



# Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

**8583**<sup>rd</sup> meeting  
 Tuesday, 23 July 2019, 10 a.m.  
 New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Meza-Cuadra/ Mr. Ugarelli . . . . . (Peru)

*Members:*

Belgium . . . . .	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China . . . . .	Mr. Wu Haitao
Côte d'Ivoire . . . . .	Mr. Ipo
Dominican Republic . . . . .	Ms. Blandino de Los Santos
Equatorial Guinea . . . . .	Mr. Esono Mbengono
France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
Germany . . . . .	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia . . . . .	Mr. Djani
Kuwait . . . . .	Mr. Alotaibi
Poland . . . . .	Ms. Wronecka
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
South Africa . . . . .	Mr. Mabhongo
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Ms. Pierce
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Greenblatt

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Morocco, Namibia, Norway, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, Uganda, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in this meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite the following individuals to participate in this meeting: Mr. Cheikh Niang, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; and Mr. Maged Abdelfattah Abdelaziz, Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States to the United Nations.

I propose that the Council invite the representative of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Ms. DiCarlo.

**Ms. DiCarlo:** The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to be locked in a dangerous paralysis that

is fuelling extremism and exacerbating tensions in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. There is a growing risk of more unilateral actions and the loss of hope that peace can be achieved through negotiations.

This outcome is not inevitable. We need to support creating an environment conducive to advancing peace and paving the way for negotiations on all final status issues, including Jerusalem. In order to get there, we need leadership, political will and the determination to make tangible progress, despite the difficulties. We must work together to bring Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiating table in order to resolve the conflict on the basis of international law, relevant United Nations resolutions and previous agreements.

Without the prospect of viable negotiations on the horizon, facts on the ground continue to undermine the possibility of achieving a two-state solution.

In June, the District Court in Jerusalem ruled that four houses in the Alei Zahav settlement could be retroactively regularized under Israeli law, despite having been built on private Palestinian land. This decision is the first implementation in practice of the so-called market regularization principle, according to which up to 2,000 housing units in settlements could be legalized. Further, on 8 July the Jerusalem District Planning Committee approved for deposit a plan for the addition of 48 housing units in the Gilo settlement in East Jerusalem. I reiterate that settlements remain a substantial obstacle to peace and are a violation of international law.

Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures by Israeli authorities also continued. Sixty-six structures were demolished or seized, overwhelmingly on the grounds of lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain. This practice must stop. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), this resulted in the displacement of 90 Palestinians, including 58 children.

On 11 June, Israel's High Court dismissed a petition by the Palestinian residents of the Wadi Al-Hummus/Sur Baher neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, giving them until 18 July to demolish nine buildings, owing to their proximity to the separation barrier. The structures were demolished by Israeli authorities on 22 July, resulting in the displacement of 24 Palestinians, including 14 children. As Deputy Special Coordinator McGoldrick stated yesterday, Israel's policy of destroying Palestinian

property is not compatible with its obligations under international humanitarian law and contributes to the risk of forcible transfer facing many Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

On 27 June, six Palestinian-owned structures in the Bethlehem community of Zatarah Al-Kurshan were demolished, displacing some 46 people. On 10 July, a Palestinian family was evicted from a property in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. This was done after the Court ruled in favour of an Israeli organization that had obtained ownership of the majority of the property.

The past month has again seen a reduction of violence in Gaza, while protests at the perimeter fence have continued. One Palestinian was killed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and another 736 were injured, including 234 children and 39 women. There were also fewer launchings of incendiary balloons and kites by Hamas and other Palestinian militants from Gaza. Despite this, some 130 fires were started by some 100 devices in Israel during the reporting period.

Similarly, there has been a reduction in the number of rockets launched by militants towards Israel since the last dangerous escalation in May. Two rockets were fired during the reporting period, causing no injuries or damage. The launching of rockets and mortars towards Israeli civilian populations is prohibited by international humanitarian law. Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad must cease this practice immediately.

Sadly, the reporting period also saw continued violent incidents in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. On 27 June, a 21-year-old Palestinian was shot and killed by an Israeli policeman after he allegedly shot fireworks towards Israeli forces during clashes in East Jerusalem. Clashes ensued in the area for several days, during which 88 Palestinians were injured.

On 12 July, a 9-year old Palestinian boy was shot and severely injured during clashes with the Israeli security forces in the West Bank village of Kafr Qaddum. I call on Israel to promptly launch a thorough investigation and reiterate that children's lives and rights must come ahead of any other consideration. They must be protected from all forms of violence. In addition, Israeli security forces injured 154 Palestinians, including 14 children, in clashes that erupted across the West Bank. On 6 July, a vehicle driven by a Palestinian reportedly rammed into a group of IDF personnel near the

entrance of Hizma village, north of Jerusalem, injuring five soldiers.

Settler-related violence also continued. According to OCHA, six Palestinians were injured in six attacks by Israelis. At the same time, two Israelis were injured by stones thrown by Palestinians. I condemn all attacks on Palestinian and Israeli civilians alike and call on all sides to refrain from violence. All perpetrators must be held accountable for their acts.

Allow me to return to the situation in Gaza.

The United Nations continues to work closely with Egypt to mediate and de-escalate tensions. While our joint efforts are beginning to bear fruit, I remain deeply concerned by the humanitarian, economic and political situation there. The shortage of medicines, equipment and personnel continues to impede the ability of health providers to meet the needs of patients, including those severely injured during the weekly protests at the perimeter fence.

Since the last round of United Nations and Egyptian-led mediation, the Gaza fishing zone has been expanded from 10 to 15 nautical miles. Israel has also returned 44 confiscated fishing boats to the Gaza Strip and eased some of the conditions for travel of Gaza-based businessmen. I welcome these developments and urge the continuation and expansion of such actions.

In line with agreed understandings, the United Nations is accelerating the implementation of the September 2018 and April 2019 packages of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians, which include interventions that have already started to improve the situation in Gaza. In this context, the United Nations efforts on job creation through the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East have thus far created some 9,000 job opportunities, including around 3,000 for women.

UN-Women has also initiated a smaller programme, targeting some 250 vulnerable women in Gaza. A recent assessment of the programme to date revealed that 91 per cent of the beneficiaries had not earned any income prior to this programme. About 83 per cent of the women said that the opportunities improved their livelihoods; 71 per cent said their interhousehold tension has decreased due to the availability of income; and 55 per cent reported that the earned income

allowed them to participate in decision-making at the household level.

The current calm must be sustained in order to gradually introduce longer-term interventions that will support Gaza's sustainable development. I take this opportunity to thank the Member States that have contributed to date and strongly urge others to support these vital efforts, particularly in the areas of job creation, health care, water and sanitation, and energy.

Yet, the root of Gaza's problems remains political. I call on all Palestinian factions to take concrete steps to ensure the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under a single, democratic and legitimate national Government. Gaza is and must remain an integral part of a future Palestinian State as part of the two-State solution.

While discussions aimed at resolving the financial crisis in the Palestinian Authority (PA) are ongoing, no solution has yet been found. For the fifth consecutive month, the Palestinian Government has refused to receive Israel's partial transfer of tax revenues owed to it. Despite the PA's announced austerity measures and the support package committed by Qatar, the PA remains under tremendous strain and may soon reach the breaking point. The Palestinian economy is increasingly showing signs of decline, with a noticeable reduction of purchasing power contributing to an overall reduction in economic activities. I call on both sides to engage in a constructive manner to ensure compliance with the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations.

In the meantime, it is critical to adopt temporary measures to address the PA's fiscal crisis, and I encourage Israel and the Palestinian Authority to work together to find such solutions. The recent decision of the League of Arab States to support with up to \$100 million per month the Palestinian Authority should provide a welcome respite until a viable solution is found. The recent memoranda of understanding between the Government of the Palestinian Authority and Jordan in the areas of energy, health and transportation are also welcome.

During the reporting period, we saw additional international support for Palestine's economic development. I note the third high-level Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development, under the co-chairpersonship of Japan and Palestine. I also note the Peace to Prosperity economic workshop that took place in

Bahrain on 25 and 26 June, and which was attended by Government officials, business leaders, representatives of international organizations and religious leaders, among others.

Humanitarian and economic support for the Palestinian population is crucial to creating an environment conducive to viable negotiation. Such measures should be followed by a comprehensive peace agreement that addresses all final status issues.

In closing, I would like to emphasize the severity of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and the urgent need for tangible steps to reverse the negative trajectory. The circumstances will hardly ever be ideal for advancing peace, but let us do our utmost with conviction, hope and creativity to support the creation of those circumstances. The United Nations remains committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis in their efforts to end the conflict and to realizing the vision of two States, living side by side in peace and security.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. DiCarlo for her briefing.<sup>^</sup>

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): We thank the Peruvian presidency for convening today's important meeting and for your able leadership of the Security Council in addressing the Council's agenda. We also thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing on the situation, one that regrettably worsens every day that action to ensure justice is delayed and that a political horizon for a peaceful solution remains obstructed.

We have come to this Chamber time after time, appealing to, calling on and imploring the Security Council to act to alleviate the human suffering, to salvage the prospects for peace and to contribute to making that peace a reality. We remain convinced that such action, in line with international law, the Council's resolutions and its responsibility for international peace and security under the United Nations Charter, is the only way to bring an end to this grave injustice.

Respect for the law and human rights and establishment of justice are the only way forward. Those who would tell us otherwise are setting us up for decades more of suffering and insecurity for all — Palestinians, Israelis and the entire region. Let me add in this regard: all colonialists and occupying Powers

throughout history have continuously and repeatedly tried to substitute freedom with the improvement of peoples' living conditions and did not succeed in a single instance. They will not succeed in the case of the Palestinian people, as we will never be the exception to the rule. And despite all those who come from within or outside the Security Council to try to convince us that what we are doing does not make sense, saying that they have the magic formula, we know that their formula has been tried throughout history, but it has never succeeded. It will not succeed this time either.

After more than 52 years of Israel's illegal occupation of our land, its gross, violent denial of the rights of our people and its constant efforts to dispossess and displace, it is past high time to justly and permanently redress the situation. This is a blatant situation of belligerent colonial foreign occupation, attested to by any measure of the law and by the Security Council, the General Assembly, the International Court of Justice, countless regional and global organizations, academia and the international community in its entirety — and it must be brought to an end.

Absent accountability, including for the gravest violations, this foreign occupation is rapidly mutating into apartheid, bringing shame to all who have pledged to never allow such denigration of human beings to occur again. Moreover, as many have long observed with regard to the question of Palestine, the failure to uphold the law on this issue has undermined the international rules-based system, exposing its flaws and total dependence on political will for effect and allowing for its cynical exploitation.

This situation can never be normalized. The legal, political and moral obligations incumbent upon the Security Council and the international community as a whole are clear, as are the principles and values that are so fundamental for peace and security in our world. However, as we have heard from Israel's representatives and more recently from its staunchest supporter in the Council, there are those who deride their principles and values as things of the past or mere slogans and who are blatantly dismissive of Palestinian rights. In their calculus, the law and morals do not matter; only raw power and delusions of superiority do. In clearing the way for a future devoid of values and principles, they not only expose the emptiness of their claims of seeking a peaceful, secure and better future for all, but do a disservice to humankind by setting dangerous precedents with far-reaching implications.

All of the foregoing was starkly reflected in the scenes of destruction and injustice witnessed yesterday in occupied Palestine in the Sur Baher neighbourhood of the Wadi Al-Hummus area of Jerusalem, where Israel has issued military orders for the demolition of 10 residential buildings, comprising at least 70 apartments and affecting hundreds of families. Instead of demolishing the illegal wall, Israel is now using the wall as a pretext to demolish Palestinian homes.

I can show Council members a few pictures of yesterday's reality; they depict some of the homes that were destroyed and demolished. In front of these homes, we see their owners watching the demolition by the Israeli occupying authorities, who show complete disregard for the suffering of children who are seeing the furniture of their homes being thrown outside while they are watching their family homes being destroyed and demolished. Such plans and actions, deliberate and systematic in nature, constitute gross violations of United Nations resolutions and the Charter prohibition on acquisition of territory by force, grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention, disrespect for the 2004 International Court of Justice advisory opinion and war crimes pursuant to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Yet, ignoring its legal obligations and the appeals of the United Nations, States and Palestinian, Israeli and international human rights organizations, Israel began yesterday to demolish, as I have mentioned, the homes in Sur Baher. In the early hours of Monday, a large contingent of Israeli soldiers entered the homes of the families residing there and forced them to leave before proceeding to destroy the homes using military bulldozers and massive amounts of dynamite. As I have just shown Council members, the scenes have been shocking and heartbreaking.

The families displaced and dispossessed of their properties and life's belongings yesterday include 17 persons, 11 of whom are children. Nine are Palestine refugees who have been traumatized by yet another displacement. As the destruction continues, 350 other Palestinians fear the same loss, in addition to the thousands more Palestinians, especially in occupied East Jerusalem, who are under the threat of pending demolition orders by Israel.

For these families, the anguish is immense and the situation disastrous. Their homes have not been taken by an act of nature such as those we sadly witness around

the world; rather they have been taken by a deliberate decision by the Israeli Government and its so-called Supreme Court of Justice, which have assumed rights and privileges that the people of Israel are not entitled to in order to strip another people of their legitimate rights, land and property. This is a blatant act of ethnic cleansing and forced transfer; it is tantamount to a war crime and it must be fully condemned and prosecuted as such.

Israel is not the sovereign in the area of Sur Baher/Wadi Al-Hummus, just as it is not the sovereign in any part of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem. Israel, the occupying Power, does not hold any of the rights it has accorded to itself to carry out such colonization in our land. The Israeli Government, its officials and military personnel must be held accountable for these crimes, and reparations and restitution for these losses must be obligatory upon the occupying Power. The State of Palestine will spare no effort and will continue exploring every avenue to end impunity and ensure justice for victims, including through the ICC.

We are informed by over five decades of Israeli occupation policies. The pretext may vary but the objective is always the same: an illegal land grab. They may declare closed military areas, green areas, new archaeological sites, a new road or a new tunnel, but they always mean land confiscation. Religion, history and security are placed at the service of that colonial project to the detriment of the rights of the Palestinian people and the interests of the Israeli people.

So when Israel announced the excavation of yet another tunnel in occupied East Jerusalem, its true intentions were obvious. Its recent inauguration of the so-called Pilgrims Road, with the support of the United States Ambassador to Israel and other American officials, was yet another illegal act attempting to assert sovereignty where there is none and to alter the character and status of that Holy City in flagrant contravention of United Nations resolutions, revealing yet again the occupation's expansionist, extremist intentions.

Is that the better life that some United States administration officials claiming to seek peace speak of? Is that the future touted by the failed, so-called Peace to Prosperity workshop convened last month, which neglected to even minimally acknowledge the root causes of the conflict, the reality of a half-century

of occupation and the basic rights of the Palestinian people, we wonder?

When people live peacefully, even under conditions of constant oppression, and when they work hard, support themselves and build homes for themselves on their own land only to see those homes destroyed under pretexts that are as false as they are illegal, how can that possibly contribute to a better life, a sense of dignity and stability? How can such dispossession, as was inflicted on hundreds of thousands of Palestinians before them, foster any belief that peace and coexistence are possible? It cannot. No amount of spin or propaganda — or stories told inside or outside this Chamber — can hide the fact that those actions are being taken in a grave breach of international humanitarian law that amounts to massive collective punishment.

Yet, though dispossessed and displaced, deprived and isolated, the Palestinian people remain. They have been and will continue to be resilient. They will not submit or surrender. There is no people on this Earth that will willingly give up the right to freedom and human dignity, and I say that in the presence of representatives of nations that have fought valiantly to free themselves from occupation. Those members who have lived under colonial domination and fought against colonialism to acquire their freedom would not consider for a second exchanging their freedom for money or a better life. Freedom was always the most important thing and we are exactly like them. Freedom is the most important thing for us.

The continuation of those criminal, inhumane actions, like all the crimes before them over more than 70 years of injustice, have sown deep resentment, anger and pain among our people, while the international community's silence and inaction have only deepened our hurt, despair and sense of abandonment. The colonization and annexation of our land by Israel, its suffocation of Gaza, its violence, terror and incitement against our people, its killing of our children, its imprisonment of our people, its assaults on our holy sites, its theft of our natural and financial resources and its destruction of our future must be halted.

The global consensus on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the same freedoms cherished worldwide, on the principles and parameters of a just solution, remains strong, and we thank and salute members for holding firmly to their collective and unanimous position in spite of all the efforts of

some to try to convince them otherwise on the basis of big ideas that were not even shared with them.

Those principles and parameters and the commitment to their realization are reaffirmed in this Chamber every month. That consensus has been reaffirmed by recent summits of the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the African Union, as well as by the ministerial meetings of the OIC and the Non-Aligned Movement, and it remains at the core of the international position. At every juncture, calls are made for action to achieve the two-State solution based on the 1967 borders in accordance with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map.

Equally consistent are the calls for action to bring an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967; to realize the independence and sovereignty of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel on the basis of secure and recognized borders; and to achieve a just solution for the Palestine refugees in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948. The consensus remains that such a solution would be the guarantor of just, lasting and comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian and Arab-Israeli peace and security.

We are grateful for those principled positions and the solidarity extended to our just cause and our people, including to Palestine refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. However, commitment to principles and humanitarian assistance alone cannot remedy that abysmal situation and make peace possible.

International action, in line with legal, political and moral duties concerning the Palestine question, must be taken. There must be accountability. All the legitimate tools that are politically and legally available, including prosecution in courts and sanctions, must be pursued without hesitation.

The Security Council must shoulder its responsibilities and act immediately, in line with its resolutions, to compel a halt to the occupation's crimes, avert further deterioration of the situation, protect innocent civilians and salvage the chances for a just peace. Israel must bear the consequences of its violations and its disregard of the international community's will.

States must also act, individually and collectively, to adhere to the relevant resolutions in both word and deed, and to uphold their legal obligations, including the obligation not to recognize or render aid or assistance to the current illegal situation and the obligation to ensure accountability. That must include action in respect of the call for distinction in resolution 2334 (2016) and all other relevant resolutions, including resolution 478 (1980) on Jerusalem.

Only such action and pressure can bring change and salvage the chances for peace. Continuing to appease and coddle Israel, the occupying Power, can only lead to more of the same impunity and worse. We will do so at our peril, but also at the peril of the Israeli people and the region as a whole, which will continue to be deprived of the justice, peace, security and development that so many have long sought and struggled for. Do not let another generation suffer that injustice.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

**Mr. Danon** (Israel): Forty years ago in 1979, the world witnessed two historic events. One set the stage for a future of peace and order in our region and the other emboldened the forces of complete and utter chaos. On 26 March of that year, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and United States President Jimmy Carter shook hands on the White House lawn to launch a lasting peace between two formerly sworn enemies.

As one end of our region began to see the light of day, the other was descending deeper into darkness. On 11 February, just five weeks before the Treaty of Peace between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the State of Israel was signed, the founders of the current Iranian regime gained control of the Government, hijacking the future of Iran and exploiting the Iranian people's genuine aspirations for freedom. Just two weeks apart from each other, two ground-breaking and radically opposed developments occurred in the Middle East — the first peace agreement between Israel and an Arab State and the rise of the violent and oppressive regime that laid the foundation for the fundamental threats facing the Middle East today.

In 2019, there is still peace between Israel and Egypt. There is also peace between Israel and Jordan. Those agreements, which have lasted decades, have served as critical forces of order in a region plagued by terrorism, extremism and hateful ideology.

But the revolution has not subsided either. If anything, the forces of chaos have only grown, extending far past Iranian borders. The Iranian regime is jeopardizing the region and beyond, spreading its ideology into Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and even the African continent. It is financing terrorism while also hijacking the freedom of navigation in one of the most crucial shipping lanes in the world. It is bolstering its proxies to commit malicious crimes around the world and continues to pursue nuclear weapons capabilities with the explicit goal of destroying Israel.

The United Nations cannot stay silent when those forces of chaos are destroying the principles for which it stands. Today, we have a duty to preserve the forces of order by confronting the forces of chaos — terrorism, extremism, hateful ideology and the regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

On 11 July 1997, Nelson Mandela delivered a speech on reaching a new world order. He observed: “in the new global order, no country, region or continent can any longer operate in isolation from the rest of the world” (“Renewal and renaissance: towards a new world order”, lecture delivered at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, United Kingdom). Mandela’s words encourage cooperation and partnership for a new and prosperous world order, but they also send a warning to those countries and forces that seek to act in isolation from the rest of the world and against its best interests.

It has become clear that the interconnected world order is upheld and protected when countries come together to confront rogue actors and their malicious partners. Those regimes seek to dominate the regions of the world with an extreme ideology. They punish or even kill those that they believe stand in their way. The regimes use violence and terrorism to achieve their goals. Such rogue regimes are those like the one in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In 1979, the year that witnessed historic peace, also endured the rise of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Iranian revolution shocked the world. When Ayatollah Khamenei took power, he wasted no time in turning his extremist militant ideology into policy. When Khamenei established the Quds Force in 1980, with the clear objective of exporting the revolution abroad, he stated in his announcement, “We have to topple these unjust and treacherous Governments”.

Take it from the Iranian political and military establishment itself. Regime leaders today celebrate

their international intervention openly and boast about their regional influence and power in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Gaza. They refer to themselves and their main partners, proxies and puppets as the “axis of resistance”. The axis includes Iran; its proxy, Hizbullah in Lebanon; and its partner, Bashar Al-Assad and his criminals in Syria. Its goal is to export the Iranian revolution, violently targeting the West and all who oppose its efforts to spread the revolution across the region.

The Iranian force of chaos has caused infestation in Lebanon — 13 years have passed since the catalyst that launched the Second Lebanon War in July 2006, when Hizbullah launched a well-orchestrated attack with the goal of infiltrating Israeli sovereign territory, killing eight Israeli soldiers and abducting two more.

One month later, the Security Council adopted resolution 1701 (2006), which established, between the Blue Line and the Litani river, “an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL” (*para. 8*). It also called for the full implementation of resolution 1559 (2004), requiring “disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias” (*para. 3*).

But Hizbullah, with inspiration, funding and weapons supplied by Iran, has further entrenched itself in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Although 13 years have passed, the Security Council has yet to receive an accurate picture of the gravity of the situation in southern Lebanon. It is unfortunate that some have chosen to turn a blind eye to the reality on the ground.

UNIFIL must be fully equipped to discharge its mandate and contribute to stability in the region. It must report to the Council all restrictions in movement to the fullest extent, detailing where the restrictions occurred and who was responsible and why, because with every passing day of Hizbullah’s further entrenchment, it becomes harder and harder to tell where Beirut ends and Tehran begins.

Resolution 1701 (2006) calls for “no sales or supply of arms and related materiel to Lebanon except as authorized by its Government” (*para. 8*). It appears, however, that the call for an embargo has been completely ignored.

The Iranian regime is transferring weapons in various ways and Council members can see it there.

The Quds Force exploits civilian airports in Damascus and Beirut — civilian airports — and civilian land infrastructure on the Syria-Lebanon border to smuggle weapons, dual-use items and other capabilities. But today I am presenting new evidence. In 2018 and 2019, Israel found that Iran and the Quds Force have begun to advance the exploitation of civilian maritime channels and specifically the port of Beirut. For the same purpose, a civilian port — the port of Beirut — is now the port of Hizbullah.

Led by the Quds Force, dual-use items are smuggled into Lebanon to advance Hizbullah's rocket and missile capabilities and conversion programme. Under the guise of Syrian entities, such as the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre, Iran and Hizbullah have been able to purchase dual-use equipment from civilian companies, while concealing the true nature of those purchases, which were hostile to Israel and its citizens.

Through that method, Iran is able to transfer the dual-use equipment from the Port of Beirut with the permission of the authorities and without revealing its true identity and intentions. Every State Member of the Organization must ask itself the following questions. Is it absolutely sure that its companies are not the ones selling dual-use equipment to Hizbullah? Is it sure that its citizens know the end use of those dual-use items?

The Iranian regime's targets for exporting the revolution stretch far beyond the banks of the Mediterranean. In the past month, Iran has pursued a dangerous advancement in its hostile nuclear programme, following President Rouhani's declaration to enrich uranium to "any amount we want". The regime has so far enriched uranium to 4.5 per cent, going over the limit of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). It is clear that Iran will continue to pursue a nuclear weapon, threatening the entire Western Hemisphere.

