



# Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

Provisional

## 8869<sup>th</sup> meeting

Wednesday, 29 September 2021, 10.10 a.m.

New York

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<i>President:</i>	Ms. Byrne Nason . . . . .	(Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	China . . . . .	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Estonia . . . . .	Mr. Jürgenson
	France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
	India . . . . .	Mr. Gotru
	Kenya . . . . .	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico . . . . .	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Niger . . . . .	Mr. Abarry
	Norway . . . . .	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Khoroshev
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines . . . . .	Ms. King
	Tunisia . . . . .	Mr. Ladeb
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Mills
	Viet Nam . . . . .	Mr. Dang

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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21-26845 (E)



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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

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

**The President:** In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process; Ms. Mai Farsakh, Planning Manager, Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights; and Ms. Meredith Rothbart, co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Amal-Tikva.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Wennesland.

**Mr. Wennesland:** On behalf of the Secretary-General, I will devote this briefing to presenting his 19th report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), covering the period from 12 June to 27 September.

Resolution 2334 (2016) calls on Israel to “immediately and completely cease all settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem” and to “fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard”.

During the reporting period, there were no new settlement housing plans advanced, approved or tendered.

On 2 July, some 50 Israeli settler families left the settlement outpost of Evyatar, illegal also under Israeli law, following an agreement with the Israeli Government that the Israeli military would re-establish a presence at the site and that a land survey would be conducted to determine land status.

Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures continued across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Citing the absence of Israeli-issued building permits, which are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain, 302 structures were demolished or seized by Israeli authorities or demolished by their owners to avoid heavy Israeli demolition fees. These actions displaced 433 people, including 251 children and 102 women.

On 7 July, Israeli authorities demolished some 30 structures, of which 17 were provided as humanitarian assistance, in the Bedouin community of Humsa Al-Baqai'a, in the Jordan Valley.

On 14 July, Israeli authorities confiscated at least 49 structures in the Bedouin community of Ras Al-Tin, in Ramallah governorate. As a result, 84 people, including 53 children and 14 women, were displaced.

On 11 August, the Jerusalem Local Affairs Court froze the demolition of several dozen structures in the Al-Bustan section of the Silwan neighbourhood until 10 February 2022, pending ongoing planning discussions.

On 2 August, Israel's Supreme Court held a hearing to consider an appeal request by four Palestinian families facing forced eviction in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. The judges made a proposal, which was not accepted, and the hearing was adjourned with no date to reconvene. There are currently some 970 Palestinians facing eviction in East Jerusalem.

Resolution 2334 (2016) calls for

“immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including all acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction”.

Unfortunately, daily violence continued. Overall, 24 Palestinians, including two women and five children, were killed by Israeli security forces during demonstrations, clashes, security operations and other incidents. Some 4,814 Palestinians, including 10 women and 530 children, were injured. Of these, 3,369 injuries were due to tear gas inhalation. Some 205 people were injured by live ammunition. One Israeli soldier was killed by Palestinians and 41 Israelis, including seven women and one child, were injured by Palestinians in clashes, rock and Molotov cocktail throwing, attacks and other incidents.

Beita village, in the occupied West Bank, remained a flashpoint, where demonstrations against the nearby Israeli settlement outpost of Evyatar often escalated into clashes between Palestinians and the Israeli security forces. Since June, four Palestinians, including one child, have been shot and killed and 3,530 others injured by Israeli forces during these clashes.

On 16 June during protests in Beita, Israeli security forces shot a 16-year-old boy, who later died from his

injuries. During a demonstration on 24 September, a Palestinian man was killed in an exchange of fire with Israeli security forces.

On 24 June, Palestinian political activist Nizar Banat died following an arrest operation by Palestinian security forces in Hebron, during which he was reportedly beaten severely. Banat's death sparked several demonstrations since late June, leading to dozens of arrests; all were subsequently released. On 27 September, a Palestinian military court held its first hearing for the 14 officers from the Palestinian security forces charged with the death of Nizar Banat.

