoid taking unilateral actions that

undermine stability and security for both Palestinians and Israelis alike. I urge the members of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC) to use its meeting tomorrow in Brussels to work with Israel and the Palestinian Authority to resolve this crisis, which threatens the viability of the Palestinian Authority.

I would like to turn to the ongoing humanitarian and economic crisis in Gaza and begin by highlighting the plight of women. Seventy per cent of all women in Gaza today are unemployed. As a result, female-headed households are more likely to face poverty and food insecurity. Moreover, we know that poverty and lack of economic opportunities are key drivers behind violence against women in Gaza. The United Nations continues to provide assistance to Palestinian women and girls across a broad range of areas, but much more needs to be done to ensure that their needs are addressed.

The United Nations is also making important progress on the implementation of a package of urgent humanitarian and economic interventions in order to stabilize the situation in Gaza, prevent an escalation, lift the closures and support Egyptian-led reconciliation efforts. Over the past year, nearly \$110 million for fuel, health, water, sanitation and temporary employment programmes have been raised. The United Nations and its partners have mobilized nearly \$45 million that will allow for the creation of approximately 20,000 temporary jobs in 2019. Since September, approximately \$4.6 million in support of the humanitarian response plan have contributed to the delivery of essential drugs and the performance of some 9,500 emergency surgeries. I also welcome Qatar's extension of funding for the United Nations to procure and deliver fuel to the Gaza power plant until June.

In a positive development, on 1 April, Israel extended some areas of the Gaza fishing zone up to 15 nautical miles. I welcome this decision and strongly urge that the rest of the fishing zone, which remains limited to 6 to 12 nautical miles, also be expanded.

As we have repeatedly stated, at its core the crisis in Gaza is political. Significant progress on the lifting of the closures and advancing intra-Palestinian reconciliation remains essential. I reiterate my call on all Palestinian factions to engage in earnest with Egypt on reconciliation efforts. I also take this opportunity to thank Member States that have supported the implementation of the AHLC projects to date and urge others to contribute to this important effort, including through critical financial support to the Programme Management Unit, as well as for the humanitarian response plan.

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As we mobilize to address the critical needs of the Palestinian population, be it in Gaza or the West Bank, we shall not lose sight of the core political issue, namely, the prospect of two peaceful and secure States living side by side in harmony. That imperative compels us all to work with the parties, bring them back to the negotiation table and urge them to avoid unilateral actions that undermine the prospects for peace. We should also work with both sides to establish an environment conducive to a return to meaningful discussions. However, only determined action by the parties themselves can salvage the two-State solution. Otherwise, Palestinians and Israelis will continue to live their lives knowing only conflict, mistrust and fear, rather than the infinite possibilities that would come with a just and lasting peace.

Finally, I would like to thank EcoPeace Middle East for joining us for today's debate. Its commendable efforts to promote Israeli-Palestinian-Jordanian collaboration around shared environmental challenges are exemplary. I welcome the ongoing commitment by Member States to generously support and bring attention to such initiatives.

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Ms. Majdalani: On a hot summer day in 2017, the family of a 5-year-old boy, Mohammad, decided to escape the harsh realities of Gaza by going to the beach. His parents did not realize that the nearby stream flowing into the sea was full of raw sewage. Later that evening all of Mohammed's family fell terribly ill; within 10 days Mohammad was dead. A virus attacked his brain after he swam in polluted waters.

As we speak today, 97 per cent of the Gaza's groundwater is not suitable for human consumption, and 30 per cent of illnesses in Gaza are from waterborne pathogens. With an average of four hours of daily power supply, wastewater facilities fail to operate, daily emptying the equivalent of 34 olympic-sized swimming pools of raw sewage into the Mediterranean Sea. After more than 12 years of blockade, consecutive wars and loss of life, including children, and the failure of internal Palestinian reconciliation, a humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip is happening right now, right before our eyes.

Rather than be negligent, Gidon and I are here before the Security Council, together with Yana, the Jordanian Director of EcoPeace Middle East, as part of a dedicated team that refuses to allow our children and our environment to remain hostage to the conflict. We are here to impress upon members that water and climate security issues are critical for a better future for all the people in our region. While politicians can speak of a disengagement policy, the fact is that we cannot disengage from our shared environment. EcoPeace revealed to the public that the Ashkelon desalination plant, which provides 15 per cent of the drinking water in Israel, has been intermittently closed due to the pollution carried by the currents from Gaza beaches towards the north. That is a big lesson to us all: water and the environment know no borders or boundaries.