I therefore ask the countries that still support the JCPOA what they are to do about the Iranian nuclear threat. Are they going to ignore it? What is the Security Council going to do about the Iranian nuclear threat? We simply do not have the luxury of giving the Iranian regime the benefit of the doubt. Now is not the time for optimism, but the time for realism. It is the time to find partners who share our goal of confronting that force of chaos.

After years of war, it is significant that Israel and our Arab neighbours have found something on which

to agree. Maybe the Council should listen to us if we agree about something after so many years. Our mutual objectives have brought us together. In the face of the threat posed by the Iranian regime, we are each committed to restoring order in the region. It is critical that, in the struggle against Iranian expansionist ambitions, all parties look at the big picture. In the face of existential threats, Israel, the Arab world and the international community can only gain from working together. By confronting the forces of chaos, terrorism, extremism and hostile nuclear ambitions, we can clear the path for regional peace.

When we gathered here three months ago, I offered a framework of four pillars for the past and the future (S/PV.8517). One of those pillars is regional cooperation. Just as in 1979, when Israel and Egypt stood together for peace, despite the turmoil shaking the other end of our region, today we must come together once more to confront the threat to peace. The forces threatening that peace all lead back to the regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We have learned from history that when the international community fails to rise to the occasion before it is too late, the price to pay is unbearable. When it comes to the Iranian regime, now is not the time for appeasement; now is the time for action.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to those Council members that wish to make statements.

**Mr. Greenblatt** (United States of America): I am pleased to be back in the Security Council today. I would like to update members of the Council on the Trump Administration's peace efforts.

I know that this institution has shown a deep interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I also know that many of those present are frustrated by the fact that we have not yet shared the details of the vision that we have crafted. We understand that. We hope that when the right time does come, that frustration will dissipate, as will the frustration that we all have about the lack of any progress towards the resolution of the conflict, as well as the lack of progress to improve lives and the security challenges that plague Israel and much of the region. We hope that such frustration will be replaced by a mutual understanding that our vision provides a unique opportunity to help the two parties and their neighbours achieve what has been elusive for too long — a comprehensive peace agreement.

We know that the Palestinians have seen promises made by some and not kept, but President Trump and his Administration desire to make the lives of everyone involved better. That means Palestinians in Gaza, Jerusalem and what many call the West Bank; and that means Israelis in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and what many call Judea and Samaria.

I want to express my gratitude to the Kingdom of Bahrain for graciously co-hosting the very successful Peace to Prosperity workshop with us last month. In Manama, more than 300 Government, private sector and civil society leaders came together to demonstrate an international commitment to improving the lives of the Palestinians. Government leaders, chief executive officers and economists at the workshop agreed that the economic vision is detailed and ambitious, but achievable and potentially transformative with the right environment created by an agreed-upon peace agreement and proper governance structures.

Our economic vision, which has now been downloaded from the Internet over 1 million times, contains a detailed portfolio of projects and capacity-building programmes that have the potential to unleash exciting, sustainable private-sector growth for Palestinians, Jordanians, Egyptians and Lebanese. We have been clear and honest about the fact that this economic vision can be achieved only if there is a resolution to the political conflict between the parties. This is not an economic peace. There will be no economic prosperity without a political solution, but no political solution will succeed without a well-developed economic plan. President Trump has not yet decided when we will release the political portion of the plan, and we hope to make that decision soon. In the meantime, I want to ask for the help of those present to create the conditions by which we could all have a serious conversation.

Among the many obstacles that we face is the constant drumbeat of tired rhetoric that is designed to prevent progress and bypass direct negotiations. It is time to retire that rhetoric. Peace will require honesty and a willingness to consider new ideas, as well as courage and hard compromises. This is a time for us to speak to each other candidly, not in stale slogans and talking points.

Let me get a little specific here. The conflict will not end on the basis of an international consensus about who was right and who was wrong and about

who should give up X and who should give up Y. International consensus might work from time to time, when such a consensus can actually be achieved. In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, international consensus has not been achieved. Those who continue to call for international consensus on the conflict are doing nothing to encourage the parties to sit down at the negotiating table and make the hard compromises necessary for peace. In fact, they are doing the opposite by allowing people to hide behind words that mean nothing. International consensus is too often nothing more than a mask for inaction.

Let us not forget the day when the United Nations could not even find a way to build an international consensus behind the fact that Hamas is a terrorist organization that relentlessly attacks Israelis by incendiary balloons, missiles, attack tunnels and other means, sometimes while hiding in residential neighbourhoods filled with Palestinian families. Hamas ghoulishly holds Israeli soldiers Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul as bargaining chips. Hamas has imprisoned Israeli civilians Avraham Mengistu and Hisham Al-Sayed. Hamas is a brutal terrorist organization that causes nothing but misery and suffering for Palestinians and Israelis. It is an organization that continues to vow to destroy Israel.

That failure is profoundly shameful. If we cannot even reach an international consensus regarding Hamas, is an international consensus really going to end the conflict? And how is it that we cannot find an international consensus that the Palestinian Authority's rewarding of terrorism and the murder of Israelis using public funds, some donated by countries represented in this very Chamber, is abhorrent and must be stopped?

International consensus is not international law. So let us stop kidding ourselves: if a so-called international consensus had been able to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it would have done so decades ago. It did not.

This conflict is also not going to be resolved by reference to international law when such law is inconclusive. We have all heard cogent arguments claiming international law says one thing or another about this or that aspect of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some of those arguments are persuasive — at least to certain audiences, but none of them are conclusive. We will not get to the bottom of whose interpretation of international law is correct on this conflict. There

is no judge, jury or court in the world that the parties involved have agreed to give jurisdiction to in order to decide whose interpretations are correct. International law with respect to this conflict is a tricky subject that could be discussed and argued for years without ever reaching a conclusion. We can therefore spend years and years arguing what the law is and whether it is enforceable and prolong the ongoing suffering or we could acknowledge the futility of that approach.

The conflict will also not be resolved by constantly referencing the hundreds of United Nations resolutions on the issue. The constant reference to these heavily negotiated, purposely ambiguously worded resolutions is nothing more than a cloak to avoid substantive debate about the realities on the ground and the complexity of the conflict. The interpretation of one of the most often-cited resolutions, resolution 242 (1967), has been hotly debated over the past half-century. That debate has not brought us closer to a lasting and comprehensive peace. That debate has not even bridged the gap between those who construe resolution 242 (1967) to call for the so-called right of return and compensation for displaced Palestinians and the fact that the world covers its eyes to the fate of the roughly equal number of Jews who were expelled or forced to flee their homes in Arab countries in connection with Israel's war of independence. Resolution 242 (1967) and others may have been drafted and voted upon in a genuine attempt to bring an end to the suffering that all involved in this conflict had endured, but we must acknowledge they have not succeeded. A comprehensive and lasting peace will not be created by fiat of international law or by these heavily wordsmithed unclear resolutions.

The same holds true for the status of Jerusalem. There is no international consensus about Jerusalem, and no international consensus or interpretation of international law will persuade the United States or Israel that a city in which Jews have lived and worshipped for nearly 3,000 years and has been the capital of the Jewish State for 70 years is not today and forever the capital of Israel. Jerusalem is a city of three world faiths. The rights of all who wish to worship at the holy sites in the city of Jerusalem must be protected. It is true that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestinian Authority (PA) continue to assert that East Jerusalem must be a capital for the Palestinians. But let us remember: an aspiration is not a right. Please do not read into that statement anything about the content of the political portion of the plan. I am simply making a

statement of fact. Aspirations belong at the negotiating table, and only direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians can resolve the issue of Jerusalem, if it can be resolved. It will not be resolved in this Chamber, in this institution or in any other capital around the world. That does not mean that the Palestinians cannot aspire to have a capital in East Jerusalem, with creative solutions that attempt to respect all three religions that cherish this incredible city. But if there is to be such a solution, only the parties themselves through direct negotiations can work this issue out.

Many participants in this conversation continue to relitigate the events of 1967, when Israel heroically acted to defend itself against the threat to its very existence. Many would rather rail against the supposed evils of what they routinely call an illegal occupation than engage constructively on the disputes that characterize the conflict today. That is not a productive dialogue. The dispute over the territory is a question that can only be resolved in the context of direct negotiations between the parties. And I am focused on how to get those parties back to the table. I hope I have the Council's support in that.

Those who have weaponized the term "occupation" in order to criticize Israel are doing nothing to promote a resolution to this conflict. In fact, they are heavily undermining the chances for peace and the improvement of the lives of Palestinians and Israelis. Both Israel and the Palestinians have asserted a claim to certain land. This is an unresolved dispute, and it will only be through direct negotiations between the parties that we have a chance of resolving that dispute and achieving a comprehensive peace. Let us not lose sight of the fact that Israel has already conceded at least 88 per cent of the territory captured by it in the defensive war it had no choice but to fight in 1967. We call on the leadership of the PLO and the PA to put aside blanket rejections of a plan they have not even seen and to show a willingness to engage in a good faith manner in a meaningful dialogue with Israel. And we call upon each of the Security Council members and each country that truly wishes to help the Israelis and the Palestinians achieve a comprehensive peace agreement to encourage them back to the table.

The vision for peace that we plan to present will not be ambiguous, unlike many resolutions that have passed in this Chamber. It will provide sufficient detail so that people can see what compromises will be necessary to achieve a realistic, lasting comprehensive solution

to this conflict, the conflict that has robbed so much potential from Palestinians, Israelis and the region as a whole. I ask all members to reserve judgment until we publish, and Council members read, the 60 or so pages that detail what peace could look like. Achieving that vision will require difficult compromises by both parties if they are willing to make such compromises, but we believe both sides will gain far more than they give.

We all want this conflict resolved. We all want to help those who continue to bear the unendurable weight of this conflict, whether they are Palestinians, Israelis or their many friends and neighbours in the region. So let us start by acknowledging that there are no shortcuts and that fictions of international consensus, international legitimacy, arguments about who is right and who is wrong as a matter of international law, and aspirations expressed as rights will not achieve peace. A solution cannot be forced on the parties. Unilateral steps in international and multilateral forums will do nothing to solve this conflict. Let us be honest with ourselves and the parties and the region that the only way ahead is direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

And let us also not lose sight of the deep division that exists among Palestinians themselves — between Fatah and Hamas — a serious issue that must be resolved to make progress. Let us start a new realistic discussion. We need to look to the future rather than dwell on the past. Let us build real foundations of peace and work to truly transform lives by speaking the truth directly to one another across the table.

**Mr. Alotaibi** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs for her briefing.

Early yesterday morning, Israel, the occupying Power, began demolishing buildings in Wadi Al-Hummus in the village of Sur Bahir in East Jerusalem, which contain numerous apartments, displacing many Palestinian families. The operations remain ongoing under the protection of Israeli soldiers. A joint statement was issued by Mr. Jamie McGoldrick, United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, Ms. Gwyn Lewis, Director of Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and Mr. James Heenan, Head of the Office of the

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, in which they stressed the dramatic consequences of these illegal actions, but begged the question as to what makes Israel, the occupying Power, adopt policies that violate international law and Security Council resolutions. The answer is the absence of accountability and the fact that Israel disregards the United Nations and the international community's response. The absence of Israel's accountability for its actions is the underlying cause of the deterioration of the situation in the occupied territories. I will therefore focus on the issue of the absence of Israel's accountability.

First, the absence of accountability has led the occupying Power to continue its expansionist settlement activities and practices, including the seizure of land by force, the confiscation of Palestinian homes and forcible displacements, which have reached their highest level in recent years, in blatant violation of the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016).

Second, in the absence of an effective and robust accountability mechanism, such Israeli practices are leading to increased violence and posing a threat to civilian lives. Raids and illegal detentions continue, as well as the indefinite imprisonment of detainees without formal charges.

Third, the absence of accountability is emboldening Israel and causing it to continue its illegal practices in the occupied territories, in particular in occupied Al-Quds Al Sharif, where the goal is to erase its religious and historic identity and end the Palestinian presence there by means of Israeli activities and repeated raids on the Al-Aqsa Mosque, guarded by the Israeli army, as well as court-authorized practices such as the demolition of buildings and forced evictions, as in the case of the village of Sur Baher.

Fourth, the absence of accountability has made it easy for Israel to enjoy impunity and continue its violations of international law by means of the relentless use of military measures. We therefore reject such unprecedented, premeditated and provocative behaviour by Israel, which aims to prolong the occupation and undermine the prospects for a two-State solution.

Fifth, the absence of accountability and Israel's refusal to implement resolution 1860 (2009) have led to a 13-year blockade on Gaza. The humanitarian situation in Gaza is precarious. Its economy is undergoing profound stagnation. Levels of unemployment have

reached 50 per cent and higher, while restrictions are preventing the people of Gaza from earning their livelihoods and undermining opportunities for them to receive adequate health care, in particular those wounded in the peaceful Great March of Return.

Sixth, under international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Israeli authorities have an ongoing obligation to implement measures that best serve the people under occupation. Israel, however, violates those obligations and is exploiting an environment of impunity, riding roughshod over its responsibilities as an occupying Power. It continues to take unilateral measures, the most recent of which were the rejection of the renewal of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron and its decision to withhold a portion of Palestinian customs revenues. We therefore call on Israel to respect its obligations and bilateral agreements with the Palestinian Authority.

Seventh, with regard to the financial challenges facing the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), we call for enabling UNRWA to continue its role in providing services to refugees in the areas of education, health and social services. It is also important to continue to provide the necessary financial support to UNRWA. The State of Kuwait will remain among the Agency's main partners. Our voluntary contributions over the past four years have amounted to \$113 million.

In the absence of accountability for daily and systematic Israeli violations within the occupied Palestinian territories and in the light of Israel's manipulation of that situation so that it can deny the Palestinians their legitimate rights and usurp and pillage their land and assets, the prospects for achieving a just and lasting peace in the region are being undermined. It is therefore urgent to stop acting as if the rights of the Palestinian people are not covered by international laws and norms.

As members of the Council, we have a particular responsibility to implement its resolutions and end the violations of international law and the Charter of the United Nations perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power.

In conclusion, we are committed to the Arab, Islamic and international positions, according to which peace is the strategic choice and a lasting and comprehensive solution is underpinned by parameters such as relevant Security Council resolutions, the principle of land

for peace, the Quartet road map and the Arab Peace Initiative, and should be implemented in a manner that will allow Palestinians to enjoy their legitimate political rights and establish their independent State within their own territory, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**Mr. Heusgen** (Germany): I will be relatively brief because we are basically turning in circles in view of the previous discussion that we had here (see S/PV.8557) and because I will align myself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Croatia on behalf of the States members of the European Union.

I would like to first start by expressing my support for the United Nations. I heard and would like to refer to what Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo said in her briefing. I fully subscribe to what she said, and I must say that I was also very struck by what she said about the negative trajectory in which we find ourselves. She talked about violence, settlements, demolitions, rockets and provocative rhetoric, among others.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a political one and will be resolved only by a political solution. Germany supports a negotiated two-State solution, based on internationally agreed parameters and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

I would like to respond in that regard to what the representative of the United States just said. As the Ambassador of Germany, I must say that, for us, international law is relevant; international law is not futile. We believe in the United Nations — that is why we sought to become a member of the Security Council for a two-year term. We believe in Security Council resolutions; for us, they are binding international law.

As I said, we believe in the force of international law and we do not believe in the force of the strongest. For us, international law is not an *à la carte* menu. On other occasions, United States representatives have insisted on international law and on the implementation of Security Council resolutions, such as those on North Korea. We absolutely support that and, as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006), we work very hard to implement Security Council resolutions word by word. For us, resolution 2334 (2016) — to name the most recent Security Council resolution — is binding law and that is the international consensus. It is the United States that has withdrawn from the international consensus on resolution 2334 (2016).

With regard to the situation, Germany participated in the Bahrain workshop, because we are interested in sensible measures that promote peace and boost the economy. But I think that one thing is clear — prosperity will be elusive as long as it is not firmly embedded in a political framework. A lot has been said about settlements, although not by the representative of the United States in his intervention. For us, settlement activities are illegal under international law. They undermine the prospects for a negotiated two-State solution. The rhetoric has gone beyond talk of settlements. We now hear rhetoric alluding to the possible annexation of parts of the West Bank. We are extremely concerned. Germany will not recognize changes to the 1967 lines, including to Jerusalem; we will recognize only changes that are the result of negotiations.

To go back to the issue of settlements, the approval of construction and tenders for new housing units in the West Bank and Jerusalem, Germany is particularly concerned about the demolition and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures across the West Bank and evictions of Palestinians from their homes in parts of East Jerusalem, such as Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan and Wadi Al-Hummus. We have seen photos of areas where demolitions are taking place as we speak. Such activities affect the Palestinian-owned structures located in Areas A and B and set a precedent that severely undermines the Oslo Accords. We therefore call upon Israel to end the expansion of settlements, the legalization of outposts, demolitions and seizures of and evictions from Palestinian-owned structures.

Let me go back to international law and, more specifically, to resolution 2334 (2016), which does not refer only to settlement activities. The resolution also mentions terrorism, violence against civilians, incitement, provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric. Germany deeply condemns all attacks on Israel. The firing of rockets from Gaza by Hamas or other groups is unacceptable. Germany stands steadfast in its commitment to Israel's security as a Jewish and democratic State. We will not remain silent when Israel's security or right to exist is questioned or compromised. For the international community, peace is best served by observing international law. That holds true for resolution 2334 (2016) and others. It also holds true with regard to the crisis in the Gulf and Iran. I reiterate that the implementation by everyone of resolution 2334 (2016) would be a step in the right direction.

Lastly, I would like to refer to what my Kuwaiti colleague just said. As we worked on resolution 2334 (2016), we believed that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was indispensable to meeting the basic needs of Palestinian refugees. Germany is proud to have been the largest bilateral donor to UNRWA last year.

**Mr. Mabhongo** (South Africa): Let me begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing today.

In recent weeks, there have been worrying reports of an increase in the number of evictions, confiscations and demolitions of Palestinian property in both East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Homes and structures in the Palestinian neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem are being torn down and settlement activity continues throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. Since 2009, more than 6,100 Palestinian structures have been demolished, displacing more than 9,400 people. Since 2009, no action has been taken to address those injustices.

South Africa is particularly alarmed about the continuing excavation of land beneath the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, whose population is predominantly Palestinian. Such actions by the Israeli Government cannot be tolerated. It is the responsibility of the Security Council, as part of its duty to maintain international peace and security, condemn those actions and call on Israel to cease such actions with immediate effect. Israel's persistent violations of international law and resolutions cannot transpire without comment or action from the Security Council. The Security Council should uphold its United Nations Charter-mandated responsibilities and act accordingly.

Nelson Mandela stood unambiguously for the two-State solution, in accordance with international law, as captured in the resolutions of the Security Council, as well as in the decisions of the International Court of Justice. Tracing the history of South Africa and locating it in an interconnected world, Nelson Mandela said, "We know too well that our own freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians". Nelson Mandela was also a friend of children and youth. In that context, we would like to focus the rest of our statement on the plight of the youth in Palestine and the impact of the occupation on the lives of the new generation.

Palestinian young people comprise 27 per cent of the total Palestinian population. Demographic trends

indicate that, in the future, youth will constitute an ever-increasing proportion of Palestinian society. As a result of the long-standing occupation by the State of Israel, the daily reality facing the youth of Palestine is one of oppression, violence and deprivation.

Military checkpoints and the illegal separation wall have resulted in limited trade between Palestine and other countries, particularly within the region, which has reduced Palestinian employment opportunities and limited the movement of people and goods alike in and out of the West Bank and Gaza, all of which have detrimental impacts on both the social and economic welfare and the future of the youth of Palestine.

As a result of that alarming situation and driven by desperation, an increasing number of Palestinian young people are reconsidering their way of political involvement. At the same time, we note that Palestinian youth have positioned themselves at the forefront of the ongoing Great March of Return, where they have staged regular non-violent protests along the Gaza border, even while bearing the brunt of a violent and disproportionate Israeli response that has led to the deaths of more than 200 unarmed demonstrators. Such non-violent activities prove that Palestinian youth want to reclaim their legitimate aspirations in a considered and thoughtful manner. They demonstrate their ability to engage in peaceful activities to express their needs and hopes.

We should harness that opportunity to become the partners of Palestinian youth and acknowledge the role they can play as agents of change in resolving the crisis in their land. In that regard, we should also acknowledge the important role that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) plays in the lives of all Palestinians and, in particular, in the lives of young people. South Africa therefore welcomes the recent pledges made at the June pledging conference in support of UNRWA. We reaffirm that such humanitarian support creates conditions that contribute to easing the dire conditions of the Palestinian people. Children in the region — be they Palestinian, Israeli, Christian, Muslim or Jewish — all have the right to live in peace and security alongside one another.

In conclusion, as we mourn the untimely passing yesterday of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. Yukiya Amano, we praise his commitment to the Joint

Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The JCPOA is a comprehensive international agreement that adds much value to international peace and security. It enhances transparency. Through a series of reports by the IAEA, it also enhances confidence in the Iranian nuclear programme.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Middle East is at the heart of international politics and the region is plagued by a multitude of crises — old and new alike. In recent days, tensions have risen in the Persian Gulf. In our view, they are being artificially heightened. The crisis jeopardizes regional peace and security, as well as international efforts to settle regional conflicts. Amid an ongoing exchange of accusations, military presence is being built up, including by States beyond the region, which creates the risk of an armed confrontation. Any incident could spark a conflict with devastating consequences.

We call on all stakeholders to undertake measures to de-escalate the situation and resolve their problems through political and diplomatic means. Above all, that presupposes an end to ultimatums, sanctions and threats. It becomes all the more necessary to build a sustained mechanism for collective security in the region on the basis of equitable dialogue. The relevant Russian initiative is indeed geared towards breaking the deadlock in those conflicts and crafting confidence and oversight measures.

However, at the centre of the issues faced by the region is the Middle East settlement. For our part, we are sparing no effort to advance a settlement of the range of complex issues of the Middle East crisis and call on all stakeholders to do the same. We stand ready to host a meeting of the leaders of Israel and Palestine in that regard. We are taking steps to help restore inter-Palestinian unity and we welcome the efforts of our Egyptian colleagues to that end.

Proactive international action is required to alleviate the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. At the same time, any assistance to the area should be coordinated with the legitimate Palestinian authorities under President Abbas and must align with the task at hand of restoring Palestinian unity.

Against that backdrop, we must send a long-overdue Security Council mission to the region. It must be designed to build trust and facilitate the resumption of negotiations between the parties in order to prevent the collapse of efforts already undertaken by the international community to ensure conditions conducive to the implementation of the sole viable settlement based on international law. That basis was devised by the Security Council; that is the very international consensus, the lack of which was mentioned by the representative of the United States. This international consensus is international law because Security Council resolutions constitute international law; they simply need to be complied with. Any revision of this international consensus is also in the hands of the Security Council. The issue lies not in the absence of international consensus, but in the United States utter disregard for it. I wonder whether the representative of the United States understands how far he will get with such mediation, such an approach and such a foundation.

We reject the practice of monopolizing political and diplomatic efforts. We propose to return to the proven practice of multilateral efforts, including the involvement of the Middle Eastern Quartet of international mediators as a unique mechanism to advance a Middle East settlement. No unilateral steps can replace the key principles of a two-State solution, land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative, or change the status of the occupied territories, including the Syrian Golan.

We will continue to contribute to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The activities of UNRWA are not only humanitarian but also political in nature, given their important stabilization effect on the Palestinian territories and the countries of the Middle East.

Along with the Palestinian issue, new-generation regional crises are still awaiting resolution. The Counter-terrorism operations in Syria, with the participation of Russian aerospace forces, has helped to make headway in the fight against terrorism. The eradication of terrorist hotbeds in Syria is in the interests not only of Middle Eastern and North African States, but also of the countries of Europe, as it reduces the level of terrorist threats and the flow of migrants. President Putin's initiative to forge a broad anti-terrorism front remains relevant.

We are currently working to establish a political settlement in Syria in conjunction with the United Nations and within the framework of the Astana format. We are in favour of combining regional efforts. It is now critical to tackle issues of socioeconomic revival in the Syrian Arab Republic without preconditions. We must also solve problems related to refugees and abandon the practice of forcibly detaining them in third countries.

General attention is currently focused on the situation in Libya. We continue to believe that the only way to help the Libyan people extricate themselves from the crisis is by consolidating the positions of international players. The current situation reflects the consequences of foreign military interventions. Although intended to oust an undesirable regime, they lead to the total dismantling of statehood. We urge all Libyan stakeholders to cooperate with the United Nations and to refrain from advancing a unilateral agenda, and call on external players to play by the rules.