On 18 July, three Israelis, including a one-year-old child, were injured by stones thrown by Palestinians near Damascus Gate in Jerusalem's Old City.

On 23 July, Israeli security forces shot killed a 17-year-old Palestinian during clashes in Nabi Saleh. Israeli security forces stated that the boy was throwing stones.

On 28 July, an 11-year-old Palestinian boy was killed in Beit Ummar after Israeli security forces fired at the car he was travelling in with his father and siblings. The next day, Israeli security forces shot and killed a Palestinian man amid clashes during the boy's funeral.

On 16 August, four Palestinians were killed and another injured in an exchange of fire with Israeli security forces during an Israeli search operation in the Jenin refugee camp.

On 24 August, Israeli forces shot and killed a 15-year-old Palestinian boy in the Balata refugee camp, east of Nablus. According to Israeli officials, the boy had been preparing to throw a large rock at Israeli security forces personnel from a rooftop. However, witnesses disputed the account of Israeli security forces.

On 31 August, Israeli security forces shot and killed a 39-year-old Palestinian man in Beit Ur, west of Ramallah, under unclear circumstances. Israeli security forces announced that it would open an investigation into the killing.

On 10 September, following a call from Fatah and Hamas, demonstrations linked to six escaped prisoners were held across the occupied West Bank and Gaza, with several escalating into clashes with Israeli security forces, resulting in 183 Palestinians injured.

On 26 September, Israeli forces conducted a search-and-arrest operation targeting what Israel said were Hamas operatives in several locations in the West Bank. Five Palestinians were killed, including a 16-year-old boy, and seven others were injured during exchanges of fire between Israeli forces and Palestinians. Two Israeli security personnel were also injured.

In Gaza, Palestinian militants launched five rockets and numerous incendiary balloons into Israel, injuring four civilians, including one child, all while running to shelter, and causing dozens of fires. In response, Israeli forces carried out 55 air strikes on what they said were military targets in the Strip, resulting in damage but no injuries.

On 21 August in Gaza, thousands of people participated in a demonstration at the perimeter fence. Hundreds hurled stones and, reportedly, improvised explosive devices at Israeli security forces, who responded with live ammunition and tear gas. Some 41 Palestinians were injured, including 24 children. Two Palestinians, including a boy, subsequently died of their injuries. One Israeli soldier was critically injured and later died of his wounds. On 23 August, Israeli forces carried out eight air strikes against what Israel said were Hamas military targets.

Across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, settler-related violence continued, including reports of armed settlers carrying out attacks against Palestinians, in proximity to Israel security forces. On 17 August, a 15-year-old Palestinian boy was attacked in the northern part of the occupied West Bank, during which a group of Israeli settlers kidnapped the boy and brutally assaulted him.

A total of 102 attacks occurred, in which Israeli settlers or other civilians injured 36 Palestinians or reportedly damaged property. Palestinians perpetrated some 193 attacks against Israeli settlers and other civilians in the occupied West Bank, including throwing stones, Molotov cocktails and pipe bombs at civilian vehicles, resulting in 23 injuries and damage to property.

On 21 August, Palestinian security forces arrested 23 people in Ramallah for their participation in a planned demonstration. On numerous occasions, Palestinian security forces restricted the freedom of expression and assembly on demonstrators and used force, including beating them with batons and indiscriminately firing tear gas and stun grenades. Women present at the

demonstrations reported sexual harassment and gender-based threats on social media afterwards.

During the reporting period, Israeli security forces arrested two prominent human rights defenders, one in Ramallah and another in Bethlehem. Israeli security forces also raided and searched three Palestinian civil society organizations located in Area A of the occupied West Bank and closed one for six months for undisclosed security reasons.

Resolution 2334 (2016) calls for the parties to refrain from acts of provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric. Some Palestinian and Israeli officials continued to use such rhetoric during the reporting period. On 27 June, an Israeli member of the Knesset challenged the status quo on the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount, stating

“our demand is full sovereignty, raising the Israeli flag and expelling all Waqf elements seeking to harm us”.