The demise of the Jordan River is another example of the environmental cost we pay for the broader Arab-Israeli conflict. Amin, the father of an EcoPeace activist, lived his childhood on the banks of the Jordan River. He remembers its waters as being clear and fast-flowing. His family used to fish and pump water from the river to irrigate their fields. Following the occupation of the West Bank, in 1967, Amin and his family lost access to the river's banks and to their rightful share of its waters. Amin visited the Baptism Site with EcoPeace more than 50 years later, and he was in total shock. The mighty river he recalled had become a trickle.

Like other refugees and residents, when Amin and his family look at the Jordan Valley they see a complex political reality that works against even their basic needs. Restricted access to water, the confiscation of land for the expansion of illegal settlements and talk of a looming annexation of Area C makes them even more determined not to give up on a better future.

For the very reasons I have just mentioned, EcoPeace has designed an integrated master plan for the Jordan Valley, which could turn around a valley of poverty and despair into one of shared prosperity for all communities from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, based on principles of

sustainable development and equal opportunities and in the framework of the two-State solution along the 1967 borders.

EcoPeace has advocated that solving water issues cannot wait. We argue that water issues and obtaining Palestinian water rights can no longer be delayed owing to a failure to agree on all other final-status issues. The terms and mechanisms set out in the Oslo Accords on transboundary water and wastewater management are today failing Palestinian, and even Israeli, sustainable development needs.

The impacts of climate change over the past decade have further brought to the fore the importance of our argument and the urgency for policy change. The past 20 years have witnessed recurring drought, the deepest droughts in our recorded history. They have contributed to wider cross-border implications on increased water scarcity, political instability and increased refugee and humanitarian crises in our region. If no immediate action is taken against the Gaza crisis today, the international community should be ready for more refugee boats.

As a civil society organization, during our latest conference we were able to convene senior representatives from our three Governments, who all agreed that climate change presents itself as a threat multiplier in relation to our water security. While most of the world is fearful of a 2°C increase in average temperatures, the Middle East is concerned about a 4°C increase.

Building on the examples I have presented, we come here with a powerful message to our own Governments and to the members of the Security Council. We together face a common threat due to conflict and climate-induced water scarcity. Climate change does not differentiate between the stronger and weaker side of the conflict. Action is needed today. A reassessment of assumptions, a rejection of unilateralism and an effort to advance cross-border water cooperation is needed as a matter of national and regional stability and security.

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Mr. Bromberg: In my 25 years with EcoPeace Middle East, my most memorable activity was to jump into the Jordan River, together with Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian mayors. Together we made a big splash but, like today, we also made an important statement. To get the mayors to literally jump into the river, it took us five years of planning. We developed an education programme called "Good Water Neighbours" — please remember that — that worked in schools on all sides of the Jordan River, educating young kids about their water reality and that of their neighbours. They saw a river with little flow and full of pollution, and, for the first time, they began to understand the impact of conflict on water. Quite innocently, those kids and their parents started to ask their mayors "Why is the Jordan River so polluted, and what must we do with the other side to clean up the river?" Empowered by the youth and their parents to take action for the benefit of their communities, the mayors jumped into the river together not as best friends, but as leaders, advocating to national Governments on all sides that only a rehabilitated river would bring economic opportunities to their residents.

Twentieth-century assumptions that dictated water diplomacy led us down a path of conflict and competition over water. We were indeed wholly dependent on natural water during the past century, and therefore each side fought over every drop. That was the mindset that led to the demise of the Jordan River and the drastic reduction in size of the Dead Sea. That was the mindset of how

water was negotiated in the Oslo Accords in the mid 1990s. Water was left unresolved as a final-status issue because coming to an agreement over sharing scarce natural water was difficult and would produce winners and losers. But today the advancements in water technologies this century, much of which is led by Israeli innovation, present real opportunities. The utilization of treated waste water for agriculture and the development of desalination technology means that water is under less constraints as a resource.

Today 70 per cent of the drinking water in Israel comes from desalination, and half of the agriculture grown is grown with treated wastewater. The availability of large quantities of manufactured water, complimenting natural water, makes the fair share of natural water between Israelis and Palestinians attainable now. Because of climate change, Mediterranean desalinated water will be pumped by Israel into the Sea of Galilee to guarantee water quality for the lake and fresh water supplies to Jordan, and could be part of the rehabilitation of the Jordan River — a river holy to half of humankind. Based on Government policies, on the one hand, of increased desalination and, on the other, community-led advocacy for the river, for the first time in 50 years some fresh water flows again out of the Sea of Galilee into the Jordan River.