The Libyan crisis has led to the emergence of new phenomena, such as migratory waves. However, this problem should not be solved by combating migrant flows, but rather by creating acceptable living conditions for them in their homelands. Such an approach is equally relevant in relation to Yemen, where all parties must act under the unifying initiatives of the United Nations in order to achieve a political settlement and revive statehood.

The recent Security Council mission to the Middle East demonstrated that Iraq requires close international attention and assistance in many areas of sociopolitical life. Another important outcome of the mission was the clear signal to us all that regional parties need to contribute to the de-escalation of the situation in the Persian Gulf. No one wants or needs a war there.

Russia maintains friendly and constructive relations with all countries of the region without exception. We will actively contribute to stabilizing the situation in the Middle East and stand ready to act with all interested parties to do so. We call on all to engage in collective efforts.

**Ms. Wronecka (Poland):** At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her comprehensive briefing.

Allow me also to align myself with the statement to be delivered later by the representative of Croatia on behalf of the European Union member States.

Despite our constant calls for the resumption of meaningful negotiations between the parties and the restoration of the political horizon for the resolution of the conflict, we have not witnessed any progress at all. On the contrary, the situation on the ground is becoming extremely worrisome. Recent developments in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank remind us of the looming threat of a full-scale escalation, which should be avoided at all costs.

The priority of the international community should be to restore a political horizon for the resumption of a meaningful peace process. We believe that a negotiated two-State solution and a resolution of all final status issues, including Jerusalem, settlements, the future of Palestinian refugees, borders and security arrangements remain the only way to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of both parties and achieve long-term peace.

We continue to support the essential agreed parameters that are based on respect for international principles and international law. The parameters for the resolution of the conflict are well known and internationally recognized and have been set out in detail on numerous occasions by our delegation. We appeal to both sides to refrain from unilateral steps that prejudge the outcome of final-status negotiations and expect them to demonstrate, through their actions and policies, their commitment to peace. We condemn all acts of violence, terrorism and incitement to violence and hate, which are fundamentally incompatible with advancing a peaceful two-State solution.

We still believe that it is only by returning to meaningful bilateral negotiations, based on international law and the relevant resolutions, which encapsulate internationally agreed parameters, that it will be possible to make a positive contribution to the process. That is the only path towards a two-State solution and the resolution of all final-status issues. Regrettably, the situation on the ground continues to deteriorate, with the two-State solution in effect continuing to be dismantled piece by piece, in particular by the relentless expansion of settlements. Currently, we are very close to the point at which the establishment of a viable Palestinian State would be difficult, if not impossible.

Poland's position on the Israeli settlement policy in the occupied Palestinian territory is clear and remains unchanged. It is also the European Union's well-known stand. All settlement activity is illegal under international law. Not only does it erode the viability

of the two-State solution and the prospects for a lasting peace, but it is an obstacle to peace.

In addition to actions aimed at advancing settlements, the demolition of Palestinian property by Israeli authorities, the forced transfer of residents and attempts to legalize West Bank outposts continue to severely undermine the possibility of a viable two-State solution. In this context, we are very worried about the planned demolitions of the Palestinian villages of Khan Al-Ahmar and Sur Bahir, and we again ask Israel to entirely abandon these plans entirely.

We are closely following Egyptian-led discussions on intra-Palestinian reconciliation and hope that the process will be successful. Accordingly, we urge all Palestinian factions to work together to achieve sustainable progress and allow the Palestinian Authority to resume its full responsibilities in Gaza. A single and legitimate Palestinian Authority is a crucial element for the unity of a future Palestinian State and a basis for a sustainable peace agreement.

In conclusion, let me underline the role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in the region. We praise the international community's collective efforts to allow UNRWA to fulfil its mandate of providing essential relief, development and protection services to Palestinian refugees and those displaced by the conflict. In our opinion, UNRWA remains a key contributor that provides humanitarian assistance, stability and security to the region.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing.

The current situation in the Middle East is unstable. Uncertainties have visibly increased. As for the hotspot issues in the region, the international community must remain committed to a political solution, promote dialogue and negotiation, undertake a constructive approach to manage the situation and take into account the legitimate rights and interests of the parties concerned.

The issue of Palestine lies at the heart of the situation in the Middle East. It is at the root of all issues related to the Middle East region. Upholding the legitimate rights and interests of the Palestinian people is the joint responsibility of the international community.

At present, the Middle East peace process is deadlocked, while inflammatory words and actions

are escalating. The construction of settlements and the demolition of Palestinian structures continues, and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is deepening. China is deeply worried about these trends. I therefore wish to stress the following points.

First, resolution 2334 (2016) should be effectively implemented. The recent clash in the village of Sur Baher in Jerusalem has drawn heightened international attention. The relevant parties should immediately halt the demolition of Palestinian houses and the destruction of Palestinian property, cease all settlement activities in the occupied territories and take measures to prevent violence against civilians. All legal actions and unilateral initiatives aimed at legalizing settlements must end immediately, and concrete steps must be taken to eliminate their practical effects on the ground so as to avoid weakening the prospect of a two-State solution.

Secondly, we must champion multilateralism and uphold fairness and justice by promoting a comprehensive, just and durable solution. The two-State solution is the only viable way to resolve the issues between Palestine and Israel. The Arab Peace Initiative, the principle of land for peace and the relevant Council resolutions offer fundamental parameters for resolving the conflict and should underpin the international community's efforts to promote a prompt resumption of negotiations between the two parties with a view to establishing, ultimately, a fully sovereign Palestinian State, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Any new initiative should respect these basic international guidelines, and all countries that have major influence in the Middle East region should play a constructive role in bringing about the necessary conditions for the resumption of talks.

Thirdly, close attention must be paid to improving the economic and humanitarian situation in Palestine. China once again expresses its concern about the withholding of the tax revenue collected on behalf of Palestine and calls upon the parties concerned to honour their obligations under the relevant international treaties, including the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, fully implement the relevant Council resolutions and swiftly and completely lift the Gaza blockade. The international community should continue to enhance its support of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, with a view to improving the humanitarian conditions of Palestinian refugees.

China has already announced that it will increase its annual contribution to the Agency to \$1 million this year. We will also provide support to the Palestinian people through bilateral channels, including assistance projects for the Palestinian refugees in the countries of the region.

**Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the members of the European Union.

At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing.

The situation on the ground is deteriorating day by day with the continuing colonization policy as one of its main catalysts. This policy, together with such measures as forced displacements, expulsions and demolitions, is illegal under international law.

We condemn the destruction on 4 July of the facilities of an Oxfam humanitarian project funded by Belgium in the village of Khirbet Ad-Duqaiqah, which included three water tanks and at least 2,500 trees. The project supported three communities and sought to expand land use through the rehabilitation of water supplies and pasture-management techniques. Some 35 families were affected by the destruction, 63 per cent of whom were young people. This is not empty rhetoric or sloganeering, but simple facts. Belgium notes that the destruction of property and objects necessary for the survival of civilians is contrary to international human rights law.

In the same vein, we condemn the recent demolitions and evictions in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, as well as the massive demolitions of buildings yesterday in the community of Sur Baher, mostly located in Areas A and B of the West Bank, but on the west side of the separation wall. These demolitions illustrate once again the pressure brought to bear on the Palestinian presence in and around East Jerusalem. They contribute to a significant change in the demographic character of the city of Jerusalem, which is detrimental to negotiations on its final status as the capital of the two States. The continued pursuit of this policy calls into question the prospect of a two-State solution.

Another immediate concern is the financial crisis of the Palestinian Authority. We expect the economic and budgetary agreements between Israel and the

Palestinian Authority to be fully implemented, including Israel's obligations under the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. In the meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority must continue to accept tax transfers on a provisional basis, which in no way constitutes a legal or political endorsement of Israeli deductions.

The security situation in Gaza continues to be a source of concern for us. We call on the parties to continue to exercise the utmost restraint and respect the ceasefire reached thanks to the efforts of Egypt and the United Nations Special Coordinator.

A political, comprehensive and lasting solution must be found to the social, economic and humanitarian crisis in Gaza. That implies a fundamental change that includes, in particular, the lifting of the blockade and the opening of crossing points, while taking into account Israel's legitimate security concerns. A political solution to the current crisis also requires the return of control of this territory to the Palestinian Authority. We call on the parties to resume constructive dialogue and welcome the Egyptian and Russian efforts to that end.

Last month, the United States presented a series of economic measures, entitled "Peace to Prosperity", at a workshop hosted by Bahrain in Manama. During the presentation of the plan, we took note of the recognition of the need to incorporate the proposed measures in a political plan. Indeed, as we have already stressed, peace can be comprehensive, just and lasting only if it meets the legitimate aspirations of each of the parties to make its national destiny a reality in peace and security within a stabilized region. The vision towards which the international community must work is in fact the coexistence of two States with Jerusalem as their future respective capitals, in accordance with internationally agreed parameters — and, yes, those parameters have been internationally agreed. This approach can be supported by economic measures, but these economic measures cannot replace a political solution. An end to the occupation, free access for Palestinians to their lands and resources, freedom of movement and access to the whole territory and the ability to integrate into the regional market are essential to enable the Palestinian economy to fully develop.

In conclusion, it is high time for the parties to resume the path of dialogue and endeavour to build peace. We are convinced that this is in the clear interest

of both the Israelis and the Palestinians. In this context, Belgium reiterates the key role of the Security Council as the guarantor for any comprehensive, just and lasting solution, in line with its previous resolutions and full respect for international law. As was eloquently stated by the Permanent Representative of Germany, we believe in international law and that it must be respected. Belgium will continue to work to that end in the Council and jointly with our Palestinian and Israeli friends.

**Mr. Ipo** (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the holding of today's briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. We thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, for her briefing, which shed light on the challenges that must be overcome to achieve peace and stability in the region.

The stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian crisis is a source of serious concern for Côte d'Ivoire, owing to the recurrent violence and the failure of the international community's many peace initiatives. The outbreaks of violence have, over the years, eroded the possibility of a compromise without which lasting peace is not possible and have contributed to the gradual deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation.

My country has always advocated the peaceful settlement of disputes through dialogue and calls again on all parties to give peace a chance, as they did when negotiating the Oslo Accords. In this regard, the international community must be relentless in pursuing mediation efforts in order to achieve the unconditional resumption of negotiations among the various parties.

Côte d'Ivoire would like to reaffirm its commitment to the security of the State of Israel and the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and, consequently, its support for the two-State solution and the peaceful coexistence of two States based on the 1967 borders. The resumption of dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians therefore appears to be much more than a necessity: it is above all a political and security emergency, the achievement of which would help to prevent further outbreaks of violence.

As with the current political impasse and its security consequences, the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories remains a matter of concern. Youth unemployment, the depletion of medicine, the lack of water and electricity, particularly in hospitals

and other public facilities, and insufficient fuel reserves for the desalination of sea water that supplies Gaza City are all vulnerabilities that can push segments of the population to despair and radicalization. This situation could deteriorate further if the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which provides assistance to more than 3 million Palestinians, does not regain a level of financing that will enable it to meet the needs of populations in distress. My country therefore welcomes the holding of the annual donor conference, on 25 June in New York, and endorses the Secretary-General's call for resource mobilization to close the approximately \$211 million deficit in UNRWA's annual budget.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire reaffirms its conviction that dialogue remains the only path to a lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. It therefore urges the international community to do more to bring both sides back to the negotiating table with a view to achieving a compromise that can help to restore lasting peace and stability in the region.

**Mr. Esono Mbengono** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank the delegation of Peru for including today's important debate on the agenda of its presidency. I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, for her detailed and informative briefing. We also welcome the presence of the delegation of Israel, as well as the other delegations that have inscribed their names on the list of speakers today.

The situation in the Middle East has always been a matter of great concern for the Republic of Equatorial Guinea. We regret that, despite the various initiatives put forth, the major financial support offered and the series of peacekeeping operations deployed to the region, the United Nations and the international community have not been able to achieve a sustainable solution to the political problems caused by the conflicts and wars in various parts of the region. This decade is coming to an end, and the future of the people of Syria, Yemen and Libya remains uncertain. Millions of people in these countries and other parts of the region are living under the threat of weapons, awaiting the day when the differences among their politicians will dissolve and a sustainable solution that enables the positive coexistence and the development of their respective populations will be found.

With regard to the issue facing Israelis and Palestinians, with clear consequences for the entire region, my delegation regrets that there has been no significant change or progress recently. Last year was quite incendiary, starting with the Great March of Return, and this dynamic of insecurity continued into the first half of this year, aggravated mainly by the acts of insurgency in Gaza, led by Hamas, and by concrete political measures taken by Israel early in this year with respect to such issues as the non-renewal of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron and the withholding of taxes and tariffs for the Palestinian National Authority. All of that has only exacerbated hatred and encouraged violence between the parties.

As we enter the second half of the year, we call on the parties to refrain from taking unilateral actions that incite violence. As we have said on other occasions, the conflict has gone through worse times, with very bloody and destructive scenes. But this horrific history has not succeeded in guaranteeing the security desired by Israelis, nor has it facilitated the establishment of a Palestinian State recognized by Israel. Violence is therefore not and never will be the best option for resolving that dispute between the two parties.

As of 2016, according to a study conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, a majority of Israelis and Palestinians would prefer two States as a means of resolving the conflict over any other solution. Moreover, a considerable majority of the Jewish population believes that the Palestinian demand for the creation of an independent State is just and that Israel can accept the establishment of such a State.

Most Palestinians and Israelis see the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as the ideal place for a hypothetical Palestinian State in a two-State solution. However, there are important areas of disagreement over the form of a final agreement, as well as over the level of credibility that each side sees in the other.

The results of that scientific exploration coincide with the vision of the United Nations on the issue. My delegation has always shown its commitment to the decisions of this Organization. The resolutions of both the Security Council and the General Assembly must be the point of reference for Israelis and Palestinians, as well as for any other international actor that wishes to contribute to finding a just solution to the conflict.

Equatorial Guinea therefore advocates for the two-State solution to be negotiated directly between the Israelis and the Palestinians within the framework of the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. A just solution through dialogue may mean that neither of the parties will have all their aspirations and claims met, which is indeed one of the essential components of dialogue. The definitive status of Jerusalem must be resolved in such negotiations.

Equatorial Guinea believes the historical claims of the Palestinians to be just, in accordance with the various pronouncements of the African Union on the matter. But we also think that Israel has every right to live in peace and security. Both Palestine and Israel must therefore respect each other's right to existence and avoid any action that could further aggravate the situation.

I cannot conclude without expressing our concern for the 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip whose living conditions still require the return of the Palestinian National Authority to that enclave. The delegation of Equatorial Guinea underscores in that regard the importance of the international community continuing to support the efforts of Egypt and the United Nations in support of intra-Palestinian reconciliation. The countries with influence in the region must exercise that influence in the quest for a just and lasting solution.

We call on the international community to continue to fund the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the economic situation of which still needs strengthening, so that it can better perform its vital role.

**Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom): I would like to start, if I may, on a different topic. I would like to join the Secretary-General in expressing our deep sadness at the passing of Mr. Yukiya Amano, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency. I would like to pay tribute to Mr. Amano's tireless work in the pursuit of peace, and we send our deepest condolences to Japan and his family and friends.

Turning to today's debate, I would like to begin, as others have done, by talking about the recent Peace to Prosperity conference that was held in Bahrain at the end of June. The United States efforts to support the development of the Palestinian economy are very welcome. It is crucial that we improve the daily life and

prospects of Palestinians across East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza.

For the United Kingdom, we are doubling the United Kingdom's aid to the occupied Palestinian territories between 2018 and 2023. We are helping to address restrictions on movement and access and improving water and energy supply, particularly in Gaza. We also support efforts that complement that work.

As others have noted, it is, of course, essential that political progress be made in order to unlock economic opportunities, and we encourage the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to engage in work with the international community to foster solutions that actively improve the situation on the ground. What Mr. Greenblatt said on the political aspect of the proposals was a welcome assurance.

For the record, the United Kingdom's position on the two-State solution remains unchanged. But in the interim until there is political progress, I just wanted to stress that steps need to be taken to address the constraints imposed on the Palestinian economy by the Israeli occupation. We want to see increasing external trade opportunities for the Palestinians, a reduction in internal movement and access restrictions and sustainable investments in water and energy infrastructure. We also want the financial sustainability of the Palestinian Authority to be realized.

Looking towards fresh negotiations, it is obviously essential to build a conducive environment, which means that we need genuine and committed engagement from both parties, including the end of actions that undermine trust and threaten the viability of the two-State solution.

We therefore urge the Palestinian Authority to address allegations of incitement, including in the education curriculum, and to make reforms to prisoner payments, ensuring that those are needs based, transparent and affordable. We remain deeply concerned, as also reflected in the statements of other speakers today, about the ongoing advance of Israeli settlements, including the more than 200 units established in Gilo on 10 July, and about the retroactive approvals of unauthorized settlement outposts. Settlements are illegal and they undermine the physical viability of a future Palestinian State. Settler violence, the demolition of Palestinian property and evictions of Palestinians from their homes should be opposed and condemned wholeheartedly.

The demolition since Sunday of a number of Palestinian properties in the Sur Baher area of Jerusalem governorate are particularly egregious, in part because much of the area lies in Palestinian Authority-controlled areas. We also condemn the eviction of the Siam family in Silwan on 10 July. The Israeli authorities have a responsibility to provide appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population. We remain deeply concerned by suggestions that any parts of the occupied Palestinian territories should be annexed. Such a move would be contrary to international law, destructive to peace efforts and could not pass unchallenged.

Let me be clear about our views on terrorism. We equally condemn in the strongest terms Hamas terrorism and that of other militant groups in Gaza. Since the start of the Great March of Return in 2018, there have been nearly 2,000 rockets and mortar shells fired from the Gaza Strip into Israel. That is completely unacceptable and we call on Hamas and other militant groups to cease such attacks immediately.

We recognize Israel's legitimate security needs. However, we do have concerns about the excessive use of force by the Israel Defense Forces. Measures used need to be appropriate and in line with international law. Accountability needs to be sought through swift transparent investigations and we welcome the investigations currently being pursued by Israel, under the Military Advocate General.

I would like to join others in expressing the United Kingdom's gratitude to the United Nations and Egypt for their efforts to mediate between the parties. Echoing what the Under-Secretary-General said, we also encourage those involved in the reconciliation process to allow the Palestinian Authority to fully resume its Government functions in Gaza.

We believe that it is essential that the international community continue work to support Palestinian refugees. Their status needs to be agreed on as part of wider peace negotiations, but until that time, the United Kingdom remains firmly committed to supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and refugees across the Middle East. We also welcome the successful outcome of the pledging conference on 25 June, for which we were able to include an additional \$25 million of United Kingdom funding, increasing our 2019-2020 support to over \$70 million.

I just wanted to pick up on something the German representative said about international law. We share his view that the Security Council is responsible for maintaining international peace and security and we all agree that the Arab-Israeli conflict is a threat to international peace and security. It is therefore right that we have adopted resolutions on that topic. We are bound by those resolutions and we all have a responsibility to implement them, just as we do to implement resolutions on other topics. Indeed, that is the very basis of the Council's work.

I was also asked by the Israeli representative about the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. So, although I did not want to talk about Iran today, let me just address that point, if I may. Together with France and Germany, the United Kingdom is urging Iran not to take further steps away from the agreement and to return to compliance. The agreement itself allows for that.

On the general point, we are clear that the nuclear agreement is still the best option and in the interests of both Iranian and global security. It is critical that Iran does not develop nuclear weapons and that agreement makes the world a safer place by taking the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran off the table. Indeed, military representatives in some of the countries that criticized the agreement have confirmed its role in national and international security. I alluded earlier to the sad passing away of Mr. Amano; the International Atomic Energy Agency plays a critical part in looking at compliance with the agreement.

Let me return to the Middle East peace process, if I may. As I said, our position remains unchanged. We support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian State based on the 1967 borders, with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both States and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees.

**Ms. Blandino de Los Santos** (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would also like to thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo for her informative briefing.

The Dominican Republic acknowledges the collective effort of the international community to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) at its annual international donor conference, held on 25 June in New York City. Representatives of States and

institutions unanimously praised the Agency's role in preserving the rights and dignity of Palestinian refugees. We applaud UNRWA staff for the commitment to offer support for the human development of 5.4 million Palestinian refugees in the Near East.

On another note, in 2016 the Security Council adopted resolution 2334 (2016), which asks all parties to put an end to territorial claims, to respect sovereignty and to liberate the occupied territories. Unfortunately, since then, the situation has not changed. The reality is that the occupation has expanded illegally without any consequences, thus preventing peace from drawing nearer.

We note with concern the large increase in demolitions in the West Bank, particularly in East Jerusalem. Those demolitions create a coercive environment for the inhabitants, which could lead to the forced relocation of the population that is being affected. It is particularly disconcerting that the work of human rights organizations has been restricted through the reduction of civic space, especially in Gaza, where the humanitarian situation remains critical and where their work is therefore indispensable.

The Dominican Republic continues to defend the existing international consensus that the only way forward for the Palestinians and Israelis is to negotiate a two-State solution, with negotiated borders based on the 1967 lines. We reiterate that the main objective should be the restoration of a political horizon for the resumption of a meaningful peace process that puts people at its centre and is consistent with international law.

Regarding the Palestinian attacks against Israel, the Dominican Republic maintains its position. We strongly condemn any type of violence and call on Hamas and the other groups to put an end to their instigation and related operations. Finally, we urge all parties involved to work together to open the doors of negotiation and to avoid acts of provocation and inflammatory rhetoric. We are convinced that the work of international organizations is essential to alleviate and reduce the risks of violence and to seek a solution to the current unfortunate situation.

**Mr. De Rivi re** (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset I should like to join others in offering my condolences to Japan and to the Secretary-General, following the passing of Mr. Amano, who was an outstanding leader of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

I would now like to thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing, which provided us with a concise update on the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

I will focus my remarks today on the threats to the two-State solution and the urgent need for the international community to reaffirm the agreed parameters of the political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. First, I wish to comment on the worrying deterioration of the situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

France condemned yesterday the demolition by the Israeli army of several buildings in the district of Wadi Al-Homs, located in the south-east of Jerusalem. Those demolitions in occupied territories are contrary to international law, in particular international humanitarian law and the relevant Council resolutions. They are occurring for the first time in Areas A and B, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority under the Oslo Accords, and they represent a dangerous precedent that directly undermines the two-State solution. France regrets that the Israeli Government has not heeded the calls of the international community to not proceed with the demolition and solemnly calls on it to suspend the ongoing demolitions as soon as possible.

In the same vein, the policy of colonization under which these demolitions fall continues unabated in East Jerusalem and the West Bank and brings us close to the point of no return. Since the beginning of the year, more than 4,500 new housing units have been approved in the West Bank. In Jerusalem, colonization activities, in particular the implementation of archaeological projects and the increase in the number of demolitions, are continuing and are cause for grave concern. That policy is all the more disturbing because it is compounded by troubling statements about the annexation of all or part of the occupied territories.

France recalls that colonization is contrary to international law, as reaffirmed in resolution 2334 (2016). It contributes to the agitation of tensions on the ground and undermines the conditions for a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, based on the two-State solution with Jerusalem as capital. France does not recognize any Israeli sovereignty over any of the occupied territories. In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, we also consider unlawful the acquisition of territory by force, whether in Jerusalem, the West Bank or the Golan Heights.

I would like to come back to the deteriorating security, humanitarian and political situation in Gaza, which continues to be a source of great concern. Clashes at the end of last week, which left more than 100 Palestinian protesters injured, highlight the persistence and the extent of the crisis we are facing in Gaza. Everything must be done to provide a humanitarian and political response and to prevent the risk of escalation. We once again call on the parties to exercise the utmost restraint and commend in that regard the efforts of Egypt, Qatar and the United Nations to avoid the worst-case scenario.

In such a precarious context, mobilizing the support of the international community for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is more critical than ever. The 25 June donor conference has enabled the Agency to use recent funds to ensure the continuity of its assistance programmes, especially in Gaza this summer.

France has already announced that it will double its contribution to UNRWA in 2019, as it did in 2018. I urge all donors to maintain or increase their contribution to UNRWA to enable it to continue its programmes, in particular to ensure the start of the school year, and to reaffirm their support for UNRWA's three-year renewal this fall.