On 20 June, a senior Hamas official said that “neither words nor messages” were needed to resolve the status of Jerusalem, and that the movement would arrive in Jerusalem with the help of barrages of hundreds of rockets fired at Tel Aviv.

Resolution 2334 (2016) reiterated calls by the Middle East Quartet for affirmative steps to be taken immediately to reverse negative trends on the ground that imperil the two-State solution. On 13 September, the United Nations launched a cash assistance programme to aid nearly 100,000 needy families in Gaza. The effort is supported by the State of Qatar, with \$40 million provided over four months. In addition, some \$45 million of the requested \$95 million has been raised for the United Nations humanitarian flash appeal, and nearly \$55 million has been mobilized in support of the humanitarian response more broadly.

In Gaza, Israel eased access restrictions imposed during the May escalation. In addition to key humanitarian assistance, access was progressively facilitated for commercial goods and materials for international projects, including allowing some 3,000 tons of rebar outside the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, with nearly 20,000 trucks entering Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing during the reporting period. The entry of materials and trade has since returned to pre-escalation levels. Moreover, on 1 September, Israel announced it would increase entry

permits for traders and businesspeople from 2,000 to 7,000, expand the Gaza fishing zone from 12 to 15 nautical miles, allow the entry of more goods and equipment and increase the supply of fresh water to Gaza by 5 million cubic metres a year.

Israel continued to deduct an amount of the clearance revenues from Israel to the Palestinian Authority (PA) equivalent to what Israel calculates is paid by the PA to Palestinian security prisoners and the families of those killed in the context of attacks. The PA continues to face a growing fiscal crisis that has a severe impact on its ability to cover minimum expenditures, including Government salaries and payments to needy households.

Following a meeting between President Abbas and Defence Minister Gantz on 30 August, the first such meeting between both sides in years, Israel said it would provide a \$150 million loan to the PA, to be repaid through commensurate deductions from the clearance revenues. Israel also announced plans to issue identification cards for thousands of undocumented foreign nationals in the occupied West Bank and grant an additional 15,000 permits for Palestinian workers to enter Israel, along with an additional 1,000 building permits for Palestinians in Area C of the West Bank.

On 6 September, the Palestinian Authority announced that it would hold local elections on 11 December for all villages and municipalities in category C, the smallest 388 of the approximately 450 councils overall. On 27 September, the PA announced that the remaining local elections would be held on 23 March 2022, including for 11 local councils in Gaza, pending an agreement for them to take place in that second phase.

On 16 August, schools managed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) opened for more than 300,000 girls and boys across the occupied Palestinian territory. However, UNRWA is once again struggling to obtain funding to operate in the last months of the year. A disruption in UNRWA services will deny hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, namely young people, across the region the essential rights to a dignified life, education, health, food and housing.

In its resolution 2334 (2016), the Security Council called upon all States to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967. No

such steps were taken during the reporting period. Resolution 2334 (2016) also called upon all parties to continue, inter alia, to exert collective efforts to launch credible negotiations.

On 15 July, the Envoys of the Middle East Quartet met virtually to discuss the most recent developments on the ground and agreed to remain engaged on the matter and chart a way forward.

On 2 September, the Presidents of Egypt, Jordan and Palestine met in Cairo. All three leaders pledged to work together to resume peace negotiations, in accordance with international legitimacy, under the auspices of the Quartet.

In conjunction with International Day of Peace on 21 September, Palestinian and Israeli peace organizations hosted several events to promote the establishment of a long-term solution to the conflict and warn about the costs of maintaining the status quo.

In conclusion, allow me to share the Secretary-General's observations concerning the implementation of the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016) during the reporting period.