In just the past five years, technological advances in solar power is allowing our region to harness the sun. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has been the regional leader in that regard, investing in large-scale solar energy, owing to its vast desert landscapes. The combination of manufactured water coming from the Israeli and Palestinian coast and sold to Jordan, powered by solar electricity produced in Jordan and sold to Israel and Palestine, is a potential geopolitical game changer. Such an exchange can guarantee water and energy security for all, responds to climate insecurity and creates healthy interdependencies between our economies and societies. Last year, with German funding, EcoPeace led a regional delegation of decision makers and business leaders to Europe to advance the project. Thanks to Swedish funding, a pilot solar project is in the planning stages in Jordan today to sell green electricity for the first time across the border.

Moving from competition to cooperation over critical natural resources as a means to help create political stability is not a new idea. The post-Second World War coal and steel agreement of continental Europe, led by former enemies France and Germany, laid the foundation for stability in Europe. Harnessing the sea and the sun shared by Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians can be our engine for achieving peace and stability. Nada Majdalani, Yana Abu Taleb, myself and all of our staff in Amman, Ramallah and Tel Aviv carry with us the voices of young students, residents and mayors. Together we have educated ourselves and the communities in which we work. We have done the research, and we have shown leadership.

We have partners for peace on all sides. Our 25 years of partnership tell us that good water, and not necessarily good fences, make good neighbours. In the spirit of Passover, Easter and the forthcoming celebration of Ramadan, let us set water free to give life and hope to our region.

We call on the Security Council to urge our three Governments — Israel, Palestine and Jordan — to advance cooperation together on water and the environment, including the rehabilitation of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea, meeting Palestinian water rights and needs, and implement a water-energy exchange for our shared future in the face of climate change, all in the context of a two-State solution. We call on the Security Council to invite all the relevant United Nations agencies and international organizations, including the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the

Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, to help facilitate the implementation of those objectives.

XI. AD HOC LIAISON COMMITTEE OF DONORS CONSIDERS THE PALESTINIAN FISCAL CRISIS

On 30 April, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) met in Brussels, chaired by the Foreign Minister of Norway, Ine Eriksen Sørreide. The Government of Norway issued the following [press release](#):

“I am pleased that Israel and the Palestinian Authority are now working actively to solve the ongoing fiscal crisis and conflict over the transfers of tax revenues. The major cuts in public services in Palestine cannot continue. Today’s AHLC meeting in Brussels was a good start and a step on the way towards reaching agreement on this issue,” said Minister of Foreign Affairs Ine Eriksen Sørreide.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Ine Eriksen Sørreide chaired the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), the international donor group for Palestine, which took place at the EU in Brussels today. The meeting was hosted by EU High Representative Federica Mogherini. Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh led the Palestinian delegation, which included Finance Minister Shukri Bishara. The negotiations on the formation of a new Israeli Government are ongoing, and the Israeli delegation was led by senior Israeli officials. Representatives of the main donor countries were also present.

The transfers of tax revenues from Israel to the Palestinian Authority were a key issue at the meeting. Since March, the Israeli authorities have withheld part of the monthly transfers of tax revenues collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, in response to the Palestinian system of payments to prisoners. Under the Oslo Accords, tax revenues are to be transferred to the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Authority has responded to Israel’s decision by refusing to accept any of the tax revenues. These funds account for approximately two-thirds of the Palestinian Authority’s overall income. The discussion at the meeting also touched on economic danger signs over and above the acute fiscal crisis.

“The AHLC is the only international forum where the Palestinian and Israeli authorities take part in dialogue with donors and the international community aimed at strengthening economic cooperation, promoting Palestinian state-building and laying the foundation for a negotiated two-state solution. I am pleased that the parties showed a willingness at the meeting today to resolve the current crisis. The international community cannot cover the financial gap that has now arisen. We will do what we can to support the parties and to help resolve the current crisis,” Ms Eriksen Sørreide said.

The framework conditions for economic activity in Palestine must be improved in order to create growth and more jobs. In particular, it is important that Israel eases the tight restrictions on the movement of people and goods in and out of both Gaza and the West Bank. The donors are also deeply concerned about the absence of a political process between Israel and Palestine, as well as about the damaging split between the West Bank and Gaza. Political progress and agreement are the only way to create the necessary conditions for growth and development.

“The international donor community has expressed its clear support for a two-state solution. A peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict can only be achieved through a negotiated agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians,” Ms Eriksen Søreide said.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is dire, and the need to ensure the delivery of goods, electricity and water into Gaza was another key topic at the meeting.

“Despite the efforts of the donors, the humanitarian situation in Gaza is unacceptable, and it is clear that more needs to be done to improve living conditions there. We have been on the brink of a new war several times during the last year,” Ms Eriksen Søreide said.