In addition to the issue of humanitarian support, lasting stability in Gaza will be achieved only through a negotiated settlement, which involves on the one hand the full return of the Palestinian Authority and on the other the lifting of the blockade while ensuring credible security guarantees for Israel.

Finally, the future of Gaza cannot be separated from the goal of the establishment of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

In conclusion, I once again reaffirm the validity of the parameters agreed by the international community for the two-State solution. As we are aware, the solution to the conflict is fundamentally a political one, defined by well-established parameters, while fulfilling the legitimate aspirations of both sides — the establishment of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and within secure and recognized borders, with Jerusalem as the capital. France stands ready to support all efforts, including economic initiatives, as long as they adhere to the guidelines that we have developed together and international law,

in particular in accordance with all relevant Security Council resolutions.

The establishment of a viable and independent Palestinian State is the key condition for Palestine's economic take-off and also for building a stronger and integrated regional economy. Economic peace cannot replace the search for a political settlement. Any attempt to deviate from those collectively defined parameters would be doomed to failure.

Together with its European partners, France will continue to defend the principle of a just and lasting peace, based on parameters agreed by the international community, and to support the Palestinian presence in Jerusalem and in all the Palestinian territories in order to preserve the two-State solution. In addition, France will never compromise on ensuring Israel's security.

**Mr. Djani** (Indonesia): Let me also offer our condolences on the passing of Mr. Amano to the people of Japan and his family.

I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her valuable briefing.

Our position is quite clear on this very important issue. I will therefore focus primarily on the latest developments.

We continue to be alarmed by the unceasing provocations of the occupying Power, including its destabilizing actions and violations of the situation and status of Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. I wish to reiterate three important points in that regard.

The first concerns the two-State solution and actions that undermine it. We reaffirm that solution, based on the 1967 lines, with Palestine and Israel living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition and in conformity with relevant United Nations resolutions. The international community must not budge an inch from that platform and position.

Our objective must remain the realization of the two States and the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as negotiated outcomes for all final status issues. Any action that contravenes that platform must be rejected. For that reason, Indonesia strongly condemns Israel's illegal construction and inauguration of the underground tunnel and path towards Al-Haram Al-Sharif, as clearly articulated at the extraordinary meeting of the

Organization of Islamic Cooperation held last week in Jeddah.

That is undoubtedly a clear violation of relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 476 (1980) and 2334 (2016). Together with the illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, the construction of tunnels can also be seen as a de facto annexation.

The Council must defend the status and character of the Old City of Jerusalem and its walls. That is the obligation of the Council itself. We also strongly condemn yesterday's arrogant, illegal and inhumane pre-dawn destruction of Palestinian homes, including occupied family homes, in the communities of Wadi Al-Hummus and Sur Baher in the West Bank. Is it possible to imagine one's house being demolished in front of one's children's eyes, as the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine showed us earlier in the glaring photo? I cannot imagine my house being demolished.

That is a further reason why the Council must act in defence of its resolutions and the Palestinian people. We must stop turning in circles or else we run the risk of spiralling into the pit of oblivion.

My second point concerns the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Given the continued use by the occupying Power of the negative policies of restriction of movement, arbitrary detentions, the use of force and the multiple-year blockade of Gaza, it is no surprise that the humanitarian conditions have continued to deteriorate. Israel also continues to withhold tax revenues of the Palestinian Authority. Let me stress again that we cannot question the Authority's refusal to accept any transfer that is less than the full amount owed to it and we must demand that Israel not take what is not Israel's.

With regard to the role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, we once again appeal to the international community to continue to ensure reliable and sustainable funding for the Agency's life-saving services. An agency that has carried out many years of public service for humankind and demonstrated impartiality and the best of intentions should be supported by us all.

Thirdly, I wish to comment on the need to strengthen Palestinian economic capacity. It is of the greatest importance that we work towards the optimal

economic capacity of Palestinians, but we caution that economic assistance cannot be used as a substitute for a final political settlement since that could be exploited by the occupying Power to gain time to advance its agenda, including its settlements, thereby making a solution more and more difficult to achieve.

Indonesia continues to work through various mechanisms to try to strengthen the economic capacity of Palestine. Earlier this month in Jericho, Indonesia and other East Asian countries met at the fourth Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development in order to strengthen efforts to support Palestine through economic and trade cooperation and joint investments. We encourage other members of the international community to consider similar undertakings in the interest of humankind.

As I promised, my statement will not be long since many of our points have already been alluded to many times in our previous statements. I would, however, like to address one important issue.

This morning we heard a statement that made the point that the status of Jerusalem will be not be resolved in this Chamber or any capital, but through direct negotiation between the two parties, as well as an appeal to create a conducive environment.

But how does one create a conducive environment when illegal settlements continue, when buildings are being demolished before children's eyes, when a nine-year-old Palestinian boy can be shot by Israeli authorities and when arbitrary detentions and many other human rights violations persist? How can one achieve peace when one does not believe in international law and international humanitarian law? And if we do not believe in international law and Security Council resolutions, then let us all together throw the beautiful Charter of the United Nations into the East River.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I will now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Peru.

I would also like to extend our condolences to the people and the Government of Japan following the death of Mr. Amano, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Our country is deeply concerned about the developments surrounding the question of Palestine. We deplore the persistent hostile environment, the indiscriminate violence of Hamas, the disproportionate Israeli response and the confrontational rhetoric on both

sides. It all creates an unsustainable and destabilizing situation for the Middle East and the international community. We must deplore the fact that unilateral decisions and actions have led to an even greater escalation of tensions and violence, including the recurrent and growing practices of settlement-building, demolitions and evictions in occupied Palestinian territories. Those actions contravene the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016) and make the prospects for the two-State solution increasingly uncertain.

We are duly alarmed by the political and social impact of the ongoing demolition of Palestinian homes in Sur Baher. We echo the Organization's calls for the Israeli authorities to stop those acts and instead implement planning policies that meet the housing and development needs of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories.

We also underscore the urgent need to pursue efforts to address the serious humanitarian crisis in Gaza, which has been exacerbated by funding cuts to assistance programmes and the unilateral decision of the Government of Israel to withhold a significant amount of Palestinian tax revenue. In such dramatic circumstances, we encourage the international community to increase its financial contributions and the United Nations to continue to align humanitarian assistance with development plans that offer hope and opportunities to the youngest in order to divert them from radicalization and extremism. We hope that the global investment fund outlined in Bahrain and a strengthened United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East will also contribute to that end.

We believe that the urgent relief of human suffering must be complemented by a renewed commitment by the parties to the peace process and the resumption of negotiations leading to a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. That will require Palestinian and Israeli political, religious and social leaders and authorities to conduct themselves responsibly and with prudence and restraint and to promote the re-establishment of high-level dialogue that will allow their respective peoples and the entire Middle East to move towards lasting peace.

To that end, we underscore the special responsibility that lies with the Council and countries with real influence over the parties, which can and must do more to ensure that the parties resume bilateral negotiations,

strictly respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights and support the efforts of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process to promote the easing of tensions.

I would also like to briefly address developments in the Strait of Hormuz, an area that is crucial to the global economy and to global security. Peru notes with deep concern the military actions that occurred in recent weeks, which pose a major threat to the stability of the region and to international peace. We urge all actors involved to exercise restraint in those dangerous circumstances, avoid any unilateral act that could trigger a conflict in that troubled part of the world and return to diplomatic channels as the only possible way out of the current impasse. We encourage the Secretary-General's good offices to reduce current tensions and build the confidence needed, in line with the powers granted to him by the Charter of the United Nations.

I shall now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The representative of Equatorial Guinea has requested the floor to make a further statement.

**Mr. Esono Mbengono** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the start of my statement, I welcomed one of the parties and neglected to greet the delegation of Palestine. I would like to rectify that now by welcoming the delegation of Palestine. I apologize for the omission.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to inform everyone that today's open debate will continue during the lunch hour as there are many names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

**Ms. Mudallali** (Lebanon): I thank you, Mr. President, for holding today's debate and congratulate you on a successful presidency of the Council this month.

Before I deliver my prepared statement, I would like to address the accusations that the Israeli Ambassador directed against Lebanon. Taking into account Israel's history of invading Lebanon, the Lebanese see those accusations as direct threats to their peace and civilian infrastructure. If the Israeli Ambassador is using those statements to divert attention from the miserable situation that Israel's occupation has created for the Palestinians, that is nothing new. But if he is using them to prepare the ground and the international

community for an attack on Lebanon's civilian port and airport and its infrastructure, as Israel did in 2006, the Council should not remain silent but should uphold its responsibility to prevent Israel from launching another war on Lebanon. The last thing Lebanon and the region need now is another war.

I shall now deliver my statement. We are meeting at a time of heightened tensions in the Middle East. There is a sense of despair and hopelessness due to protracted conflicts and decades of occupation. Nowhere is that hopelessness more vivid than on the question of Palestine. We are witnessing not only a lack of progress towards peace, but also the roll-back of the principles and foundation of real, equitable peace, namely, United Nations resolutions and the application of international law:

The situation on the ground for Palestinians continues to deteriorate, especially in Jerusalem and Gaza, where international humanitarian organizations describe it as getting worse by the day. The continued Israeli occupation and its illegal measures — closures, arbitrary detentions, the demolition of homes, the expansion of settlements and depriving Palestinians of their basic human and political rights — have rendered the situation unbearable. The international community should uphold its responsibility not only to Palestinians, but also, and more importantly, to ensure that the Council fulfils the principles that the Organization was founded upon and stop those actions. The dire humanitarian situation is made worse by the difficulties that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East faces in terms of funding, which puts hundreds of thousands of Palestinian livelihoods at stake in the occupied territories and around the region.

At the political level, the much-awaited peace plan is still promised, but its opening phase, in the form of an economic conference, was met with disappointment and condemnation by most of the parties, especially the Palestinians, because of the lack of a political horizon. Palestinians and Arabs want the right recipe for just, comprehensive and lasting peace. They regard the Arab Peace Initiative and the two-State solution as the best bases for a political solution to the conflict — a solution based on international legality, resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 2234 (2016), with a Palestinian State living in peace and security with East Jerusalem as its capital. That was reiterated at the most recent meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation

Foreign Ministers this month, which condemned Israeli attempts at “altering Jerusalem's legal character, status and demographic makeup”.

In Syria, Israel continues its policy of entrenching its occupation and annexation of the Golan Heights with impunity. Lebanon is concerned and troubled by that Israeli policy to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Golan Heights. Lebanon calls on Israel to implement resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 497 (1981) and the Geneva Conventions in their entirety.

The Lebanese Government has made progress since the last quarterly debate in the Council (see S/PV.8517). Its Cabinet approved the 2019 budget — the first step in the financial reform programme of the Government to fulfil its obligations under the CEDRE conference on economic development and reform. The electricity plan was also approved by the Cabinet and Parliament. Discussions on our capital investment programme for the rehabilitation of infrastructure have begun as well. The Government demonstrated its firm commitment to the human rights agenda by appointing the members of our national preventive mechanism against torture.

Lebanon is grateful for the continuous support of its long-standing international partners, whether economically or in relation to its peace and security agenda. The Security Council held consultations yesterday on resolution 1701 (2006), one of the pillars of its peace and security agenda in the south, where the Council heard from the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/574) that the situation in the area of operations is calm. Calm is exactly what is needed in the region. This would not have been possible without the help of the United Nations and UNIFIL forces.

During a visit to the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force last week, the Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri reaffirmed both his and the Government's commitment to resolutions 1701 (2006) and 2433 (2018). The Prime Minister stressed that he was fully dedicated to further developing the capacities of the Lebanese navy in fulfilment of Lebanon's obligations under these resolutions. He announced that he was fully briefed on the plan to increase Lebanese naval capabilities and vowed to do his utmost to have it endorsed by the Cabinet. The strengthening of the Lebanese Armed Forces' capability and building a naval force will enable

them, as the Prime Minister said, to slowly assume their responsibility in support of UNIFIL.

The United States used its good offices to reach an agreement on starting talks on the delineation of the maritime and land borders between Lebanon and Israel. Although these negotiations have not yet produced the desired outcome, which could lead to the start of these talks, the Prime Minister has vowed to work relentlessly to initiate these negotiations.

Unfortunately, the Lebanese commitment to resolution 1701 (2006) and to respecting its obligations under other relevant resolutions is met with daily Israeli violations of Lebanese territory by land, air and sea. This month has already witnessed tens of violations, especially by warplanes and military boats, terrifying the population. On the border, Israel continues to build on Lebanese occupied territories in what are called reservation points. These violations are a source of tension and instability and lead to increased fragility along the border. They must end.

The situation in the Middle East will remain a source of conflict as long as Security Council and General Assembly resolutions are ignored and human and political rights are denied. The Council can and must change that reality if the region is to live in peace.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Namibia.

**Mr. Gertze** (Namibia): Allow me, at the outset, to join others in expressing our deepest sympathies on the passing of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency and, in particular, to his bereaved loved ones.

I also wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your successful presidency of the Council for the month of July. I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs for her comprehensive and detailed briefing.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the Permanent Representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Last month, in his presentation on behalf of the Secretary-General of the tenth report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) to the Security Council (see S/PV.8557), Mr. Mladenov once again underscored that no concrete steps had been taken to implement that historic resolution. Notably,

settlement activity has continued in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, with Israeli authorities advancing, approving or tendering nearly 6,000 housing units — the largest settlement advancement in two years. I take this opportunity to reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law and represent an obstacle to peace. Furthermore, the demolition and seizure of Palestinian-owned structures by Israeli authorities also continue throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. We firmly condemn the demolition of dozens of Palestinians homes in the Palestinian village of Sur Baher yesterday.

The security situation in Gaza remains particularly tense and, as the past has shown, the situation could flare up at any moment. The humanitarian situation is also extremely worrying. According to UNICEF's quarterly humanitarian situation report on the State of Palestine for the period from January to March 2019, over 50 per cent of Palestinian families in Gaza are living below the poverty line. Namibia also remains deeply concerned by the serious movement and access constraints being placed on national staff from United Nations agencies and international and non-governmental organizations in Gaza. These individuals provide lifesaving services to Palestinians in Gaza and their access should not be restricted.

Despite these negative trends, there are a few positive developments that should be highlighted. The State of Qatar's continued provision of financial assistance for the humanitarian situation in Gaza has proven essential and has had a positive impact on efforts to de-escalate the situation in Gaza. Furthermore, the work of the Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process to create more sustainable solutions in the energy sector — an area that has been plagued by problems for many years — should be recognized and highlighted.

I take this opportunity to commend the successful holding of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) pledging conference, which took place on 25 June here in New York. I thank those countries that helped raise \$110 million, ensuring that the life-saving services of UNRWA are not interrupted for the time being. I also take this opportunity to reaffirm Namibia's support to UNRWA and its mandate in providing essential services to Palestinian refugees across the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria.

The financial crisis that the Palestinian Authority is currently facing as a result of Israel's decision to withhold part of the clearance revenues of the Palestinian Authority is severely impacting the Palestinian economy. The continuation of this crisis threatens to destabilize an already volatile situation. We urge parties to implement and respect their bilateral agreements.

The Peace to Prosperity workshop held in Bahrain on 25 June made it clear that the international community remains steadfast in its belief that economic development cannot be achieved without negotiations leading to a two-State solution. The solution to this protracted conflict remains political. No amount of humanitarian or economic support will provide a solution to the conflict. We urge parties not to abandon the political process that would secure the foundation for economic development.

Due to a similar experience, Namibia knows that, for as long as the people are denied their inalienable right to self-determination and independence, tension, frustration, anger and even hatred will continue to mount. The oppressed people who are denied their right to self-determination and freedom will never be silenced. A boiling point will be reached sooner rather than later, which would certainly have far-reaching consequences for Israelis and Palestinians alike, as well as devastating effects on prospects for peace in that region. The continued violation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions by the occupying Power, ongoing settlement expansions, unilateral actions to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, the annexation of the Golan and the withdrawal of funding for UNRWA are causes for great concern as they gravely undermine the process of reaching a mutually acceptable, just and lasting solution. We must stand on the side of respect and upholding of international law.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I speak in my capacity as a critical stakeholder on this agenda item.

The ongoing Israeli occupation of the Arab territories poses a great challenge to the credibility and significance of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law. Despite the unprecedented manipulations of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the Israeli occupation of Arab territory in Palestine, southern Lebanon and the Golan, rhetoric continues to be used to try to turn essential issues into items of secondary importance and

vice versa through a flood of details of little import to the detriment of what is essential — the need for the Israeli occupation to be brought to an end. This is the crux of the agenda item: ending the Israeli occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories and empowering Palestinians to enjoy their legitimate rights. It appears that some choose to engage in discussions on issues that have nothing to do with an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab lands and the Palestinian question, talking, for example, about Iran and going on about other matters, knowing full well that this runs counter to consensus within the Council and diminishes the importance of addressing the agenda item at hand.

We have recently seen a series of provocative unilateral measures. Those behind them are trying to capitalize on the Security Council's inability to implement its own resolutions on ending the Israeli occupation in order to turn the facts upside down and shirk their legal obligations and the established terms of reference. This was illustrated by the United States President's recognition of occupied Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and of what he called "Israeli sovereignty" over the occupied Syrian Golan, completely flouting commitments made by previous United States Administrations to comply with all relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 497 (1981), which states that by imposing its legislation and administration in the Syrian Golan, Israel, as an occupying Power, is acting in a manner that is null and void and that its acts of aggression have no legal validity. These direct provocations targeting our country have continued unabated, including through armed terrorist groups, leading most recently to the deaths of four civilians, including a baby, and the wounding of 21 others, mostly women and children.

Israeli practices also include the seizure of goods and lands of Golan residents for the purposes of expanding settlements or building wind-power stations. These actions are often a mere pretext, given that our compatriots in the Golan, having omitted their lands from the proper registries, have seen their goods and property seized or confiscated. This scandalous behaviour by the Israeli occupying Power also continues in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Yet that is not all: the occupying Power held a Cabinet meeting in the Golan, where it announced the creation of a new settlement called Trump Heights as a gift from the Prime Minister of the occupying Power to the United States President for having violated the resolutions of the Security Council

and international law by unilaterally recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Syrian Golan.

Regretfully, this matter was not addressed by Ms. DiCarlo, who has repeated the long-standing error of Mr. Nickolay Mladenov. When she, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, fails to address the matter of the occupied Syrian Golan under this agenda item, it constitutes a grave breach by the Secretariat and a new iteration of Mr. Mladenov's failure to address the issue of the occupied Syrian Golan in his briefings before the Security Council. We wish to voice this grievance to the Secretary-General so that the matter will be duly addressed.

Our Government reaffirms that the Golan is an integral part of the Syrian Arab Republic. Our claim to it is an inviolable right that cannot be negotiated. The Syrian Golan and the Syrian presence in the area is, under international law, at the heart of our priorities. We call on the Security Council and the United Nations to take robust action without delay in order to ensure that the principles of international law are applied so as to bring an end to the Israeli policies of aggression and its scandalous violations of international law, the provisions of the Charter and Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981).

We reiterate our demand that Israel, the occupying Power, release prisoner Sidqi Al-Maqt and all other Syrians it has imprisoned. Mr. Al-Maqt is a Syrian citizen of the Golan who has spent 27 years in Israeli jails, as many years as Nelson Mandela spent in apartheid-era jails. His crime was documenting, through audiovisual media, the cooperation of Israeli authorities with armed terrorist groups. He was convicted to 14 years in prison.

Those present in the Chamber today should note that the statements delivered by the representative of the Israeli occupation before the Council are an unparalleled rejection of Council resolutions and international law. I would recall that President Mahmoud Abbas stated that the Organization has adopted more than 800 resolutions on the issue of Palestine. The statement delivered by Israel speaks of everything except what is essential, namely this agenda item, which is why this meeting on ending Israeli occupation of Arab territories and denying Israel's access to the occupied lands, including pre-1967 Jerusalem, all of the Syrian Golan and what remains of Lebanese territory has been held regularly since 2002. Contrary to what the representative of Israel

would have us believe, it is the main reason behind the prevailing tensions in the region. By speaking one day of Lebanon, another day of Libya, another of the Sudan and another of Yemen, the Israeli representative denies at every meeting of the Council in which Israel participates the essence of the agenda item, namely, the occupation of Arab lands and the Palestinian question, and the recognition of the legitimate right of the Palestinian people. That is the essence of this agenda item — not Iran, the Sudan, Yemen or Libya.

In conclusion, the Syrian Arab Republic maintains its unwavering support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, their desire to establish an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital, and their right of return, as set out in General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948. Furthermore, we support the accession of Palestine as a full-fledged Member of the Organization through the implementation of a principle that cannot be blocked or lobbied against by the occupying Power.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

**Mr. Kawamura** (Japan): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's open debate. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her valuable briefing. I am also grateful to all delegations for expressing their thoughtful condolences on the passing of Mr. Yukiya Amano, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Their words are truly appreciated.

Japan remains committed to supporting a two-State solution. We continue to believe that the most realistic solution to this long-standing conflict is a two-State solution, based on the 1967 lines, with mutually agreed swaps, which will bring about the peaceful coexistence between a viable Palestinian State and the State of Israel, with secure and internationally recognized borders.

We remain deeply concerned about the continued violence both in Gaza and in the West Bank, including indiscriminate rocket launches from Gaza into Israel. We strongly condemn violence and acts of terrorism against innocent citizens, and we call on the parties to take immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence, provocations and incitement. In addition, the final status of Jerusalem is part of a range of issues that should be resolved through negotiations based on relevant Security Council resolutions and known parameters. Continued settlement activities and the demolition

of Palestinian-owned structures, including the most recent case in Sur Baher, undermine the viability of a two-State solution. Japan once again urges Israel to cease those activities.

Japan is also worried about the continued issue of the Palestinian Authority's withheld tax revenues. That has exacerbated the Palestinians' deteriorating financial situation, which we fear could negatively affect stability and security. We call on the parties to find a mutually agreeable solution to this issue as soon as possible.

While the future prospects of the political process are dim at present, Japan believes that every country can contribute to creating an environment conducive to peace efforts. In that regard, I wish to highlight the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD). Japan, together with regional partners, initiated the Conference in 2013 to assist Palestine in its economic development by utilizing the resources and experiences of East Asian countries. The latest meeting, which we co-hosted in Ramallah earlier this month, emphasized the importance of involving the private sector in the development of Palestine.

At a business-matching event held on the sidelines of the meeting, a memorandum of understanding on cooperation was signed between the Chambers of Commerce of Palestine and Indonesia, in the presence of the Special Envoy of the Government of Japan for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Kono, and the Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Shtayeh, as witnesses. Conference participants also reaffirmed their unchanged stance to support a two-State solution and expressed their determination to continue to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, responding to the call of the Agency's Commissioner-General, Mr. Krähenbühl, who was present at the meeting.

Behind Japan's efforts through CEAPAD is our belief that in order to achieve a two-State solution, we need to assist Palestinians in achieving sustainable economic development. Nevertheless, development projects alone cannot achieve peace. Lasting peace and security can be reached only through negotiations between the parties. We must continue to encourage the parties to make difficult but necessary decisions. Japan will remain engaged with both sides and will continue to promote confidence-building measures.

Let me conclude by briefly addressing the situation in the Strait of Hormuz. Securing the safety of navigation in the area is extremely important for the peace and prosperity of the international community, including Japan. We sincerely hope for an easing of tensions and a stabilizing of the situation in the region, and we will continue our diplomatic efforts to that end, in coordination with relevant countries and international organizations.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

**Mr. Vieira** (Brazil): Thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this important debate.

Brazil wishes to reiterate its support for a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. Brazil encourages the parties to seek a constructive political environment conducive to a return to meaningful negotiations. The situation in Gaza continues to highlight the need for a fair, just and mutually agreeable political solution to the conflict. In that spirit, Brazil encourages all of the parties involved to engage in new and creative diplomatic efforts with an open mind in order to achieve a just and comprehensive settlement. Peace will be achieved only with difficult decisions and concessions being made by all sides.

Regarding the situation in Syria, Brazil remains concerned about the escalation of violence in the north-west of the country, while welcoming the memorandum on the stabilization of the situation in the Idlib de-escalation zone. We reiterate the importance of all parties fully complying with the ceasefire in the region and strongly condemn air strikes impacting civilians, including those on medical facilities and medical workers, who must be protected at all times.

Brazil underscores its support for the work of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Geir Pedersen, and hopes that we will soon see further progress on the Geneva track, including through the prompt convening of the constitutional committee. That will be a crucial step towards achieving an urgently needed political solution based on the parameters set forth in relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 2254 (2015), and the Sochi declaration. We remain convinced that only a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led United Nations-facilitated political process will deliver lasting peace

and allow for the relief of the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian population.