I reiterate that all settlements are illegal under international law and that they undermine the prospects for achieving a viable two-State solution, in line with United Nations resolutions, international law and prior agreements. The pause in new advancements and tenders of plans for housing units in settlements observed during this reporting period must become permanent.

I remain deeply concerned by the continued demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures, which have included internationally funded humanitarian projects. I urge Israel to cease demolitions and evictions, in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law, and to approve plans that would enable these communities to build legally and address their development needs.

I am deeply troubled by the continued loss of life and serious injuries in the occupied Palestinian territory. I am appalled that children continue to be victims of violence. I reiterate that security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable in order to protect life. Pertinent authorities must carry out thorough, independent, impartial and prompt investigations into all instances of possible excessive use of force and hold perpetrators accountable.

I am deeply concerned by the continued settler-related violence in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israel, as the occupying Power, has an obligation to ensure the safety and security of the Palestinian population and to investigate such attacks. I underscore that all perpetrators of violence must be held accountable and swiftly brought to justice.

The launching of indiscriminate rockets and incendiary devices towards Israeli civilian population centres violates international law and must stop.

I would like to reiterate that the fate of two Israeli civilians and that of the bodies of two Israel Defense Forces soldiers held by Hamas in Gaza remain an important humanitarian concern. I call upon Hamas to provide information on their status, as required by international humanitarian law. I also remain deeply concerned by the continued Israeli practice of holding the bodies of Palestinians. I call upon Israel to return withheld bodies to their families, in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law.

The death of Nizar Banat while in the custody of Palestinian Security forces is unacceptable. I call on the Palestinian Authority to ensure that his death and all allegations of use of disproportionate force against protesters by Palestinian security forces be investigated and those responsible held accountable. All arrests of human rights defenders, journalists and activists on charges that interfere with their exercise of fundamental freedoms of expression must cease.

I welcome Qatar's generous contribution to support vulnerable families and improve the dire socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. The United Nations will continue to work closely with the Palestinian Authority and partners, including Egypt, to solidify the ceasefire, allow the entry of urgent humanitarian assistance and stabilize the situation in Gaza.

While materials for humanitarian assistance have entered Gaza more regularly, predictable access for materials necessary for stability and economic recovery remains a key challenge. All materials required to implement the 2021 humanitarian response plan and the May 2021 flash appeal should be allowed into Gaza. All parties must facilitate unimpeded access for humanitarian relief. Humanitarian staff from the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations must also be able to enter and exit Gaza



on a regular basis. Hamas must cease practices that hinder the delivery of crucial humanitarian assistance.

A recent assessment by UN-Women of the impact of the May hostilities has highlighted the importance of addressing the protection needs of women and children in Gaza. I encourage support for United Nations partners to continue to offer gender-based-violence-related services.

The Palestinian Authority's finances continue to be of serious concern. In addition to the severe impact of the occupation on the economy, Israelis and Palestinians should urgently resolve the impasse over prisoner payments and the other fiscal files. The scope of private-banking-sector lending to the Palestinian Authority is now at its limit. I encourage donors to provide urgent support to the Palestinian Authority.

I welcome recent high-level contacts between Israeli and Palestinian officials and the steps taken by the Israeli Government to ease the economic pressure on the Palestinian Authority, and I encourage their further expansion. I encourage both Parties to take urgent steps that are necessary to stabilize the Palestinian economy and strengthen Palestinian institutions. I also urge the implementation of existing agreements by both sides. The next meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee can examine how outstanding issues can be addressed by the parties, with the support of donor community and the United Nations.

I reiterate the gratitude of the United Nations to all donors who continue to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). I urge Member States to sustain the funding levels of UNRWA's programme budget in the past years and advance disbursements of funds as much as possible to avoid a disruption of essential services and humanitarian aid across the occupied Palestinian territory. We must provide the Agency with adequate resources to fulfil the mandate it was given by the General Assembly. Investing in UNRWA remains an indispensable investment in regional stability and support for the goal of Middle East peace.