Brazil welcomes recent reports of a general reduction in violence and in the number of victims of the conflict in Yemen since the Stockholm Agreement on a ceasefire in the port city of Al-Hudaydah entered into force. We are nonetheless concerned about the recent increase in tensions in the country. As we heard at the latest Council briefing on the matter (S/PV.8578), the humanitarian, political and security situations in Yemen remain extremely fragile. We therefore call on the parties to refrain from any actions that might lead to a further increase in hostilities and to take the necessary steps towards the full implementation of the Stockholm Agreement. We also urge the parties to continue to work with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths, in seeking a comprehensive political solution to the conflict. Brazil reiterates its commitment to the monitoring of the ceasefire by the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement, to which we have agreed to deploy Brazilian military and police officers.

Finally, Brazil condemns the attack on the detention centre near Tripoli on 2 July and urges all sides to exercise maximum restraint, avoid an escalation of violence and engage with the United Nations, the African Union and relevant stakeholders in order to achieve a full and comprehensive cessation of hostilities throughout the country. We remain convinced that establishing peace and national unity in Libya and countering terrorism and transnational crime in the region ultimately require an inclusive, Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process, in accordance with the Libyan Political Agreement and the United Nations action plan for Libya. We therefore call on all parties to work with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya, Mr. Ghassan Salamé, towards achieving a comprehensive political solution to the security crisis and the dire humanitarian situation in Libya. We maintain our hope that the Libyan national conference will be held at the earliest possible opportunity.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

**Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank Peru for having invited us to participate in this debate and extend our congratulations to the Peruvian presidency on

its excellent job in steering the work of the Security Council this month.

The Palestinian-Israeli peace process is undergoing its most difficult period since the Oslo Accords in 1993. Not only have there been serious difficulties in resuming a peace process that would allow for progress to be made towards the two-State solution based on the 1967 borders and in resolving all final-status issues identified in those agreements, but at the same time there has been an escalation of violence and a rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation.

Argentina wishes to express its support for the work of the Special Coordinator of the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, and acknowledge the important contribution of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in preventing a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. In that context, the truce on the Gaza border is a positive first step towards de-escalating tensions. The recurring episodes of violence renew the urgent need to carry out a genuine peace process leading to a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the 1967 borders and agreements reached by the parties during the negotiation process, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, the Quartet road map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Argentina reaffirms its support for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establish an independent and viable State that is recognized by all nations, as well as the right of the State of Israel to live in peace with its neighbours within secure and internationally recognized borders. Argentina reiterates its concern about the growth of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and urges Israel to cease its expansionist activities, in line with the Council's resolution 2334 (2016).

Argentina also condemns the indiscriminate launching of missiles from Gaza against civilians in Israel, as well as the violent actions of Hamas. It is necessary for Palestinian leaders to address Israeli security concerns in earnest. In that context, we recognize Israel's right to exercise legitimate self-defence, emphasizing the importance for Israeli actions to be compatible with international humanitarian law

and taking into account, in particular, the principles of distinction and proportionality.

Argentina reaffirms the special status of Jerusalem, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, including resolution 478 (1980), and rejects any unilateral attempt to modify that special status. Argentina therefore considers Jerusalem to be one of the issues whose final status must be defined by the parties through bilateral negotiations.

Turning to the situation in the Syrian Golan, Argentina maintains a principled position with regard to the illegality of the acquisition of territory by force and respect for the territorial integrity of States. We firmly believe in the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes, which is why we feel that it is important to seek a negotiated solution to the Syrian-Israeli conflict with a view to ending the occupation of the Golan Heights as soon as possible, in accordance with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

In respect of the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, Argentina supports a political solution achieved through dialogue and diplomacy, in line with international law and respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria. Argentina attaches special importance to the Geneva talks held under the auspices of the United Nations. We appreciate the work of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Geir Pedersen, and strongly support his efforts to achieve a peaceful solution to the conflict in line with the provisions of resolution 2254 (2015). In the same vein, we recognize the contribution of the Astana agreements and other ceasefire agreements to de-escalating violence and alleviating the humanitarian situation on the ground with a view to creating the conditions conducive to moving towards a definitive, inclusive and long-term settlement of the crisis. We call on the guarantors of those agreements to redouble their efforts in order to ensure their full and uninterrupted implementation.

With regard to the situation in Yemen, Argentina reiterates its support for the constructive involvement of the Organization through the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement, with the goal of supporting its implementation in the city of Al-Hudaydah and in the ports of Al-Hudaydah, Saleef and Ras Issa, as established in the Stockholm Agreement. We believe that the full and comprehensive

implementation of the commitments assumed by the relevant parties is essential in order to make progress towards a peaceful and definitive settlement of the internal conflict in Yemen, which will make it possible to reverse the very grave humanitarian crisis facing the civilian population.

Finally, the Government of Argentina reiterates its concern over and condemnation of the attacks in the territory of Saudi Arabia and against oil tankers operating under various flags near the Emirati port of Fujairah and in the Gulf of Oman, which took place in May and June. Argentina believes that such actions put civilians at serious risk and negatively affect maritime safety and the freedom of navigation and international trade. We call on the international community to join forces and work together to prevent any situation that may threaten the stability of the region.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Uganda.

**Mr. Odida** (Uganda): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the States members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in Uganda's capacity as Vice-Chair of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers. Before I do that, I wish, in my national capacity, to extend my delegation's regards and congratulations to you, Mr. President, on the manner in which you are conducting the work of the Council in this month of July. I also wish to extend our heartfelt condolences to the Government of Japan for the passing away of Mr. Yukiya Amano, the late Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

At the outset, the OIC believes it imperative to highlight the illegal actions that took place yesterday, 22 July, when Israel, the occupying Power, forcibly displaced Palestinians from their homes in occupied East Jerusalem. Seventeen Palestinians, including 11 children, were displaced, while more than 350 others also face the threat of displacement. The Israeli occupying forces began the demolition process of at least 10 residential buildings, citing a lack of permits and security concerns regarding the proximity of those buildings to the illegal apartheid wall. In that regard, we must reaffirm our position, as well as the international consensus, and refer back to international law in insisting that the wall is illegal, the settlements are illegal and any action to advance either of those is illegal.

The continuing destructive, colonial practice of demolishing Palestinian property and forced displacement of Palestinians must be put to an end. The flouting of international law cannot be disregarded. Israel is acting in full contempt of the Council and making a mockery of our rules-based order. The Security Council has a direct responsibility to put an end to this culture of impunity and hold Israel accountable for its crimes. Day by day, the two-State solution is being eroded by those policies, and with that, the hopes, dreams and fundamental rights of millions of Palestinians living under a gruesome and belligerent occupation are being denied.

Since the Security Council's previous open debate on the question of Palestine (S/PV.8517), developments have made for an even grimmer outlook as Israel persists with its illegal policies and measures, heightening tensions and the volatility of the situation in Palestine. That has included, in particular, illegal, provocative and destabilizing acts concerning the holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem, including excavations that are directly threatening the sanctity, stability and status of Christian and Islamic holy sites such as Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which houses the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque. In that regard, we draw the Council's attention to the OIC Executive Committee's extraordinary open-ended meeting at the level of Foreign Ministers, which convened on 17 July to consider the escalating frequency and brutality of colonialist Israeli violations. The OIC Ministers stressed their grave concern over all unlawful Israeli attempts to alter the historical, political and legal status and demographic composition of occupied East Jerusalem. Such illegal actions have been ongoing for more than half a century, in violation of international law and the Council's resolutions, and must be halted.

The OIC Ministers also expressed particular concern about recent events surrounding the inauguration of the excavation of the so-called Pilgrims Road underneath the Silwan neighbourhood towards Al-Aqsa Mosque. Deplorably, that inauguration was attended by representatives of the United States Administration, in total disregard of international law and norms and in blatant disrespect of Muslim sentiments. The OIC cautions that such acts contribute to further consecrating, entrenching and perpetuating the illegal Israeli colonial occupation of Palestinian territory and the acquisition of territory by force, further fuelling

tensions and violence, fomenting religious conflict and constituting a threat to international peace and security.

We call on this organ to uphold its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations with regard to the Palestine question and the decades-long quest to ensure a just, peaceful solution to the conflict and security in the region. Under international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), there are clear obligations to ensure Israel's full compliance, including in relation to the question of Jerusalem — the occupied capital of the State of Palestine — which has been enduring endless Israeli attempts of isolation, Judaization, colonization and subjugation. It is unfortunate that the Security Council has so far failed to put an end to all measures, decisions or statements by any party aimed at forcibly and unlawfully altering the legal, historical, cultural and political status of the occupied city of Jerusalem, including attempts to relocate some diplomatic missions thereto, which constitute blatant violations of international law and relevant United Nations provisions and undermine the rule of international law, deepen the current political impasse, erode the two-State solution based on the 1967 borders and foreclose all prospects for peace and stability.

The dire situation in Palestine is becoming even more dangerous owing to the decision by the Israeli authorities to forcibly withhold Palestinian tax revenues. Such an illegal decision is an act of piracy and collective punishment against the Palestinian people and constitutes a violation of international law and of Israel's commitments under signed agreements, thereby exacerbating the financial, economic and humanitarian crisis being encountered by the Palestinian people, which is especially dire in the Gaza Strip — which remains under an illegal Israeli blockade — and has caused such poverty and devastation. The OIC once again underscores that the lack of effective international deterrent measures has only emboldened Israel to pursue racist, destructive and illegal acts and practices with total impunity. Only accountability, in line with international legal obligations, can create the pressure necessary to end the Israeli occupation and ensure the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people — the cornerstone of peace and security in the Middle East.

While the economic empowerment of the Palestinian people is imperative, addressing the dire economic situation in Palestine should not overshadow the core of

the Palestinian issue and the root cause of the plight of the Palestinian people, which is essentially the Israeli colonial occupation and its far-reaching consequences. The underlying issues of this historic injustice must be directly and fully addressed. In that regard, we affirm that in order for justice to be established and for a genuine, lasting peace to materialize, an internationally sponsored political process based on United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative must be launched, with a view to ending the Israeli occupation and enabling the Palestinian people to fulfil their legitimate and national rights to live in freedom and dignity in their independent Palestinian State, on the territory occupied since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to find a just and lasting solution for the Palestinian refugees, in line with resolution 194 (III).

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

**Mr. Zulqarnain** (Pakistan): My delegation welcomes this debate on the situation in the Middle East.

Despite the Council's regular deliberations on this agenda item, turmoil and disorder have continued to rise in the Middle East, exposing the inadequacy of our efforts to end the illegal occupation, the annexation of territories and the violation of basic human rights in the region. While existing conflicts grow and intensify, new conflicts have emerged, threatening to plunge the region into a fresh vortex of violence and instability. Tellingly, we have gone backwards in more ways than one, and nowhere is that grim assessment more apparent than in Palestine. With every new illegal settlement that goes unchecked, the occupying Power is emboldened to continue eroding by design the viability of the two-State solution, blatantly disregarding the international consensus on the issue.

On the humanitarian front, a modern-day tragedy is playing out daily in the Gaza strip, where millions of innocent people have been subjected to an excruciating blockade in contravention of all prevalent international laws and human rights. Thousands of civilians, particularly women, children and the most vulnerable, are constantly under threat, exacerbating the perpetual cycle of violence and increasing the risk of a broader escalation of the conflict. While the Secretary-General has repeatedly said that there is no plan B for Palestine, realities on the ground are being deliberately engineered to tip the scales in favour of the occupying Power. My delegation reiterates that a viable, independent and

contiguous State of Palestine, established on the basis of internationally agreed parameters, the pre-1967 borders and with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, remains the only sustainable guarantee of enduring peace in the region.

At a time when a political settlement of the Palestinian issue remains elusive, the financial challenges faced by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) have heightened concerns for the long-term sustainability of many of its critical activities, including in the provision of education, health and social services to over 5 million Palestinian refugees. It is heartening that the international community has stepped up its efforts to address the financial shortfall faced by the Agency. In the wake of unprecedented financial challenges, those enhanced contributions have not only allowed the Agency to keep its operations going, but have also served as an endorsement of UNRWA's critical role as a beacon of hope for Palestinian refugees across the region. In line with our long-standing commitment to our Palestinian brothers and sisters and to express our solidarity, my country, Pakistan, has already made an additional contribution to UNRWA for the current year.

The Middle East stands at a dangerous juncture in its history. The repudiation of multilateralism and the abandonment of political processes are systematically eroding the established norms of international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, worsening an already fragile regional environment. As the international community intensifies its efforts to de-escalate tensions in Yemen and advance a political process in Syria, our focus should also remain on alleviating the humanitarian situation in the broader region. Pakistan reaffirms its commitment to support negotiated political settlements that are based on agreed frameworks and achieved through inclusive political engagement.

A just and lasting peace in the Middle East, especially for the occupied people in Palestine, is not only critical for regional stability but also a fundamental prerequisite for global peace and security. The international community cannot rid itself of its responsibility to ensure justice and fairness and it cannot abandon the people of Palestine in their quest for self-determination. For far too long, they have looked to the United Nations with expectant eyes. We must not fail them.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

**Mr. Tayel** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, whose tireless efforts are facilitating the Middle East peace process, containing the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and fostering Palestinian reconciliation efforts.

The Palestinian cause has existed since the creation of the Security Council. We have followed all developments concerning the issue, and we have witnessed a decline in the international community's ambition to reach a just solution to end the occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories and restore the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, including their right to live in dignity in an independent State, as other peoples of the world do.

Let me reaffirm here that the means of achieving a just and lasting solution to this question is well known to all. Over the past 70 years, we have held debates, adopted resolutions and concluded agreements that have all led to one clear-cut result in responding to the aspirations of these peoples and addressing the issue of Jerusalem, namely, the two-State solution based on the 1967 borders. Contrary to what some may believe, such resolutions and agreements have rarely been implemented, due to a lack of genuine political will. Transition periods have led to crises and palliative temporary measures that have clouded the political process. I repeat, that is not due to shortcomings in international law; rather, it is due to a lax attitude in the implementation of agreements and resolutions.

As we have always said, we are not trying to impose solutions on the parties. That is not our intention and would be illogical. Neither are we rehashing theoretical positions. However, we believe that the issue must be settled with immediate action. Over the past decade, we have witnessed the ongoing deterioration of the situation on the ground. That reality will not change unless international law is applied.

We have spoken of the Arab Peace Initiative, which continues to be ignored by the authors of various resolutions, despite the fact that it clearly answers many questions and provides realistic solutions, in accordance with international law and Council resolutions, while also responding to the realities of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and their aspirations.

I therefore call on the international community to avoid political speculation, which is prone to bias, and to take the Arab Peace Initiative seriously, as it demonstrates flexibility. I am convinced that, if the parties demonstrate genuine political will, the Initiative will accommodate the aspirations of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and, indeed, all the peoples of the region.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

**Ms. Bahous** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month. I also wish to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, for her valuable briefing.

The Middle East continues to suffer from crises that negatively affect the political, economic and social situations of the countries and peoples of the region. The situation requires tireless efforts to find solutions to the root causes of conflict in the Middle East, the most prominent of which is the ongoing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. That occupation is a source of conflict and violence that will continue to grow if the Palestinians do not enjoy their legitimate right to freedom and statehood, with East Jerusalem as their capital.

Jordan is continuing its efforts to protect Jerusalem and its Islamic and Christian holy sites by continuing its custodianship. His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein is devoting all of the Kingdom's available resources to preserving the Christian, Islamic and Arab identity of holy sites and their historical and legal status quo. We recall here that Jerusalem is the basis for peace. Compromising Jerusalem and its holy sites therefore constitutes a threat to international peace and security. We condemn the opening by the occupying Israeli authorities of the so-called Pilgrims Road in the village of Silwan, which leads to the holy sanctuary of Al-Aqsa Mosque.

We caution against those irresponsible and illegal measures that are increasing tension. We express our categorical rejection of all Israeli attempts to change the identity of the Old City of Jerusalem, in particular the Al-Aqsa Mosque and its adjacent sites. Such Israeli practices constitute a flagrant violation of international law and international humanitarian law and are in continued violation of UNESCO's resolutions calling for the cessation of all illegal Israeli excavations in the

Old City of Jerusalem which are in clear contradiction of international norms.

The issue of Palestinian refugees is one of the final-status issues to be dealt with within the framework of a comprehensive solution, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and resolutions of international legitimacy, the most prominent of which is General Assembly resolution 194 (III), and in a manner that guarantees refugees the right to return and receive reparations.

Until such action is taken, it is essential that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) continue to provide basic services to more than 5 million Palestinian refugees in order to guarantee them a decent standard of living. In that context, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all of the countries that participated in UNRWA's pledging conference, held last month, for their continued political and financial support for the Agency. That support sends the message to millions of Palestinian refugees that the international community will continue to fight for them until a just and fair solution is reached.

The adoption of resolution 2334 (2016) reflected the international community's condemnation of all Israeli settlement activities. We condemn yesterday's demolition by Israeli authorities of dozens of Palestinian residential units in the Sur Baher area of East Jerusalem. We express our categorical rejection of settlement policies in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, which include the construction of settlements and the expansion of existing settlements, the policy of land confiscation and demolition, the expulsion of residents and the construction of surrounding roads, as well as other policies and measures aimed at forcibly displacing residents. That represents a flagrant violation of international law and Security Council resolutions. We call on the Israeli authorities to immediately cease those practices, which deepen despair, increase tension and have a fundamental impact on the two-State solution.

The Syrian crisis has now entered its ninth year. We reiterate our firm and clear position, which has remained unchanged since the beginning of the crisis, namely, that only a political solution can end the suffering in Syria. We also reiterate our full support for the efforts of the United Nations, particularly those of Special Envoy Geir Pedersen, who has called

for a solution based on resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), which would preserve the territorial integrity of Syria and its sovereignty, while achieving stability and national reconciliation and creating the conditions necessary for development, reconstruction and the return of displaced persons and refugees.

In conclusion, we reiterate our firm position that the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be achieved only by ending the Israeli occupation through the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on international resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant United Nations resolutions.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

**Mr. Skoknic Tapia** (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Peru for including this issue on the agenda and for the opportunity to participate in today's open debate and to reaffirm the importance that we attach to this matter. We also thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing this morning.

Before proceeding, I wish to express the condolences of the Chilean Government to both the Japanese Government and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the death of IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano. I had the opportunity to work alongside him for five years, when we were both Ambassadors in Austria for international organizations, and for two years on the IAEA Board of Governors; I in fact succeeded him as Chair of the Board. I saw first-hand Director Amano's fervour and passion for the issues of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. His absence will be noticed and missed and we appreciate the contribution that he made with regard to those issues.

Returning to the issue of the Palestinian question, Chile wishes to reiterate its conviction that the solution to the situation in the Middle East, in particular the Palestinian question, lies in two free, autonomous, sovereign and independent States that are able to live in peace within safe and recognized borders, in accordance with United Nations decisions and resolutions and international law, which must serve as the basis for a direct agreement between the parties.

The President of Chile, Sebastián Piñera Echeñique, recently conducted his second official visit to both Israel and Palestine just one month ago, on 24-28 June. The first such visit was in 2011, following Chile's recognition of Palestine as a State. He was as always accompanied by a representative delegation from both the Palestinian and Israeli communities, including parliamentary, business and civil society representatives. During his trip, President Piñera Echeñique reaffirmed that Chile sees its contribution to reaching a peaceful solution as a foreign-policy priority, while continuing to express his support for a just and lasting solution in the Middle East.

Our commitment to peace goes back many years to the early twentieth century, when what is now the largest Palestinian community outside the Middle East began arriving in Chile and integrating themselves into all levels of society. Not only has the Palestinian community found its home in Chile and become a part of our society, but an extensive Jewish community has also been well established for many years. We share strong historical and brotherly ties with Israel and Palestine. For that reason, the President signed agreements during his most recent visit that are important for both States because they reflect the synergy that exists between Israel and Chile and between Palestine and Chile.

As a country that believes in respect for international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, we wish to reiterate what was pointed out a few weeks ago by President Piñera Echeñique in that holy land:

“We are confident that Israel and Palestine share exactly the same aspirations as all other nations of the world — the best for their societies and for the people living on their territories; prosperity and security; and the desire to achieve a sustainable peace to end the decades of pain that have scarred entire generations.”

Violence only generates violence, but sustainable peace fosters development, well-being and the promotion of resilient and cohesive societies that are capable of addressing and overcoming their own challenges. We trust that both nations believe in the two-State solution. We believe that it is the responsibility of the international community to support them in achieving that aspiration which has already been delayed for far too long.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

**Mr. Niang**: On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, I would like to commend the professionalism with which the delegation of Peru has conducted the work of the Security Council this month.

While welcoming the holding of this open debate, which provides a renewed opportunity to consider the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, I reiterate the deep concern of the Committee about the recent developments on the ground that continue to undermine hope for a peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine. In that same spirit, the Committee strongly deplores and condemns yesterday morning's demolition of houses by Israel in the Palestinian community of Sur Baher and calls for an end to those violations of international law.

Indeed, as we gather in the Council, the cycle of violence, dispossession, expansion of settlements, evictions and demolitions, together with the deteriorating human rights, humanitarian and economic situation, all in the context of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, continues unabated. We are at a critical juncture owing to a series of deliberate, unilateral and unlawful actions aimed at negating many of the final-status issues, including settlements, the status of Jerusalem and the return of refugees. The threat of de facto annexation of the Palestinian territory is more worrisome than ever.

In response to the Peace to Prosperity workshop held on 25 June in Manama, Bahrain, the international community has made it clear that, without a political initiative that addresses that historic injustice with the fulfilment of their inalienable rights, including the rights to self-determination and independence, as well as the realization of the two-State solution, an economic initiative for the Palestinian people cannot succeed.

While humanitarian and economic support for the Palestinian people is very important and is indeed an urgent matter, the solution to the conflict remains political. The only viable and just solution to the conflict remains that based on the long-standing parameters of two States living side by side in peace and security, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine and negotiated outcomes for all final-status issues, as per international

law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative.

By and large, the international community is still upholding those parameters, as witnessed in the declarations and outcomes adopted at recent summits of the African Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the League of Arab States and the ministerial meeting of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. During recent visits of Committee delegations to Brussels and Berlin, Government and European Union interlocutors also reaffirmed their ongoing and strong commitment to the two-State solution.

Such support must translate into concrete actions, including the formal recognition of the State of Palestine and support for its full membership of the United Nations. In addition, the Committee continues to emphasize the importance of a collective approach to revive and promote the long-stalled peace process and calls for the strengthening of the Middle East Quartet and immediate efforts to that end.

The international community must also support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in order for it to continue its crucial operations. Despite the additional \$60 million raised at the 25 June Pledging Conference, the Agency's 2019 budget shortfall remains at \$151 million. That is why the Committee calls on all donors to continue to ensure reliable and sustainable funding for the Agency's core programmes and life-saving services and to continue to strongly support its General Assembly mandate, which is due to be renewed at the Assembly's seventy-fourth session.

Allow me to reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law and remain a substantial obstacle to peace. The Committee appreciates that some reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) are now provided in writing and it expects future reports to incorporate text on compliance with the resolution, including its operative paragraph 5 requiring Member States to distinguish in their dealings between Israel and the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. That is imperative to ensure accountability as a central contribution to the search for justice and peace.

The Committee is also encouraged by the steps taken by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to publish in the coming months a database on companies operating in Israeli settlements in the

occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. That will be an important tool to ensure the accountability of private sector companies engaged in illegal business activities in the occupied territory and will represent a significant step towards the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016).

The situation in Jerusalem also remains of utmost concern, as discussed at the latest conference convened by the Committee on 27 and 28 June in Geneva, which focused on preserving the cultural and religious character of Jerusalem. The Committee again calls on all Member States to comply, *inter alia*, with resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980) and to refrain from establishing diplomatic missions in Jerusalem. The sanctity and historic status quo of the holy sites of Jerusalem must furthermore be respected and their preservation is the international community's shared responsibility.

The security situation on the ground, particularly in Gaza, has remained tense in recent weeks. Weekly demonstrations have continued at the fence, where the lives of Palestinians, including children, have been taken, while rockets continue to be fired into Israel. The Committee reiterates its condemnation of all acts of violence and terror against civilians and stresses the need to ensure the protection of civilians, in accordance with international humanitarian law and Council resolutions. The Committee also reiterates its call for the lifting of the illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip.

Regrettably, there has also been no resolution to the Palestinian Government's serious financial crisis, which has been caused by Israel's withholding of Palestinian tax revenues. The Committee calls for an end to those punitive measures and for respect for international law and all signed agreements. It is crucial that the financial crisis, as well as Palestinian reconciliation, with the support of Egypt and others, be positively resolved in order to facilitate the creation of an environment conducive to the pursuit of peace.

In conclusion, the Committee again calls on all Member States to remain committed to the two-State solution as the only way to end the 52-year-old Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and to achieve the peaceful, just, lasting and comprehensive peace that has been called for by the Council and the General Assembly for so long. For the very future of our collective action, we need to do more to close the gap between words and deeds. We cannot stand idle as the Palestinian

people continue to suffer a terrible historical injustice . We must become the actors that achieve the two-State solution and make a just peace a reality.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

**Mr. Drobñjak** (Croatia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

The absence of any improvement in the situation on the ground over the past three months has further impeded prospects for peace. Significant obstacles include the lack of trust between Israelis and Palestinians; Israel's continued occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; the ongoing illegal expansion of settlements; the constant threat of violence against civilians; the incitement of hatred and violence; the lack of progress towards intra-Palestinian reconciliation; and the severe financial crisis faced by the Palestinian Authority. Those developments are occurring against a wider political backdrop, including at the regional level, that threatens the viability of the two-State solution.

The position of the European Union (EU) remains unchanged, based on international law and relevant Security Council resolutions and centred on our firm commitment to a just and comprehensive resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a negotiated two-State solution. Our goal is to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of both parties, including Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty.

The parameters for the resolution to the conflict are well known and recognized internationally and the EU's position in that regard has been set out in detail on numerous occasions, such as in the Council of the European Union's conclusions of July 2014. They include the need to reach an agreement on the borders of the two States, based on the June 1967 lines, with equivalent land swaps. They also request security arrangements that, for Palestinians, respect their sovereignty and show that the occupation is over and, for Israelis, protect their security, prevent the resurgence of terrorism and deal effectively with security threats, including new threats in the region.

They call for a just, fair, agreed and realistic solution to the refugee question, and they underline the need to fulfil the aspirations of both parties with regard to Jerusalem, for which a way must be found to resolve its status as the future capital of both States.

We emphasize that direct negotiations are an important way forward to resolve all permanent-status issues. The EU will recognize changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, only when agreed by the parties. Ultimately, we want to see the State of Israel and a sovereign, independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security. That position is based on respect for international law. It is in the interests of the parties themselves, not least because it guarantees a democratic future for Palestinians and Israelis alike. It is also in the interests of the broader region and in the European Union's own interests.

Last month, the United States published a set of economic proposals, entitled "Peace to Prosperity", and subsequently presented them at a workshop convened in Manama, together with the Kingdom of Bahrain. We take note of the acknowledgement by the United States that the vision outlined in Manama would be embedded in a political plan. We are ready to work with the United States and the other Quartet partners, as well as our partners in the region, with the objective of ensuring that the implementation of economic projects will improve the situation on the ground and contribute to the two-State solution. The EU and its member States have long been reliable economic and development partners to the Palestinian Authority and other partners in the region.

The EU, together with Norway, will continue to use the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians as a relevant framework, not least because it is one of the rare international forums with the participation of both the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority. However, the main obstacle to development in the occupied Palestinian territory is the lack of a political solution to the conflict. We are convinced that genuine and sustainable economic development must accompany but cannot substitute for a political solution that, among other things, brings an end to the occupation and takes into account the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples alike.

One area of serious ongoing concern is that of continuous Israeli settlement construction, including recent announcements of a number of new projects around Jerusalem's Old City. Our position on settlement policy is clear and remains unchanged. All Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law and figure among the significant obstacles to peace and development that erode the viability of the two-State solution and prospects for lasting peace, as reaffirmed by resolution 2334 (2016). We also underline that any form of unilateral annexation, in particular *de jure* annexation of already existing settlements, would represent a further breach of international law and further undermines the political solution based on the agreed international parameters.

The demolition and seizure of Palestinian-owned structures have significantly increased in recent months, notably in East Jerusalem. Evictions there have also taken place again, such as in Sheikh Jarrah and, most recently, in Silwan. Israeli authorities proceeded yesterday with the demolition of 10 Palestinian buildings, containing some 70 apartments, in Wadi Al-Hummus in occupied East Jerusalem. The majority of the buildings are located in Area A and Area B of the West Bank, where, according to the Oslo Accords, all civil issues are under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority. The spokesperson for European Union Foreign Affairs and Security Policy called the Israeli authorities to immediately halt those ongoing demolitions, which are illegal under international law. Such developments mark a clear change in the current characteristics and demographic make-up of Jerusalem. Furthermore, we also remain very attentive to the developments in the Bedouin village of Khan Al-Ahmar. We remain strongly opposed to such demolitions; confiscations, including of EU-funded projects; and forced transfers and evictions, as well as other actions taken in the context of Israel's settlement policy.

A further immediate concern relates to the financial crisis facing the Palestinian Authority. We expect the economic and fiscal agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority to be implemented in full. Meanwhile, we call on the Palestinian Authority to accept the tax transfers on a provisional basis, bearing in mind the fact that the delivery of health care, education and security to millions of ordinary Palestinians, which is indispensable for the full enjoyment of their human rights, remains in the interest of all sides. In

our view, accepting the transfers on a provisional basis would not constitute a legal or political endorsement of the Israeli decision. Continuous revenues would also ensure that the ongoing work to build the capacity of a future Palestinian State is not interrupted — an objective which the EU regards as important for the two-State solution.

The EU continues to oppose all forms of terror and firmly rejects and condemns any incitement to violence and hatred, which are fundamentally incompatible with advancing a peaceful two-State solution. We expect both the Palestinian and the Israeli authorities to take steps against violence. We are extremely concerned by the increased settler violence, and we call upon Israel to take actions in that regard.

The situation in Gaza remains dire and continues to fuel extremism and radicalization and to foster instability. Notwithstanding the ceasefire arrangements, the EU is deeply alarmed by the sharp escalation of violence and the loss of human lives in recent months, resulting in a high number of Palestinians, including children being killed and injured. We strongly condemn the repeated firing of rockets by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad from Gaza into civilian areas in Israel, and call upon the Palestinian factions in Gaza to refrain from any acts of violence.

The EU continues to be concerned by Israel's use of force against demonstrators, and expects the Israeli authorities to respect the principles of necessity and proportionality, while acknowledging Israel's legitimate right to safeguard the security of the Israeli people. We repeat our call on all parties to take urgent steps leading to a fundamental change in the humanitarian, political, security and economic situation in Gaza, including through an end to the closure policy and a sustained opening of the crossing points, which are important for Gazans' daily lives. We welcome the fact that, according to recent reports, Israel has eased entry restrictions on certain materials. We welcome such efforts and encourage further steps in that regard and commend the efforts of Egypt, Qatar and the United Nations Special Coordinator to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

The lack of intra-Palestinian reconciliation is one of the significant obstacles to peace and to the realization of the two-State solution. We therefore continue to urge Palestinian factions to engage in good faith in the reconciliation process. We welcome

the renewed efforts of some factions, as facilitated by Egypt only few weeks ago. We again value Egypt's role in this process. A single, legitimate and democratic Palestinian Authority, with full control over the whole Palestinian territory, including Gaza, is critical to fulfilling the national aspiration of the Palestinian people and to achieving a viable Palestinian State. We encourage the prompt setting of a date for the planned Palestinian elections in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

Until a fair, just, agreed and realistic solution to the Palestinian refugee issue, in accordance with international law, is found, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in the Near East (UNRWA), is best placed to provide them with the necessary protection and essential services. The services provided by the Agency contribute to the viability of the two-State solution and to the stability and security of the region. It is vitally important that the Agency receive the financial support that it needs in order to fulfil its mandate.

We commend the Agency's efforts to overcome the ongoing financial crisis. We welcome the success of the pledging conference of 25 June that took place under the auspices of the United Nations. The provision of services and food delivery, in particular to the vulnerable population in the Gaza Strip, are now guaranteed over the summer months. We encourage others to also demonstrate their support to the Agency's work to ensure the continuity of its mission and its mandate again this year.

Allow me to briefly turn to the situation in Syria. It is the worst crisis of our times — a conflict that has displaced half of the Syrian population, threatened the stability of the entire Middle East and provided fertile grounds for the rise of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Da'esh.

The European Union has voiced strong concern over the violence in north-west Syria. Military strikes by Syrian regime forces, supported by Russia, have destroyed internally displaced persons camps, schools and health facilities, which should be the safest spaces. Hundreds of civilians have lost their lives, and more than 330,000 have been displaced, many of them for the second or third time.

The continued presence and activities of United Nations-listed terrorist groups in the area contribute to the suffering of civilians and remain of grave concern. Yet, fighting terrorist groups cannot justify violations

of international humanitarian law. The EU reminds all parties, in particular the regime and its allies, of their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We continue to call upon Russia and Turkey to restore the ceasefire in Idlib that they agreed on under the Sochi memorandum. The EU stresses again the need to establish an effective and lasting nationwide ceasefire in Syria.

There is no way ahead towards sustainable peace but by resuming intra-Syrian negotiations in Geneva and achieving a Syrian-led solution that will lead to a political solution, in line with unanimously adopted resolution 2254 (2015). Only an inclusive political solution can form the basis for national reconciliation and pave the way towards free and fair elections.

The European Union will therefore maintain its strong support for the United Nations-led process in Geneva and continue to support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria to revive the political process and assist in the establishment of a balanced and inclusive constitutional committee to pave the way for free and fair elections, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015), and to support Syrian civil society, including women and their equitable and meaningful engagement in the political process.

We will remain at the forefront of international efforts to promote accountability and justice and to combat impunity as part of any future process of national reconciliation in Syria. We will continue to support the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Those Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 and the assiduous work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. The EU strongly condemns the practice of arbitrary detention, the enforced disappearances of civilians and torture in detention, primarily used by the Syrian regime as a form of retaliation and retribution, as well as by terrorist groups.

The EU has strengthened its sanctions against the Syrian regime this year by adding business individuals and entities who benefit from supporting the Al-Assad regime, as well as others responsible for chemical attacks. The EU will continue to consider further restrictive measures against Syria as long as the repression continues. We will also continue our support

and funding for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and fully back its efforts to identify the perpetrators of chemical attacks in Syria in order to hold them accountable for their crimes. We reiterate our call to have the situation in Syria referred to the appropriate justice mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court.

Finally, the EU continues to support the efforts of the Global Coalition to Counter Da'esh. To contribute to the enduring defeat of Da'esh, the EU will continue to respond with stabilization efforts, while promoting inclusive, independent and representative local governance in north-east Syria.

We support the right of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons to a safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return. We support the assessment of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that those conditions are not in place yet. For the third consecutive year, the European Union and the United Nations co-chaired the Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, from 12 to 14 March. Pledges made at the conference have reached a total of €8.3 billion for 2019 and beyond. Two-thirds of the funds were pledged by the EU and its member States.

The Conference was also an occasion to reiterate our firm position on reconstruction. EU support for reconstruction will be possible in Syria only once a comprehensive, genuine and inclusive political transition, consistent with resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), is firmly under way. In that respect, I would like to inform the Council that the European Union intends to host a high-level event on Syria during the high-level week of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations.

**Father Charters** (Holy See): The Holy See wishes to thank the presidency of Peru for convening today's open debate to discuss the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

Last month, in his briefing to the Security Council, Mr. Mladenov noted a dangerous escalation of violence in Gaza, as well as continued violence in the West Bank (see S/PV.8557). The lack of unity on both sides, as well as internal divisions, are abetting an environment of

distrust. Fuelled by dangerous rhetoric and extremist ideology, that lack of trust can sadly and rapidly devolve into violent acts that put the lives of innocent Palestinians and Israelis alike at risk and negatively impact the tense wider region. Such a situation cannot permit this open debate to remain merely a rehearsal of well-known facts and commentary on troubling setbacks and impediments to reaching the much-sought two-State solution within internationally recognized borders. It must lead to action.

Through generous donations, mainly by means of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the international community continues to ensure that education, health care and other basic services can be provided for Palestine refugees, lest the situation on the ground become untenable. There is already high unemployment and limited prospects for the younger generations, alongside an ever-increasing demand for food and water.

Yet, while humanitarian and economic support remain vital for creating the environment for negotiations, they cannot replace negotiations. Political will and constructive dialogue are required to establish the conditions for lasting peace and a comprehensive and sustainable solution. An important contribution that Member States can make at this time is to encourage parties to return to the negotiating table and offer them the space and resources to commit to dialogue as protagonists of their own peaceful future, side by side.

In our consideration of the Middle East, we cannot overlook the still unstable areas in Syria, where the risk of a worse humanitarian crisis remains high. We cannot be deaf to the cries of those lacking food, medical care and schooling, or to those of orphans, widows and the wounded. Yesterday, in his letter to President Bashar Al-Assad, Pope Francis expressed his profound preoccupation over the humanitarian situation in Syria and, in particular, the dramatic conditions faced by the civilian population in Idlib. He renewed his call for their protection and for respect for international humanitarian law.

The worsening humanitarian situation in Yemen is also a cause for grave concern, in particular when those most in need are deprived of food and medical attention. The Council's unanimous adoption on 15 July of resolution 2481 (2019) to renew the mandate of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement was a needed step to strengthen the

implementation of the ceasefire and to facilitate access to provisions and essential supplies. There is a need for coherence, however. How can we make eloquent appeals for peace in the Middle East and even commit to humanitarian action while at the same time continuing to permit the sale of arms in the region?

Iraq, after the unspeakable crimes that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant inflicted upon its population, especially members of religious and ethnic minorities, offers some hope as it moves forward along the way of reconciliation and reconstruction through the peaceful and shared pursuit of the common good on the part of all elements of society. In addition, it is essential that the international community continue to encourage and seek out every possible opportunity for negotiations and peaceful solutions to current crises in the Gulf region.

This is a critical moment in which all countries of the region must not squander peaceful advances by falling back into hostilities sparked by the simmering conflicts of regional Powers. Rather it is essential to promote even more dialogue for a culture of tolerance, of acceptance of others and of living together peacefully; in this way, they can contribute significantly to reducing many economic, social, political and environmental problems that weigh so heavily on a large part of humankind.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the observer of the League of Arab States.

**Mr. Abdelaziz** (*spoke in Arabic*): The Security Council is meeting today to conduct its periodic review of the progress made towards achieving peace in the Middle East, and to ensure that Israel, the occupying Power, is respecting its commitments according to the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the decisions of the Security Council pertaining to the peaceful resolution of the Palestinian question.

Notwithstanding the report's details about continuing Israeli violations of the resolution's provisions, a close follow-up of developments since the last periodic review (see S/PV.8517) demonstrate a growing tendency on the part of Israel to try and cover up its violations. It does so by seeking to depict this political and regional conflict, which was triggered by the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, as a religious conflict. Israel exploits the Security Council as a forum for its hate speech and misinformation, contradicting the actual reporting on what is

happening, particularly with regard to the sacred sites of East Jerusalem.

Israel and the United States of America have failed in their bold attempt to change the historic status of Jerusalem. It was an underhanded attempt to try and garner international recognition of Israeli claims to the holy city. These attempts by Israel and the United States run counter to concerted international opposition, at the forefront of which are the General Assembly and the Security Council. Israel, however, is undaunted and continues to speak in incendiary and provocative terms, including here in the Security Council. Israel tries to stoke religious tensions and to debate this as a religious conflict. That demonstrates a flagrant lack of respect for the international community and an attempt to continue its violations of the rights of the Palestinian people.

Israel seeks to entrench its illegal occupation of Palestinian territory. All of that should spur the Security Council to be more objective and to take steps to guarantee respect for the religious texts of the three great monotheistic religions. The Council should also take steps to prevent Israel from interpreting these religious texts in a perverse manner in an effort to justify its political stance as an occupying Power. Steps should be taken to prevent Israel from failing to live up to its obligations under international law.

Israel occupied East Jerusalem in 1967 and is now trying to claim that Jerusalem, as an undivided city, is its capital. It is trying to impose Israeli sovereignty on a de facto basis, moving forward with the claim that this was the case under the British mandate before 1948. That is a refusal to recognize Security Council resolutions, which make the status of the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip, very clear.

The League of Arab States reaffirms that Israel has no sovereignty claim over East Jerusalem or over any part of the city. That remains a core issue that must be resolved as part of the final resolution, which needs to be the fruit of direct negotiations between the two parties — Israelis and Palestinians. There should be no interference in these direct negotiations and no thumbing the nose at international law. Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2334 (2016) must be upheld. Also to be upheld are the General Assembly's own decisions and resolutions, particularly those adopted at its resumed emergency and regular

sessions, notably resolution 73/22, of 30 November 2018, on Jerusalem.

The League of Arab States calls on the Security Council to reiterate its full support for the status of Jerusalem, in line with existing resolutions, in order to define it as a holy city for the faithful of the three main monotheistic religions: Judaism, Islam and Christianity. The Security Council also needs to call for full respect for the holy sites in the city, including those that are under the historic guardianship of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, thanks to the support of the Al-Quds Committee, which is affiliated with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Israeli attempts to confer a religious nature upon the Arab-Israeli conflict are underhanded. They go hand in hand with acts of provocation and incitement, including attacks and assaults by the occupying forces and Israeli settlers on Palestinian civilians, holy sites and places of worship in occupied East Jerusalem, as well as Israel's attempt to alter the historic status of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and other holy sites. In response, the League of Arab States calls on the Security Council to ensure that Israel, the occupying Power, puts an end to its warmongering activities, in particular the forced expulsion of the Palestinian people; the demolition of their houses and the confiscation of their land, property and belongings; settlement activities and the annexation of Palestinian land, all of which are illegal practices that flout Security Council resolutions.

They also flout the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice concerning the legality of the construction of the separation wall in the occupied Palestinian territories and the Israeli demolition of dozens of Palestinian homes in Sur Baher and Wadi Al-Hummus, to the south of Jerusalem, following the expulsion of its residents under the pretext that their houses were too close to the separation wall. All of that is intended to forge a connection between the Israeli settlements and Al-Quds, which is in violation of the agreed terms of reference. It is critical that the perpetrators of those violations be held accountable for their actions.

We must once again discuss the issue of report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2018/462), which addresses the plight of the Palestinian people under occupation and was discussed at the resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, on 13 June 2018

(see A/ES-10/PV.38). It is especially meaningful as, this year, we are celebrating the seventieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, which provide a clear legal framework for the protection of the Palestinian people under occupation, while enabling them to enjoy their inalienable rights, including the establishment of an independent Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital and within the June 4, 1967 borders, through transparent negotiations focused on the five questions concerning the final status of Jerusalem and refugees.

The League of Arab States believes that this — and not the prioritizing of the economic sphere as a means to satisfy Palestinian aspirations to the detriment of finding a political solution, while ignoring their fundamental rights and freedoms — is in contravention of international law, and the Security Council remains responsible for the violations committed by Israel at the holy sites, including excavation activities, such as the digging of a tunnel under Silwan in East Jerusalem — foreshadowing a tragic fate for the Al-Aqsa Mosque. It is necessary to end Israeli practices aimed at illegitimately and forcibly altering the historic and demographic character of Jerusalem.

We support the decisions adopted by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Against that backdrop, the League of Arab States once again supports the political declaration issued by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in July. We reject any recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan, in accordance with resolution 497 (1981). We believe that it is necessary to respect the relevant terms of reference and not allow anyone to change the reality on the ground either through the use of military force or through illegitimate political support. It is necessary to preserve Syrian sovereignty over those territories and the territorial unity of the Syrian Arab Republic. Syrian territories remain Arab land in accordance with the decisions of the League of Arab States, despite the suspension of Syria's membership in the League of Arab States.

We call on the Security Council and the Secretary-General to implement the decisions adopted at the three Arab summits convened in Mecca on 30 May 2019, as well as the Arab Summit held in Tunisia, concerning Iranian interference in the internal affairs of Arab States in the Arabian Gulf and the Iranian threat to peace and security in the Arab world. Iran supports extremist organizations so as to destabilize the region by fanning

the flames of violence and sectarian, racial and ethnic conflicts. We are convinced that the Security Council can realize those goals by immediately taking action.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

**Mr. Al-Maawda** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Sir, on your presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also like to thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, for her excellent briefing this morning.

First of all, I express my thanks to the United Nations for its efforts to bring about peace in the Middle East and support the Palestinian people. We express our full support for those efforts. Achieving the peace that we wish for with all our hearts requires us to commit fully to the principles of international law, in particular the relevant United Nations resolutions, and rely on the agreed terms of reference, including the Arab Peace Initiative.

It is now clear that the path towards resolving the Palestinian question lies in the two-State solution, predicated upon the establishment of a viable Palestinian State within the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. That also requires ending the Israeli occupation of occupied Palestinian territories and immediately halting all settlement activities. Refugees must be able to return. The Palestinian people must recover all of their inalienable rights.

The State of Qatar condemns the intensification of settlement activities in East Jerusalem, in particular the announcement in May of the construction of 805 new housing units. In that regard, we call for the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the most recent of which is resolution 2334 (2016), on settlements in the occupied territories.

Qatar reiterates its principled and coherent position that the Golan Heights is occupied Arab territory. Therefore, Israel's imposition of its jurisdiction and administration is null and void and has no legal effect. As part of its commitment, Qatar has played a positive role in ensuring the necessary conditions for achieving peace and is pursuing efforts with the stakeholders, in coordination with the United Nations, to alleviate the very trying humanitarian situation that the Palestinian people are undergoing, in particular in the Gaza Strip,

which is suffering under an extremely burdensome and long-standing blockade.

In that regard, I should like to draw the Council's attention to the State of Qatar's pledge, made in May, to provide \$480 million in humanitarian assistance to our Palestinian brothers in the occupied Palestinian territories. Of that, \$300 million will be disbursed as a donation and loans supporting the education and health-care budgets of the Palestinian Authority, and the remaining \$180 million are earmarked for emergency humanitarian assistance and the provision of electricity.

Moreover, we are supporting those projects being carried out under the auspices of the United Nations. The State of Qatar has also committed this year once again to providing additional support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, as we realize the tremendous importance of the services provided by the Agency to millions of Palestinian refugees. Qatar reaffirms its support for national reconciliation among our Palestinian brothers.

While the catastrophic humanitarian repercussions of the Syrian crisis continue, the State of Qatar, for its part, continues to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to the brotherly Syrian people and cooperate with the United Nations and international partners to end the crisis. The only way to end the humanitarian suffering is to end the violence and serious violations of international humanitarian law. Furthermore, it is essential to work seriously to achieve a political solution that responds to the aspirations of the Syrian people in all their aspects, with respect for the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2254 (2015). It is all in the context of preserving Syria's unity, sovereignty and independence, while guaranteeing accountability for the most serious crimes.

The situation in Libya is at a critical phase, with escalating tensions in the west of the country following the assault on its capital Tripoli. That risks undermining the political process under way under United Nations auspices. Recently, we have seen serious violations of international humanitarian law, including the aerial bombing of a migrant reception centre in Tripoli and the targeting of a hospital in the south of the city. That requires firm condemnation on the part of the Council and draconian measures to end the escalation.

The State of Qatar expresses its full support for the Government of National Accord that is recognized by the international community. Qatar welcomes the initiative of Mr. Fayez Al-Sarraj, Chairman of the Presidential Council, in his efforts to resolve the crisis by holding an intra-Libyan meeting in coordination with the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, so as to achieve a comprehensive political agreement guaranteeing Libya's sovereignty and territorial integrity and responding to the aspirations of its people for security and stability. We hope that the international community will support that initiative and express our full support for the efforts of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ghassan Salamé.

For two years now, our region has been the scene of an escalating crisis, with serious repercussions on regional stability, which could become a threat to peace, security, human rights and cooperation in the region. I am speaking here of the crisis concerning the imposition of an unfair blockade and illegal unilateral measures on the State of Qatar and the accompanying campaign promoting hatred and disinformation — a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the principle of friendly relations among States, which calls on States not to aggravate conflicts, but rather to resolve them through dialogue and peaceful means. The position of the State of Qatar is very clear. We call for the settlement of the crisis through dialogue, thereby guaranteeing our sovereignty and ending illegal measures. We have reiterated that commitment through the good offices of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Emir of Kuwait. In that regard, we thank all States that supported it.