Crucially, Gaza requires political solutions that will see a focus on working towards advancing intra-Palestinian unity, lifting the debilitating closures in Gaza, in line with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), and, ultimately, returning to a peace process that will end the occupation and create a viable two-State solution. Palestinian unity is crucial to advancing

a two-State solution. It is therefore critical that the Egyptian-led intra-Palestinian reconciliation efforts continue. The United Nations stands firm in its support of these efforts. The holding of elections in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza would be a crucial step towards Palestinian unity, giving renewed legitimacy to national institutions, including a democratically elected Parliament and Government in Palestine. I encourage the Palestinian Authority to resume the election process as soon as possible.

I am encouraged that many Israelis and Palestinians remain committed to achieving a two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace despite the significant challenges. We in the international community must support the civil society organizations that continue to work tirelessly to build trust and advance the prospects for peace.

In closing, while I am encouraged by the recent engagement of senior Israeli and Palestinian officials, we must continue our efforts to address the worrying situation on the ground, including reversing negative trends across the occupied Palestinian territory and stabilizing the fragile situation in Gaza. We must now re-energize efforts aimed at establishing a legitimate political horizon that will end the occupation in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements in pursuit of achieving the vision of two States — Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestinian State — living side by side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

I once again urge Israelis, Palestinians, States of the region and the broader international community to take practical steps that will enable the parties to re-engage on the path to peace. I will continue to actively engage in advancing those efforts with my counterparts in the Middle East Quartet, key regional partners and Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Wennesland for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Farsakh.

**Ms. Farsakh:** We would like to attest before the Security Council to the blatant disregard of the State of Israel for international law in its continued settlement expansion into Palestinian territory, at the expense of

Palestinians' individual right to housing and collective right to self-determination, among other rights, such as the enjoyment of natural resources, private property, freedom of movement and, with the emergence of settler violence, personal security.

The settler population now stands at nearly 670,000 persons across 132 settlements and 140 outposts in Area C and 13 settlement blocs in East Jerusalem, controlling nearly 43 per cent of the territory of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem — an enterprise amounting to the transfer of a State's population into occupied territory. Since the adoption of resolution 2334 (2016), approximately 60,000 additional settlers have taken occupancy of the occupied Palestinian territory through the addition of 43 new outposts and the expansion of existing settlements, as reflected in the published tenders for 15,900 new housing units, as per data published by Peace Now.

More plans have since been announced in 2021, involving 9,000 housing units in the Atarot settlement, south of Ramallah, and 3,412 housing units in E-1, in the Jerusalem periphery, among others. More threatening still are the plans being advanced to retroactively authorize illegal outposts situated on Palestinian private land by declaring the lands as State land after the fact, as is being attempted in the case of the Evyatar outpost, constructed in May in the Nablus governorate. Earlier in 2021, authorization plans were also furthered for another two outposts: Havat Yair in the Salfit governorate and Nofei Nehemia in the Nablus governorate.

Settler violence, actively or tacitly supported by the Israeli army, has been among the key measures employed by settlers in constructing and maintaining settlements and outposts on Palestinian lands. Such violence takes the form of verbal assault and intimidation, physical attack up to murder, the destruction of property and fencing off land, among other measures. According to data collected by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 441 settler attacks were documented against Palestinians and Palestinian property in the occupied Palestinian territory in the first five months of 2021, which is nearly a threefold increase when compared to the monthly average of settler violence incidents the year prior.

Facilitating the process of settlement expansion are Israel's restrictive zoning and planning policies, which effectively preclude Palestinians from obtaining and/or

affording building permits and leaves the great majority of residents vulnerable to the threat of demolition, as reflected in 241 villages being completely designated as Area C, nearly all Bedouin communities receiving blanket demolition orders and at least a third of the Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem lacking Israeli-issued building permits. Since the adoption of resolution 2334 (2016), Israel has only intensified demolition and displacement efforts in clearing the way for settlement expansion. Between January 2016 and August 2021, 3,255 Palestinian structures were demolished, displacing 5,622 women, men, girls and boys.