Our approach is the right one, as was demonstrated in our handling of the crisis using international law and international dispute settlement mechanisms. Our legal position is also valid, as proved by the judgment of July 2018 at the International Court of Justice for measures to be taken against the United Arab Emirates for violating the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, as well as the decision of the Court in June to refuse the request of the United Arab Emirates for the implementation of temporary measures against Qatar.

The aim of those attempts to undermine the State of Qatar is now well known. Attempts to impinge upon our State have had the sole result of demonstrating its importance and place on the international stage. Its place has been recognized, as it is based on positions

and policies rooted in the principles of international law, the United Nations Charter and based on an important contribution to cooperation that seeks to preserve international security, bring about development and protect human rights. However, the ongoing crisis sets a dangerous precedent in international relations and is a threat to international peace and security. The international community must therefore take a firm position on the issue and put an immediate end to the illegal blockade.

In conclusion, the continuation and growing number of crises in the Middle East should not undermine our hope in our ability to address them. The Council has played a key role in combating threats to international peace and security. The people suffering from the crises in our region aspire to the role that the international community and the United Nations can play to address them effectively.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

**Mr. Hasrin** (Malaysia): First and foremost, I wish to commend you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate, which allows Member States to participate and express their views on the worrying situation in the Middle East, in particular on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Malaysia wishes to align itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Uganda, on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the statement to be delivered by the representative of the Bolivian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

As we gather at today's quarterly open debate, Malaysia shares the concern, as reflected in the tenth report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), that no steps have been taken by the occupying Power, in particular on the illegal settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

As we have pointed out on countless occasions, the ongoing expansion of Israeli settlements is a grave violation of resolution 2334 (2016), as well as of other United Nations resolutions. It constitutes a flagrant contravention of international law and international humanitarian law. Not only are such actions a threat to international peace and security, but they are nothing short of acts of defiance against the voice of the international community. The international

community must continue to call for the immediate reversal of negative trends on the ground that imperil the two-State solution. Israel must cease immediately and completely all illegal settlement activities in the occupied territories, as well as the continued illegal demolition of Palestinian homes.

The ongoing escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, remains precarious. We condemn the continuous use of force by Israel against Palestinians. Those acts of provocation and incitement against the Palestinian people and holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem, including Al-Haram Al-Sharif, threaten the sanctity and stability of holy sites. The international community has a duty to collectively ensure that Israel's continued violations are put to an end.

Malaysia commends the initiative taken by the OIC to convene the Open-Ended Extraordinary Meeting of the Executive Committee at the Level of Foreign Ministers on the Israeli Violations in the Occupied City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, on 17 July.

Israel's recent opening of the so-called Pilgrims Road tunnel, which was cut from under the village of Silwan to reach the Al-Aqsa Mosque, has sparked widespread indignation and anger across the OIC membership. The construction of the tunnel has not only resulted in the weakening of the structure of the mosque, but has also left 80 Palestinian homes in Silwan damaged, while dozens more are at risk of collapsing, forcing Palestinian families from their homes. Surely the international community cannot be expected to stand on the margins and continue to witness further destruction unfold?

The financial situation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), compounded by the decision of the United States to cease its funding, remains deeply alarming. The discontinuation of funding to UNRWA would unravel 25 years of work and perseverance, not only by the United Nations and its agencies but by all other parties that have dedicated their lives to the name of peace and humanitarian assistance.

Malaysia remains deeply concerned by the unilateral actions taken by the United States that further jeopardize the international consensus on the two-State solution. Malaysia believes that a legitimate political process is the only way forward in order to put an end to the illegal occupation of Palestine and address

all final-status issues in accordance with relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and previous agreements. The stalled Middle East peace process serves only to exacerbate the current situation in Palestine, therefore credible conditions must be created in order to revive the peace process, based on the existing terms of reference to the two-State solution.

Malaysia remains convinced that the ongoing occupation is the stumbling block to progress and development in the occupied Palestinian territories. We continue to believe that it is the responsibility of the Security Council to strive towards a two-State solution whereby the Palestinians and the Israelis can live side by side in peace, based on the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. It is our sincere hope that the views expressed here will be considered seriously by Council members for the sake of maintaining peace and security in the region.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

**Mr. Atlasi** (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month and to thank you for convening this meeting to discuss the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her informative briefing on the subject.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements to be delivered by the representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, and by the representative of the United Arab Emirates, on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

It is with great regret and concern that we are following the deteriorating situation in Palestine, due to the occupying Power's policies against the Palestinian people, namely, the Judaization of the territory of Jerusalem and the continued building of settlements, demolition of houses and repression of unarmed civilians. These policies are complicating the situation even further, exacerbating tensions and reinforcing all the obstacles to the onset of a peace process that has been moribund for years. We are therefore witnessing the demise of the two-State solution.

The ongoing settlement activities, in flagrant violation of Security Council resolutions, particularly

resolution 2334 (2016), undermine peace efforts and nullify all attempts to revitalize the political process. Worse still, they represent a continued provocation of the Palestinian people and the international community. Moreover, the deterioration of the living conditions of the Palestinians and the lack of basic requirements for a dignified life prevent the lost climate of confidence from being re-established. It is also detrimental to the State-building process and to the creation of the framework and conditions necessary to revive peace talks for a two-State solution along the borders of 4 June 1976.

Jerusalem/Al-Quds Al-Sharif remains at the heart of this conflict. It is the centre of the Middle East and the essence of a political solution for Palestinians and Israelis alike. Indeed, Jerusalem/Al-Quds Al-Sharif occupies a special place in the hearts of all followers of the three monotheistic religions. It is the first Qibla and the third of the holy shrines, which gives the city a special legal status that cannot be undermined, as guaranteed by Security Council resolutions.

His Majesty King Mohammed VI, President of the Al-Quds Committee, has attached great importance to the city by consistently emphasizing the need to preserve its historical, legal and political status. He has called on the United Nations and permanent members of the Council to shoulder their responsibilities in order to prevent its status from being undermined and efforts to resolve the conflict from being delayed. His Majesty has also, on more than one occasion and by various means, be it at bilateral meetings or in various international forums, called for an end to Israeli settlement activities and the Judaization of Jerusalem. He has urged the occupying Power to discard all plans to change the legal status of the city and its spiritual sites of worship by drawing attention to the serious repercussions of adopting its project to Judaize Jerusalem. He has also called for Israel to avoid any measures that would undermine the political status, as the question of Jerusalem lies at the heart of final-status issues under resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980).

Based on this belief with regard to the special status of Jerusalem for members of the three monotheistic religions, the Emir of the Believers, His Majesty Mohammed VI, President of the Al-Quds Committee, along with the Pope, issued a joint appeal in Rabat, on 30 March, calling for respect for the sanctity, spiritual dimension and exceptional position of Jerusalem as a city of peace. This appeal was enshrined in a unique

document calling for the preservation of the unique nature and identity of the city.

In addition, the communiqué that followed the historic visit of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein to the Kingdom of Morocco, at the invitation of his brother, His Majesty Mohammed VI, reaffirmed their full support for the Palestinian people in the recovery of all their legitimate rights and for the creation of an independent Palestinian State along the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital and on the basis of relevant international resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the two-State solution.

This was reaffirmed at the first round of political consultations between the Kingdoms of Morocco and Jordan, held last week in Amman. Mr. Nasser Bourita, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Morocco, demonstrated that our two countries share the same position of advancing a two-State solution under international law and preserving Jerusalem and its Islamic heritage. In that context, His Majesty sent Moroccan architects and craftspeople to preserve the Al-Aqsa Mosque, in collaboration with the Jordanian Waqf.

In conclusion, our position remains consistent. It is based on the Arab Peace Initiative and all terms of reference for the creation of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital within the 4 June 1967 borders, coexisting in peace, harmony and security with Israel.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay.

**Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay consistently monitors the various situations that make up the Council's agenda with regard to the Middle East, all of them complex and multidimensional.

We would like to thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, for her informative briefing. We would also like to recognize, as we routinely do, the work of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, who has the full support of Uruguay.

The few, if not non-existent, positive measures taken by the two parties have been insufficient to reverse the negative trends on the ground, which is why the viability of the two-State solution is at serious risk.

We once again recognize the potential contribution of multilateral, regional and unilateral initiatives, whether in force, being proposed or not yet devised, but we are still a long way from reaching a solution to the conflict. More importantly, it is necessary to resume direct negotiations in order to clarify the outstanding issues. We know that this will not be easy, but remaining in the state of paralysis and stagnation that we are currently witnessing and which has gone on for too long, will be even worse. The two-State solution continues to be the only viable option; there is no plan B that can replace it.

Uruguay has strong ties of friendship with both the State of Israel and the State of Palestine. We once again reaffirm the right of Israel and Palestine to live in peace within secure and recognized borders in an environment of renewed cooperation and free from any threat or act that undermines the peace. To achieve this goal, the current negative trends on the ground must be reversed. Otherwise it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for Palestine to territorially consolidate its State.

The intensified development, approval and construction of settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as well as the legal measures underpinning them, is extremely worrying. The evictions of Palestinian families and the continued demolition and confiscation of their properties, as occurred yesterday in Sur Baher or in Wadi Yasul in April, exacerbate the situation and increase the risk of plans for future annexation.

We condemn acts of violence and terrorism against Israeli civilians, including the firing of rockets and explosive devices from the Gaza Strip. We equally condemn the increased settler violence against Palestinian civilians, as well as the excessive use of force in Israel's response. The incitement and glorification of all violent acts deserves our total condemnation.

For all the foregoing reasons, we would once again like to call on both parties to adopt measures and take steps to gradually de-escalate and alleviate tensions, which is the only way to reach a mid- and long-term definitive solution to the conflict and a just and lasting peace amid the long-standing dispute between Israel and Palestine. During the most recent open debates on this issue, Uruguay has proposed a set of 10 measures to that end, and we reiterate them today.

Seventy years ago, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II). Thanks to the impetus of that international legal act taken by the Organization,

Israel and Palestine have continued to consolidate their identity, rights and obligations as States and recognized legal entities. As was the case 70 years ago, when it was eager to find a solution and favoured this one, the international community today remains ready and expectant.

It is not helpful when leaders take action contrary to the path forward that the international community has set out for them in good faith and promotes. We disagree with those who rebuff international consensus or reject provisions adopted in the Security Council, the General Assembly or the judgments and opinions of the International Court of Justice. International law plays a critical role in the resolution of this and all conflicts. It is the civilized way we have devised to support and promote peace and development. We should not forget that.

It is high time to begin to overcome hatred and its incitement, disillusionment, despondency and frustration. Any gain in territory or exercise of misconceived sovereignty is worthless if it is achieved at the cost of peace and prolongs the struggle of the peoples that inhabit the region.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

**Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Our delegation welcomes the convening of this debate under Peru's presidency and wishes to reiterate that the question of Palestine is of vital importance to the international community and the Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility conferred on it to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations, as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations, namely, to maintain international peace and security.

We welcome the briefing by Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo.

A month ago, the Council met (see S/PV.8557) to hear the tenth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), covering the period from 25 March to 10 June 2019, which was introduced by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov. Mr. Mladenov's briefing was very clear. He offered evidence that the expansion of settlements over the past two years continued, particularly in occupied East

Jerusalem, and that demolitions — including punitive demolitions — and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures by the Israeli authorities were also ongoing.

In that regard, Ecuador's position on the settlement policy has not changed. All settlement activity, evictions, demolitions, and home seizures are illegal under international law. The financial crisis of the Palestinian Authority, resulting from Israel's decision to withhold part of its tax revenues, remains unresolved. We are concerned that the humanitarian situation, human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory continue to worsen and deteriorate. Deaths, attacks, arrests, violence and clashes are not stopping. Provocative actions, statements that incite violence and inflammatory rhetoric continue, as the report points out. Our country condemns all acts of violence and terrorism from wherever they come.

The 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in The Hague stated that the construction of the barrier in the occupied territory was contrary to international law, which is why the recent demolition of several buildings in East Jerusalem erected near the security barrier is deeply worrying. It is imperative that the Council take action to ensure full respect of the fundamental principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, as it has been repeatedly called on to do. Its inaction gives rise to events that run counter to the repeated calls of the Middle East Quartet for immediate positive steps to be taken to reverse the negative trends on the ground that are endangering the two-State solution, around which there is a near international consensus.

Our delegation reiterates its call for the international community to make concrete progress in supporting the advancement of a peaceful, definitive and just political solution, based on the existence of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security, with borders negotiated on the basis of the 1967 borders, which is the consensus reaffirmed in resolution 2334 (2016).

It is imperative that the prospect of a two-State solution be preserved, as it is only way to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East, restore the rights of the Palestinian people and realize the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, which would enjoy full membership in the United Nations. Our delegation also appreciates and reiterates its support for the various

international initiatives that have been taken for the purpose of having negotiations and peace talks resume between Israel and Palestine.

We are also concerned about the deep-seated humanitarian and political crisis in Gaza. In this regard, our delegation recognizes the tireless efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and reiterates its full support for its mandate. We call upon all donors to maintain their financial commitments so as to alleviate the financial deficit.

In conclusion, I would like to recall Nelson Mandela's first maxim: "no problem is so deep that it cannot be overcome...through discussion and negotiation rather than force and violence".

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

**Mr. Bin Momen** (Bangladesh): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your successful steering of the work of the Security Council in the month of July. I thank Under-Secretary-General Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo for her comprehensive briefing this morning.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

We are holding this meeting at a time when the cause of Palestine has been experiencing unprecedented existential challenges, particularly owing to the absence of any serious political and legal actions by the Security Council to end Israel's illegal, decades-long foreign occupation of the occupied Palestinian territory. In particular, Israel's recent attempt to disfigure historical realities by opening the so-called Jewish Pilgrims Road extending from the Silwan pool to the Al-Buraq Wall constitutes blatant contempt and systematic violations of international law and numerous United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016). Illegal demolition by Israel of approximately 70 apartments of Palestinians as recently as yesterday in Sur Baher displacing some several hundred Palestinians is yet another flagrant violation.

My delegation condemns those unfortunate developments. The limitless aggression, indiscriminate killing of innocent Palestinians, including children, intensification of Israeli settlement policies, ongoing assault on Islamic and Christian holy places, particularly

Al-Aqsa, changing the demography of East Jerusalem, and all other provocative and outrageous actions by Israel, the occupying Power, in defiance of Security Council resolutions make peace in the Middle East as elusive as ever. In this regard, we recall the open-ended extraordinary meeting of the OIC Executive Committee held at the Foreign Minister level in Jeddah last week and fully endorse its final communiqué reiterating, *inter alia*, its condemnation of any attempt to undermine the legal and historical status of the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

Israel's illegal blockade, escalation of military aggression and raids are making the already volatile situation more perilous, thereby exacerbating the humanitarian catastrophe of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. Increasing numbers of Palestinian civilians are being made homeless or forced to live under disastrous circumstances.

Another grave concern is the socioeconomic downturn of the people of Palestine. The realization of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is facing serious challenges in the Palestinian context. The Israeli occupation has been contributing directly to prolonged poverty, unemployment and humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory. The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals would fail miserably if we left our Palestinian brothers and sisters behind, to suffer in their political, social, economic and cultural hardships. We urge the international community's prompt intervention to compel the Israeli authorities to lift the blockade, facilitate the freedom of movement of Palestinian civilians and ensure their access to basic supplies.

Israel's continuous acts of aggression have given rise to an egregious culture of impunity, which is undermining the viability of the State of Palestine and jeopardizing the prospects for realizing the two-State solution. In this situation, we believe that the Security Council cannot remain passive. With the Security Council at the forefront, the international community must fulfil its responsibility to ensure accountability for all Israeli violations, uphold the rule of international law and provide protection for the Palestinian people in the occupied territory.

We reaffirm our support for the accession of the State of Palestine to international organizations and treaties and reiterate our call on the Security Council to recommend and positively consider its admission

as a full member of the United Nations. We also urge the Security Council to do its utmost to implement in a timely manner relevant Council resolutions to end the Israeli occupation, which is the bedrock of achieving lasting peace in the Middle East. The implementation of the road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the efforts of the Quartet are also crucial.

Vulnerability and deepening poverty are increasing the number of Palestinian refugees, which calls to mind the year 1971 when millions of our people had to take refuge in neighbouring India. Knowing full well the pain of distressed humankind, we have opened our doors to host 1.2 million Rohingyas fleeing atrocity crimes in Myanmar. Recognizing the dire need to ensure enhanced, predictable and sustainable funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, we will continue our modest contribution to the Agency.

Compelled by our constitutional and moral obligations and the avowed principle of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh will continue to unwaveringly support the cause of Palestinian struggle until the State of Palestine is established on the basis of a two-State solution and pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

**Mr. Denktaş** (Turkey): There was a moment in history when we were hopeful for peace in Israel and Palestine. That is hardly the case anymore, frankly, and the hopes for a lasting solution are dim. But this gloomy picture could have been avoided; it was not inevitable.

Today, despite continuous international calls, the expansion of illegal settlements continues throughout occupied Palestinian territory. The dramatic escalation of settlement activities that are designed to create new realities on the ground continue to be a cause for concern, as it is an attempt to undermine the two-State vision and the possibility of coexistence.

Parallel to settlement expansion and excavation work, there is also an effort to destroy the demographic character and history of the old city of Al-Quds/Jerusalem. The ongoing destructive excavation tunnel work to open the so-called Pilgrims Road is the latest example of such efforts. In Al-Quds, Palestinians are also facing eviction orders and daily incursions into their neighbourhoods. Their residency statuses are

terminated in violation of international norms. Only yesterday, Palestinian residential buildings, including inhabited homes, were destructed in Sur Baher. I draw the Council's attention to the fact that these demolitions are occurring for the first time in areas under the authority of the Palestinian Authority under the Oslo Accords. This is a breach of international law and relevant Security Council resolutions.

The situation in Al-Haram Al-Sharif is also a cause for concern. For the first time in years, hundreds of settlers entered Al-Haram Al-Sharif during the Ramadan. We saw attacks against Muslims worshipping at Al-Aqsa Mosque. Instead, with its blessed place in all of our hearts, Al-Quds should be a city of peace and harmony, not a place of violence and provocation.

All the foregoing illegal steps must stop immediately. Peace requires Israel to show political will and refrain from provocative and detrimental actions. The international community, in particular the Security Council, cannot turn a blind eye to the blatant disregard for international law. The Council needs to take action, the basis of which should be the only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: the two-State solution based on 1967 borders, with Palestine and Israel living side by side.

The rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination, are not up for negotiation. For decades, the basis for peace negotiations have been the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, as was explicitly reaffirmed in resolution 2334 (2016). These modalities cannot be changed. Economic projects and plans cannot replace the need for dignity, justice and freedom, and no project can succeed without a just peace.

Unfortunately, the plight of Palestinian refugees is compounded by the financial crisis of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Until a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestine conflict is achieved, the work of UNRWA remains vital. It is our collective and moral duty to support the Agency. As the Chair of the UNRWA Advisory Commission and the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, Turkey will continue to contribute to Agency's work. We call upon all actors to do the same. It is high time that States Members of the United Nations stand up for justice and protection of the established parameters for a lasting peace in Palestine.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

**Mr. Al-Mouallimi** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin by congratulating you on your capable leadership of the Security Council's work this month, Mr. President. I would also like to express our deep appreciation to your predecessor, our sister State Kuwait, for its successful presidency last month.

I am honoured to deliver this statement as chair of the Group of Arab States this month. On behalf of the members of the Arab Group, I would also like to express my appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, for her valuable briefing.

The Arab Summit held in Tunis in March and the emergency Arab Summit held in Mecca last month both underscored the primacy of the Palestinian cause. It is therefore a priority for Arab countries. The Summits also reaffirmed the Arab identity of Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine and further highlighted that the Arab countries are committed to peace as a strategic choice. We have underpinned the importance of a lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, which is a strategic Arab choice, embodied by the Arab Peace Initiative, which was adopted by all Arab States in Beirut in 2002 and was endorsed by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The Initiative continues to represent the most comprehensive plan to address all the elements of a final settlement, at the forefront of which is the issue of refugees. It accords Israel acceptance, peace and security. We are committed to the Initiative and all its provisions, including the need to withdraw from Arab occupied territories, especially the occupied Syrian Golan. We call on the international community to join us in working towards the just settlement of that cause.

The Israeli hostile practices persist. We strongly condemn Israeli authorities' demolition of dozens of homes in Sur Baher, in East Jerusalem, an area that is home to hundreds of Palestinian citizens. The Saudi Council of Ministers has condemned such acts, and we call on the international community, particularly the Council, to uphold its responsibilities to protect the Palestinian people and put an end to the Israeli occupation and its systematic violations of Christian and Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem, at the forefront of which is the blessed holy sanctuary of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

We condemn the Israeli attempts to change the historical status of Jerusalem, and we caution against the illegal settlement activities on Palestinian territory. We also call for the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) and underscore the significance of the historic Hashemite custodianship over the Christian and Islamic holy sites in East Jerusalem, particularly Al-Aqsa, and the leading role of Jordan in protecting those sites, as well as the Arab identity of Christian and Muslim sites in Jerusalem.

We stress the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Libya and reiterate our rejection of all military solutions and all external interference. We call for an expeditious, comprehensive political settlement through inclusive dialogue, based on the road map, under the auspices of the United Nations, with a view to restoring security and stability in Libya and ending the suffering of the Libyan people. We reiterate our support for all efforts to eliminate terrorist groups and uproot the threat faced by Libya, its neighbours and the region at large.

We stress the need to achieve a political solution to end the Syrian crisis in a way that fulfils the aspirations of the Syrian people, promotes the integrity and sovereignty of Syria and ends all external interference and active terrorist organizations in Syria, based on the Geneva outcomes, the statements of the International Syria Support Group and relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2254 (2015).

There is no way to stop the bloodshed except through a peaceful settlement that could achieve a real transition to a new political reality, agreed by all components of the Syrian people, through the Geneva road map, which is the only path towards a peaceful solution. We are committed, together with the international community, to alleviating the humanitarian situation in Syria. We reiterate our support for the Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Geir Pedersen, and his efforts to find a solution to the Syrian crisis and to establish a constitutional committee as soon as possible.

The ongoing negative conduct of Iran in the region will lead only to further threats to international peace and security. Iran's clear support for the Houthi coup militias and its supply of arms threaten regional security, commercial shipping lines and civilians in the region. The threat to close the Strait of Hormuz and the continued attacks on and detention of commercial ships require the Council to fulfil its obligations to

stand firmly against such practices in order to maintain international peace and security.

We are seeking to restore peace and security in the region, and the only real means to do so is for all nations to respect the principles of good-neighbourliness and refrain from the use of force or the threat of the use of force and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States. Iran's activities in the region contravene those principles, undermine the requirements to build trust and threaten stability and security. We reaffirm our readiness to establish friendly and cooperative relations with Iran, based on the principles of non-interference in internal affairs and respect for sovereignty.

The continued activity of the Houthi coup militias, which are supported by Iran, and their continued control over critical State institutions in the capital of Sana'a, for the fifth consecutive year have created a hotspot for terrorist organizations in the region, enabled the spread of epidemics and led to the deterioration of humanitarian crises. The militias are using humanitarian assistance as a weapon to maintain their control and achieve their political aspirations. The conduct of those militias and the attacks on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reveal the nature of their ideology and destructive principles. We call on the Council to enhance the implementation of resolutions 2140 (2014), 2216 (2015) and 2451 (2018).

We also emphasize that the solution for the Yemeni crisis is only through political dialogue, in line with the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and the outcomes of Yemen's National Dialogue Conference.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

**Mr. Halvorsen** (Norway): Only a negotiated two-State solution can create durable peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Economic development and institution-building are essential building blocks for a future Palestinian State, but they cannot replace the need for a political resolution to the conflict. Norway shares the concern to ensure urgent improvements in the living conditions of the Palestinian people. It is crucial for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to maintain its capacity to deliver basic services, in particular health care and medication, to Palestine refugees. That is also an important factor for regional stability. Norway will therefore continue to support UNRWA both politically and economically.

A key challenge remains — how to implement projects that can lead to stability, growth and economic development in preparation for a negotiated two-State solution? The obstacles are many and of a political nature, such as the continued occupation, restrictions to access and movement, and internal Palestinian divisions. We call on all those involved to take steps to reverse the current negative trends on the ground, including settlement activity and acts of violence.

Norway strongly regrets the Israeli Government's ongoing demolitions of Palestinian buildings in Wadi Al-Homs, part of Sur Baher in occupied East Jerusalem.

Norway is deeply concerned about the current financial situation of the Palestinian Authority. The international donor group for Palestine, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC), remains the international framework for addressing economic issues between the two parties and the donors. Norway will chair the next meeting of the AHLC, to be held in New York on 26 September. The key priority will be to develop a common strategy to implement concrete measures that will strengthen the Palestinian economy and improve the dire situation in Gaza.

With regard to Syria, we express our support for the early establishment of a constitutional committee. We call for trust-building measures that will contribute to an atmosphere conducive to such a committee's work, including prison releases that initially prioritize women and children. Norway also encourages renewed de-escalation in north-west Syria and the launch of a genuine political process.

The increased tension in the Gulf region is of great concern. It is critical that all actors refrain from actions and statements that may further escalate the situation. Iran's seizure of ships in the Gulf is unacceptable and is contributing to a further escalation of tension. As a leading shipping nation, Norway views the freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce as crucial to secure international trade and cooperation.

Norway remains committed to preserving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran. The agreement plays a crucial role in international non-proliferation and regional stability. We regret all steps that may jeopardize the agreement. Recent enrichment activities by Iran are inconsistent with its commitments and are moving it away from the agreement. We urge Iran to reverse course and return to

full compliance. Norway strongly supports the ongoing measures by France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the European Union to preserve the JCPOA.

Norway expresses great concern about the situation in Yemen, which remains the world's worst humanitarian crisis. We urge all parties to abide by the Stockholm Agreement in its entirety and to commit to a political process under the guidance of Mr. Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen. We call on the Security Council to apply pressure on all parties to live up to their commitments enshrined in international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The de-escalation in Al-Hudaydah is a positive step. It should be utilized to make further progress.

Norway has a long-standing commitment to contribute to peace and security in the Middle East. If elected as a member of the Council for the term of 2021-2022, we will bring that commitment with us. We will remain an active and consistent partner in supporting international efforts that ultimately lead to peaceful solutions in the region.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

**Ms. Rodríguez Abascal** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I should like to endorse the statement that will be made by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Since the last quarterly open debate (see S/PV.8517), far from taking steps to immediately and completely end the illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, greater impetus has been given to the expansion of settlements, which is troubling. Punitive demolitions, seizures of Palestinian structures by the Israeli authorities, the forced displacement of hundreds of Palestinian civilians and the increase in violence have resulted in the continuing deterioration of the situation on the ground. We condemn in the strongest terms the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, all illegal and colonizing policies, practices and measures, as well as the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force against Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law.

In the light of those events, we once again call on the Security Council to fulfil the responsibility

granted by the United Nations Charter to maintain international peace and security. The Council must demand the immediate end of the occupation of the Palestinian territories and the aggressive policies and colonizing practices. It must also demand compliance with its resolutions on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, in particular resolution 2334 (2016).

The complicit silence of the Council is unacceptable. The Council has not even condemned the escalation of violence or the tragic events that have been taking place in the Gaza Strip since 30 March 2018, owing once again to the repeated obstruction of the delegation of the United States.

We express deep concern about Israel's decision not to renew the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron, in compliance with the relevant Council resolutions, the Oslo II Accords and international law, as well as the freezing of the revenue of the Palestinian Authority.

We reaffirm our unstinting support for a comprehensive, fair and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that allows the Palestinian people to exercise the right to self-determination and to have an independent and sovereign State based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as the right of return of refugees.

We express to the Palestinian Government and people our unwavering solidarity and support for Palestine's entry as a full member of the United Nations. We reject the unilateral action of the United States Government to recognize the city of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel; the withdrawal of financial support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; and all unilateral measures and attempts to undermine the two-State solution, which is the only viable and realistic solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We also reject the so-called pact of the century, drawn up by the current United States Government, which ignores both the creation of a Palestinian State and the two-State solution, which has had the historical backing of the United Nations, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and other international actors.

We reiterate our strongest condemnation of the decision of the United States Government to recognize the occupied Golan as the territory of Israel, which constitutes a serious and flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolution 497 (1981). That latest manoeuvre from Washington, which violates the legitimate interests of the Syrian people and the Arab and Islamic nations, will have a serious impact on stability and security in the Middle East and will further increase tensions in this volatile region. We will continue to support the demand of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to recover the Golan Heights and we demand once again the total and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from the Syrian Golan and all occupied Arab territories.

We reject the fabrication of pretexts and concepts attempting to legitimize in the Council the unilateral use of force and aggression against sovereign States. We demand respect for multilateralism, an end to double standards, interference in the internal affairs of others, foreign aggression and support for terrorist groups to promote instability and conflicts in the Middle East.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Maldives.

**Mrs. Hussain** (Maldives): My delegation wishes to thank Peru for organizing today's open debate. I would also like to thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, for her timely briefing.

The situation in the Middle East remains grim for the millions of people suffering in the aftermath of conflicts, terrorist attacks and other acts of violence. Despite numerous debates and calls for action, the situation in the region remains tense, with a high probability of escalation leading to renewed conflict and unrest.

The lack of action by the international community is epitomized by the seven-decade-old question of Palestine — now one of the longest-standing issues on the agenda of the Council. The peace initiatives offered by various interlocutors have so far failed to gain traction to instigate genuine dialogue between the conflicting parties, which is all the more reason why we must continue to strive for an international consensus to resolve the issue.

The plight of the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination will always remain an international priority for the Maldives. Let me remind all Member States that the Council has declared null and void, through resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980), Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine, the annexation of Jerusalem, the shifting of Israel's capital to Jerusalem and the decision by any country to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Our position on the Israeli settlement policy and related activities in the occupied Palestinian territory remains clear and unchanged. We reaffirm resolution 2334 (2016). All settlement activity is illegal under international law and erodes the viability of the two-State solution and the prospects for achieving lasting peace.

Allow me to reaffirm our unwavering support for any resolution involving international consensus on a two-State solution, with the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We urge the Security Council and the international community to redouble their efforts to end the conflict so that the people of Palestine can enjoy meaningful and lasting peace and live in dignity.

The aftermath of the conflict in Syria has presented Member States with new sets of challenges, as refugees and foreign terrorist fighters continue to be held in detention facilities. That is especially true for family members, women and children left behind by foreign terrorist fighters, with no international consensus or framework to effectively deal with the situation. My delegation calls on the Council and the United Nations to facilitate and provide assistance to Member States whereby they can repatriate, rehabilitate and reintegrate those individuals back into society after a thorough threat assessment. The Maldives looks forward to dialogue with its partners in exchanging information and views on what could be done and what measures are most effective in the rehabilitation process.

We must be united in our efforts to avoid the impending humanitarian crisis in Syria and must undertake efforts to ensure that hundreds of malnourished children and women do not perish in those refugee camps.

Today, the humanitarian crisis in Yemen remains one of the largest, with over 20 million people requiring aid and tens of millions at risk of famine. The Maldives

is hopeful because of the remarks made by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen to the Council last week (see S/PV.8578), expressing optimism that we may be nearing the end of that war. Despite positive steps forward, we recognize that the situation in Yemen remains fragile, and we need to find a comprehensive political solution, including the full implementation of the Al-Hudaydah agreement and its mandate.

My Government will remain committed to working with the Council and supporting the Secretary-General's efforts to find a lasting solution to the many conflicts in the Middle East. It is our collective voice and ability to act that will provide a safer world for all of us and future generations.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Al Habib** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank you, Sir, for convening this open debate and align myself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The main development since the previous open debate on this issue (see S/PV.8517) has been the attempts to implement the so-called deal of the century by convening a workshop on Palestine in Bahrain. That initiative is based on ill intent, wrong assumptions and unrealistic approaches, and is therefore definitely doomed to fail. It is based on ill intent simply because it has been proposed by the United States, a country that is well known for its biased policies rendering unconditional support for Israel, as well as unjust practices towards the Palestinians. The latest examples include moving the United States Embassy to Jerusalem and recognizing Israel's sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan, both of which are in flagrant violation of the pre-emptory norms of international law.

Basically during the past seven decades, the Security Council has been unable to force the occupying Power to end the occupation because of the unreserved support of the United States for Israel. Such systematic United States support, even when Israel is committing the most heinous and barbaric crimes, has emboldened the Zionist regime to continue, with total impunity, to commit all international crimes systematically.

Relying on such support, Israel has also continued its expansionist policies and illegitimate practices in oppressing the Palestinians, in gross violation of their basic rights. One example of such brutality is the decade-long illegal blockade by Israel on Gaza, turning it into the largest open-air prison in the world. That inhumane blockade must come to an end. Moreover, the so-called deal of the century is based on wrong assumptions simply because it is aimed at buying all causes and aspirations, honour and dignity, property and territory, and the inalienable rights of an entire nation. It is certainly an illusion and will therefore definitely fail completely.

The cause of Palestine is based on the struggle of a nation for freedom, liberty, independence, complete control over all its ancestral lands, preserving its religious and cultural identity and sites, and saving its honour and dignity. Diminishing and reducing such noble and holy causes to economic improvement is the most wrong-headed assumption ever for resolving the question of Palestine. Additionally, the so-called deal of the century is based on an unrealistic approach, simply because all Palestinian groups, without exception, have strongly rejected it.

Furthermore, Al-Quds Al-Sharif, in addition to the Palestinians, is dear to all Muslims, and no Muslim in the world is ready to accept such a disgraceful plan. Al-Quds Al-Sharif is and will remain the capital of Palestine.

History tells us that no nation has compromised on its sacred causes, and the nation of Palestine is no exception. The mere struggle and resistance of Palestinians over the course of the past seven decades clearly indicate how resolute, determined and persistent they are in realizing their noble objectives of liberty and independence. They have suffered economically for seven decades to liberate their lands. What they need is freedom and liberation. Once the occupation ends, they know very well how to improve the economy of their independent State.

At the same time, the international community should maintain its strong support to the Palestinians in their struggle to liberate their homeland. Under the pretext of economic improvement, the main aim and true nature of the so-called deal of the century are to consolidate the occupation. The world must resist that unjust move. The Council must also end the vicious cycle of being bullied by one of its permanent members,

which unlawfully and brazenly continues rendering this organ inactive and ineffective, regarding Israel. That hypocritical policy should come to an end and the Council must be able to play its Charter-based role in support of Palestinians.

Ultimately, like any other crisis, the question of Palestine cannot be solved without addressing its root causes. There is no magic solution. The unlawful occupation of Palestine is the main source of the crisis and it can end only by ending the occupation.

Finally, the Israeli representative, in total disregard for the agenda of today's meeting, which is respected by all and focused on the Palestinian question, unsuccessfully tried to distract our attention from the crimes and unlawful policies of its regime. He should have explained why they continue the occupation of Palestine, investing in death and destruction, invading other countries, imposing an inhumane blockade on Gaza, killing innocent children, demolishing homes, schools and hospitals, promoting racism, developing all types of weapons of mass destruction, including hundreds of nuclear weapons, refusing to join treaties banning weapons of mass destruction, in particular the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and rejecting the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. It must stop its fabrications, lawlessness, brutality and crimes and be held accountable.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

**Mr. Moncada** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has the honour to speak on behalf of the 120 States members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Just three days ago, the Movement's Ministerial Committee on Palestine met in Caracas to review the most recent developments in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Regrettably, the situation remains critical and is clearly unsustainable. At that meeting, we unanimously adopted a political declaration in which we renewed our permanent solidarity with the Palestinian people, their inalienable rights and their just cause.

The States members of the Movement reiterate that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the Israeli occupation at its centre, remains a serious threat to

international peace and security and requires urgent attention and action, in accordance with international law, the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, the Charter of the United Nations itself and available multilateral diplomacy instruments.

The Security Council has a clear responsibility to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security. This organ must uphold its obligations under the Charter and act accordingly to implement its own resolutions, which are not only the basis for a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the conflict, but also legally binding on all States Members of the United Nations. That is why we are deeply concerned by the fact that the Security Council has been unable, for too long now, to fulfil its mandate on such an important issue, owing to the use of the veto by one of its permanent members. We call on the Security Council to overcome its paralysis with regard to the Palestinian question and to fulfil its responsibilities under the Charter.

The Movement continues to believe that resolution 2334 (2016) is the only viable path to peace as it establishes the essential requirements and parameters for achieving a just settlement on the basis of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders and respecting the terms of reference historically endorsed by the international community, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, with a view to ensuring that the Palestinian people can realize their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and independence in their State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We therefore call for full respect for resolution 2334 (2016) and the effective implementation of its provisions and the obligations outlined therein by the occupying Power, including also in terms of the obligations of States with respect to distinction — an issue that is paramount for determining the responsibilities borne by entities tasked with administering justice.

With regard to the Gaza Strip, the situation remains of great concern to the Movement, in particular the grave humanitarian situation, which, regrettably, continues to deteriorate day by day. The Movement therefore reiterates its call for the complete lifting of the Israeli blockade, which continues to subject more than 2 million Palestinian girls, boys, women and men in Gaza to indescribable humanitarian, social and economic suffering. The crisis must be addressed

in a comprehensive manner, in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law, all relevant United Nations resolutions, within the context of the overall situation resulting from the ongoing illegitimate and belligerent Israeli foreign occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and all calls for an end to the occupation.

In that regard, we reiterate the need to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in ensuring its continued and uninterrupted provision of vital humanitarian and development assistance to the more than 5.4 million Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, as reaffirmed by the international community at the Agency's recent donors conference.

We also express our concern about the deterioration of the socioeconomic conditions faced by Palestinians under occupation. Those conditions have been exacerbated by the financial crisis of the Palestinian Government due to Israel's illegal withholding of Palestinian tax revenue. We call for an end to that unfair and punitive practice, while demanding respect for the agreements signed.

Given that Israel has clearly renounced its obligations as an occupying Power to provide protection to the Palestinian civilian population under the Fourth Geneva Convention, the States members of the Movement are obliged to reiterate their call on the international community to ensure the protection of the Palestinian people. That is an urgent matter as it pertains to alleviating the critical insecurity of the occupied Palestinian territory and preventing the loss of more innocent lives.

The Movement reiterates its concern about the fact that Israel is not being held accountable to justice for all the violations it has committed, many of which could even be considered war crimes. The lack of justice only fuels impunity, leads to new crimes and further destabilizes the situation on the ground, thereby diminishing the prospects for peace, as noted in the report of the internationalIndependent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (A/HRC/40/74), established by the Human Rights Council. That is why we continue to call for international action — by the Security Council in particular — to guarantee the immediate

cessation of violations being systematically committed by the occupying Power against the Palestinian civilian population under occupation. Israel must fulfil its obligations and responsibilities under international law.

With regard to the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, the Movement reaffirms that all measures and actions that have been or may be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, such as the illegal decision of December 14 1981, seeking to modify the legal status, physical nature and demographic composition of the occupied Syrian Golan and its institutional structure, as well as all of Israel's measures to apply its own jurisdiction and administration in this area, are null and void, lack validity and of no legal effect. Therefore, we once again demand that Israel comply with resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw completely from the occupied Syrian Golan along the borders of 4 June 1967, in compliance with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We also reiterate our condemnation of the arbitrary and unilateral declaration by the United States on recognizing the Golan Heights as part of Israel, and renew our call on the Security Council to also condemn this act of provocation.

Regarding Lebanon, the Movement's member States reaffirm the need for Israel to withdraw from all Lebanese territories — including the areas of the Shaba'a farmlands, the Kfar Shuba hills and the Lebanese part of the village of Al-Ghajar — behind the Blue Line. We urge Israel to cease its persistent and serious violations of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Lebanon, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions and resolution 1701 (2006) in particular.

Finally, we reiterate our calls on the international community to act collectively and responsibly to defend international law and to step up all necessary efforts in support of the Palestinian cause, with the ultimate objective of ending this historic and grievous injustice. We reaffirm our commitment to promoting a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine in all its aspects, including the suffering of Palestinian refugees. We also reaffirm our support for the heroic Palestinian people in their struggle to achieve justice and realize their inalienable rights and legitimate national aspirations, including the right to self-determination, freedom and independence in their State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bahrain.

**Mr. Alrowaiei** (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting, which comes at a time when the challenges and tensions in the region are increasing.

We are grateful that Member States have this opportunity to participate in this discussion on the Middle East at a time when we are witnessing extremely important developments. We would also like to express our deepest appreciation to your delegation, Sir, for its presidency of the Council this month, and congratulate the delegation of the brotherly State of Kuwait on its successful Council presidency in June. Finally, we thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, for her excellent briefing.

The importance of the role of the international community in implementing these resolutions on peace and stability in the Middle East, as well as in preparing the necessary conditions to provide greater chances for a successful political settlement is more evident today than ever before. This role includes providing protection to the aggrieved, refraining from interfering in the internal affairs of States and ensuring that States are able to preserve their sovereignty, security, independence and regional integrity.

We strongly condemn the actions of the Israeli authorities in Sur Baher, in occupied Jerusalem. In that regard, we reaffirm that a comprehensive, just and final peace in the region will be achieved only by resolving the Palestinian question, enabling the brotherly Palestinian people to recover their legitimate rights, like other peoples of the world, by building their independent State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We call for the preservation of the status and historical secular character of this city based on the Arab Peace Initiative, the two-State solution and all relevant international resolutions,

The Kingdom of Bahrain hosted a conference entitled "Peace to Prosperity" in June, in partnership with the United States of America, which was attended by many Heads of State, as well as civil society and private sector representatives from the region. The conference aligned with Bahrain's efforts and commitment to realizing the aspirations of the brotherly Palestinian people in terms of development and prosperity and

in support of initiatives to strengthen the Palestinian economy. Indeed, the next steps in the process will require a convergence of all international efforts to ensure a bright economic future that is committed to peace and to supporting development for all peoples of the region. The conference achieved these objectives by encouraging investment in the brotherly Palestinian State to strengthen the economy and ensure prosperity and development for its people. In that regard, we welcome the great efforts made by the United States of America towards achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

In conclusion, achieving international peace and security requires us to join ranks and work towards the development of innovative mechanisms to face new challenges. The Kingdom of Bahrain, for its part, will continue to work within the regional community to resolve disputes peacefully in order to achieve security and stability in the region and throughout the world.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

**Mr. AlMutawa** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. We would also like to express our thanks to Ms. DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, for her briefing this morning.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The issues of the Middle East are, without a doubt, of utmost importance to the Council. We have heard briefings by United Nations officials about the gravity of the situation in the region and the need to take decisive measures as new crises and challenges have emerged. This situation requires the international community to take action to reduce tensions, ensure the maintenance of regional security and stability and reach political solutions to the long-standing crises in the region, particularly the Palestinian issue.

The United Arab Emirates calls on the international community to assume its responsibilities to end the suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people and to establish an independent Palestinian State along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. We emphasize the need

for Israel to cease its illegal practices of Judaization, creating new facts on the ground, expanding settlements and demolishing Palestinian property, the latest incidence of which was the demolition of 70 houses in East Jerusalem yesterday. We emphasize the need for the international community to take all measures necessary to end these grave violations, given their grave implications for the security and stability of the region as a whole.

In our quest for a just and comprehensive solution, we must not lose sight of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories or of the importance of continuing and intensifying humanitarian assistance.

Based on my country's long-standing support for the Palestinian people, in 2017 and 2018 the United Arab Emirates provided more than \$364 million to our Palestinian brothers and to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

We renew our commitment to supporting regional and international efforts to advance the Middle East peace process. The United Arab Emirates also renews its commitment, within the coalition, to supporting the legitimate efforts to reach a political solution in Yemen, based on the relevant Council resolutions, including resolution 2216 (2015) and 2451 (2018). In that connection, we reiterate our support for the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen to implement the Stockholm Agreement and relaunch the political process. We emphasize that there is no military solution to the conflict and a political solution is the only way forward.

The United Arab Emirates condemns in the strongest terms the attacks by Houthi militias on the territory of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through the use of ballistic missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles, as well as the ongoing threat posed to navigation in the Red Sea. The situation calls for the Council to take more decisive measures to end these violations and prevent the flow of Iranian weapons to Yemen, which is a flagrant violation of resolutions 2216 (2015) and 2231 (2015).

The Houthi attacks on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia undermine the prospects for progress in the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement and the ceasefire in Al-Hudaydah at a time when the United Arab Emirates and the Arab coalition are providing

an opportunity for peace by redeploying forces in Yemen and promoting political efforts aimed at a comprehensive solution.

On the humanitarian front, my country strongly condemns the practices of the Houthi militias, which have exacerbated the humanitarian crisis through the looting of humanitarian aid and the denial of access to its intended beneficiaries. The United Arab Emirates will continue to work with the United Nations and key partners to improve the humanitarian situation and meet the needs of the brotherly Yemeni people. The United Arab Emirates has provided a total of \$5.5 billion in assistance to Yemen since 2015.

My country is following with great concern the latest development in Syria and Libya. We stress that a political solution is the only way to end these crises. We call on all parties concerned to sit at the negotiating table and find a solution to the protracted crises within the framework of the relevant Council resolutions. In that context, we express our concern about the exploitation by terrorist groups of the security vacuum in Libya and the growing migrant tragedy in the Mediterranean, which makes it more difficult to reach a peaceful solution to the crisis. We call for concerted efforts to end the crisis and restore stability in Libya.

As the international community, we share a collective responsibility to avoid conflict and tension in the region and to prevent any party from attempting to undermine the security and safety of maritime navigation and global energy supplies. Sabotaging and threatening commercial ships and the lives of their crew is a serious development that threatens not only maritime trade, but broader regional stability. The United Arab Emirates emphasizes the importance of ensuring freedom of navigation and the integrity of energy supply lines and of safeguarding the security of sea lanes and straits, particularly the Straits of Hormuz and Bab Al-Mandab. My country also stresses the need for patience, wisdom and good judgment, and calls on all parties to prioritize diplomacy and to restore stability in the regional.

In conclusion, we affirm that the gravity of the situation in the Middle East requires the international community to pay serious and credible attention and the Council to assume its responsibilities to end all destabilizing acts and practices, including violence by extremist and terrorist groups with the support and funding of certain States, and to hold accountable the

parties responsible for the outbreak and continuation of conflicts in the region.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of Israel has asked to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

**Mr. Bourgel** (Israel): After hearing Lebanon's statement, allow me to make some clarifications regarding the situation in our region.

This 11 August will mark 13 years since the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), calling for the establishment, between the Blue Line and the Litani river, of an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). It is clear that this call has yet to be answered.

For the past 13 years, Hizbullah's presence in UNIFIL's area of operations has only amplified, converting all villages into command-and-control centres, weapons warehouses and intelligence bases. Hizbullah has only entrenched itself further into southern Lebanon, strengthening and widening its grip. All of those activities are taking place in parallel to the exponential growth of Hizbullah's rocket and missile capabilities.

Eight months ago, we came to the Chamber following Israel's initiation of Operation Northern Shield (see S/PV.8432). The discovery and demolition of six terror tunnels, in violation of both Israeli sovereignty and resolution 1701 (2006), should have, at least, raised questions regarding the claim that UNIFIL's area of operations remains relatively calm. Let us be very clear — UNIFIL's area of operations is anything but calm.

Eight months have elapsed and UNIFIL has yet to be granted access to the tunnel's entry points on the Lebanese side. The claim of private property cannot continue to deny UNIFIL the ability to discharge its mandate. The Lebanese Armed Forces and the Lebanese authorities have the responsibility to extend sovereignty over their land and are failing to do so. As a result, they are only serving Hizbullah's game. This situation should be unacceptable to anyone whose goal is to prevent a new war. Today more than ever, the question of where the Lebanese Government ends and where Hizbullah begins remains pressing and needs to be answered.

The restriction of movement of UNIFIL forces in its area of operations is cause for alarm. UNIFIL should report all restrictions in its movement to the fullest extent, detailing where the restrictions took place, who was responsible and why. The Security Council should demand detailed maps with coordinates pointing to the locations of those incidents. No one should accept any assault on UNIFIL troops or any seizure of their material. The Security Council must ensure that the Lebanese authorities investigate such attacks thoroughly and swiftly. Turning a blind eye is simply not an option.

The Secretariat's report regarding the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) should reflect accurately the dangerous situation developing on the ground. In that sense, the creation of a map that would show where UNIFIL is successfully operating at this time and where it is not would be very helpful. Weapons are pouring into and out of Lebanon and the Lebanese authorities show no sign of making any effort to fix this urgent problem. The international community and the Security Council must ensure that the arms embargo set forth in resolution 1701 (2006) is fully implemented and duly reported.

*The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.*