The financial, social and psychological ramifications of living in anticipation, or in the aftermath, of a demolition or violent act by an Israeli involve far-reaching impacts on the lives of Palestinians, from the loss of property or an inability to access livelihood resource and the associated financial impacts to the loss of social cohesion and freedom of movement, trauma and the resulting effects on mental health — for example, depression/anxiety, higher rates of delusional, obsessive, compulsive and psychotic thoughts and domestic violence and, in the case of children, withdrawal, attention difficulties, delinquency and violent behaviour. According to a study by Save the Children, having to cope with trauma emanating from house demolition in an environment of family trauma serves to marginalize the individual's own need for care. That is especially problematic for children, whose needs are magnified when their parents are contending with their own, and for women, as they are tasked with caretaking.

When demolition involves makeshift schools constructed to service more remote and marginalized areas, such as Bedouin communities or communities isolated within the seam zone, the ability of girls in particular to continue their education is often threatened. The alternative, that of crossing in and out of heavily militarized checkpoints or walking along arduous footpaths or settler roads to reach schools beyond their community, often prompts families to discontinue their education out of fear for their safety. Similar concerns have served to hamper women's participation in higher education and employment opportunities.

The continuously evolving facts on the ground I referred to and their human impact serve to attest to Israel's intentional undermining of a viable two-State solution and the prospect of peace in the region.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Farsakh for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Rothbart.

**Ms. Rothbart:** I thank you, Madam President, for your kind and uncommon invitation to speak here in front of the Security Council. I also thank the members of the Council and the Special Coordinator for their attention and consideration of new ideas and hope for the future.

I am Meredith Rothbart, and I am a Jewish Israeli, a religious Zionist, speaking to the Security Council from Jerusalem. I am the co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Amal-Tikva, where my Palestinian co-founder, Basheer Abu-Baker, and our teamwork with leaders of non-governmental organizations, philanthropists and field experts to build capacity for strategic, sustainable and scalable peacebuilding efforts. I am here to share with the Council my view from the ground.

We heard today and over the past few weeks of the continued violence between our two peoples. It is clear to all who are observing our political reality that negotiations at the highest diplomatic levels would not result in substantive peace right now.

If we recall, the Oslo Accords failed because the agreement came from a secret process between elite leaders, with no women, no religious leaders and no representative of those wishing to disrupt the process with violence. Neither society was prepared or ready to make compromises. It is therefore no wonder that the Oslo Accords failed and that the disappointment by the public led to the most violent era in the history of our conflict. Let us not do that again.

Around the same time as the Oslo Accords, when violent attacks were a daily occurrence in Northern Ireland, the United States spearheaded the establishment of the International Fund for Ireland. Both Prime Ministers Bertie Ahern and Tony Blair share the view that the Fund built the social and economic foundations upon which peace was eventually secured about a decade later.

Today the Special Coordinator asked for affirmative steps to improve the situation on the ground. We know that civil society peacebuilding is not only an affirmative step; it works, and it is a required precondition for a negotiated peace agreement, especially in an intractable conflict. We know because of so many initiatives that have been proved to succeed.

We know that it works because a Palestinian police officer saved a lost Israel Defense Forces soldier's life, not because he had to but out of appreciation for the Israeli volunteer from the organization Road to Recovery, who had driven his brother to the hospital just the week before.

We know that it works because Rabbi Michael Melchior and Sheikh Raed Badir from the Religious Peace Initiative were the religious leaders who prevented a third intifada amid violence on the Temple Mount. And it was they who conducted the negotiations that led to our unity Government, which has a religious Zionist Prime Minister and Palestinian members of Parliament from the local Islamic Movement.

Those are the real peace negotiators. My close friend and mentor, the Reverend Gary Mason, who helped bring about peace in Northern Ireland, always says:

"If you want peace today, you should have started building it 20 years ago. And if you do not feel like working for building peace today, then you better not complain to me in 20 years that the conflict is ongoing and affecting your children."

The United Nations has adopted resolution after resolution, which, as a global institution, is a part of the Security Council's agenda. I understand that but, in order to build peace between Israelis and Palestinians, I ask the Council to consider investing in a social peace.

It is no coincidence that it is the Irish who invited me here today, because the Irish know the power of civil society peacebuilding firsthand. I must also acknowledge the United States Government for passing the Nita Lowey Middle East Partnership for Peace Act, the first large-scale Government attempt at building Israeli-Palestinian peace from the ground up. That is an opportunity for a multilateral partnership.

I ask the members of the Security Council to take inspiration from the Irish and American peacemaking efforts and to commit to investing in the infrastructure needed for real peace.

Help us build a multilateral international entity like the Peace Impact Programme of the International Fund for Ireland; an independent entity with the resources and the mandate to build capital projects, such as a peace institute in Jerusalem modelled on the Skainsos Centre in East Belfast, or a laboratory for programme innovation and capacity-building, impact investments and microgrants.



Invest in the infrastructure that peace actually needs, like the partnership between adjacent community centres in Jerusalem — one Israeli and one Palestinian — which are working together to renovate their communal health-care centres, supporting women entrepreneurs and making their neighbourhoods safer.

Invest in building economic partnerships through organizations like Tech2Peace and 50:50 Start-ups, which are teaching technology and entrepreneurship to young Israelis and Palestinians and guiding them to create start-ups addressing climate, food security, water and other critical issues.

Invest in programmes like Kids4Peace and the Teachers' Lounge, which are enabling youth and educators to not only learn each other's narratives but view themselves as agents of change. There are many more organizations like those, with methodologies and programmes that work, but they are not yet at scale. They could be with enough support, capacity and infrastructure.

In our ancient Jewish text known as *Pirkei Avot*, or the *Ethics of the Fathers*, we read:

“You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it”.

We know that, in order for peace negotiations to work, we must break the intractable nature of our conflict into manageable parts and tackle each one of those parts one by one. We must build a popular belief that peace is actually possible and that all people — Israelis and Palestinians — have an integral role to play and responsibility in its pursuit.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Rothbart for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Mills** (United States of America): I thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process for his briefing, and I also thank Ms. Rothbart and Ms. Farsakh for their powerful statements. They were heard.

I think it is clear that, while present circumstances are both difficult and concerning, there are steps that we can take to improve the lives of the Israeli and Palestinian people in concrete and practical ways now. We can help today, while also preserving the possibility of a negotiated two-State solution when the time is ripe.

Of the urgent needs, we assess that we must currently focus our attention and resources on supporting the livelihoods of the most vulnerable in Gaza.

The United States once again expresses its thanks to Qatar for its financial assistance to Palestinians in Gaza. We welcome the commencement of the stipend disbursements, and we hope that that stable income will help families meet their daily needs. In order to facilitate recovery, the United States calls for regular, predictable and sustained access to Gaza for humanitarian actors.

In the interest of the people of Gaza and regional security, crossings should remain open with regular hours to normal commercial traffic and the expedited transit of humanitarian goods. It is important that materials needed for vial relief and recovery efforts can get to affected areas. We were pleased that the Israeli Government agreed to provide additional water to the Gaza Strip. However, there remains a dire need to get water flowing regularly within Gaza, and we hope to see the importation of water pipes to allow for the rehabilitation of water networks in Gaza. The de facto authorities in Gaza must refrain from interfering in humanitarian activity, assistance, delivery and internationally supported reconstruction efforts. Those efforts are directly supporting Palestinians in Gaza, especially the most vulnerable.

The Special Coordinator mentioned the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The United States has already contributed more than \$300 million to UNRWA this year. We call on others to step up and contribute to help address UNRWA's imminent shortfall in funding for its core services. UNRWA is a vital lifeline and provides schooling to more than 530,000 Palestinian children across the region. In the absence of UNRWA, many of the children will be unable to attend school or would be forced to attend schools under the influence of extremist groups.

At the same time, we will continue to urge UNRWA to make operational and managerial improvements to ensure that it can deliver assistance to Palestinian refugees efficiently and with maximum effect. We will continue working with UNRWA to ensure that it upholds commitments to promoting tolerance, respect, transparency and accountability.

The United States also remains committed to widening the circle of peace between Israel and its neighbours. In the past year, we have seen Israel open

Embassies in the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain appoint their first Ambassador to Israel. Israel and Morocco also agreed to upgrade their missions to full Embassies in short order.

The United States is committed to expanding on those normalization agreements and hopes that those agreements, which are important in and of themselves, will also generate momentum between Israel and the Palestinians. In the meantime, we will continue to encourage both the Israelis and the Palestinians to exercise restraint and refrain from provocative actions and rhetoric. Such actions distract from reconstruction and threaten the viability of a two-State solution and a future where Israelis and Palestinians live with equal measures of freedom, dignity, security and prosperity.

**Mr. Ladeb** (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): We thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Tor Wennesland, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). We reiterate our support for his efforts and those of all United Nations personnel in the occupied territories to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people and strengthen prospects for peace in the Middle East. We also listened closely to the briefings by the two civil society representatives.

This meeting coincides with the beginning of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly. Once again, the world has demonstrated through statements by leaders and high-level officials the broad consensus on the need to end the suffering of the Palestinian people, end the occupation and establish an independent sovereign Palestinian State, within the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Once again, delegations from all over the world call on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, to ensure the implementation of its relevant resolutions. They also call on the Council to urge the occupation authorities to comply with international legitimacy resolutions.

In the light of the broad consensus in the international community, we cannot help but wonder: when will we see international action to break the stalemate in the peace process and facilitate the resumption of negotiations in order to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the Palestinian question, based

on the international agreed terms of reference and the relevant United Nations resolutions?

We remain confident that the international community, including the Security Council, the Middle East Quartet, neighbouring countries and effective actors, will be able to create genuine prospects to achieve a settlement, which would promote stability and the maintenance of peace and security in the region. In that regard, we support the proposal to hold an international peace conference under the auspices of the Middle East Quartet as soon as possible.

The obstruction of prospects for settling the conflict and enabling the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate rights is accompanied by the insistence of the occupation authorities on imposing a de facto policy by continuing to implement settlement plans, attempting to change the demographic composition and the legal and historical character of Jerusalem, demolishing homes, displacing Palestinian civilians and imposing the unjust blockade on Gaza.

We have expressed our condemnation for the continuation of those practices. In that regard, we call on the international community, especially the Security Council, to fully shoulder its responsibility to compel the occupying Power to honour its commitments under international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The occupying Power must put an end to its violations and settlement projects and any unilateral action that could further exacerbate and escalate the situation, thereby undermining any chance of achieving peace and restoring stability and security to the region. We call also for the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2334 (2016).

We reiterate the need to provide protection to Palestinian civilian people from violence by settlers and occupation forces that use excessive force. We call for follow-up on the implementation of General Assembly resolution ES-10/20, on the protection of the Palestinian civilian population.

With regard to the deteriorating humanitarian and economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including in the besieged Gaza Strip, we stress the importance of facilitating unfettered delivery of humanitarian assistance, as well as refraining from hindering reconstruction efforts. We look forward to seeing a scaling up of the humanitarian response in the occupied territories and the securing of sustainable

funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

We reiterate the need to continue Palestinian reconciliation efforts, and we welcome the renewed commitment by the Palestinian leadership to hold general elections in Palestine as soon as there is approval to hold elections in East Jerusalem.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support to the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establishing their independent sovereign State. We hope to undertake collective efforts in which we focus on practical measures to put an end to this protracted tragedy, allowing Palestinians to regain the rights that were stripped from them and ensure the rule of law.

**Mr. Gotru (India):** I thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process for his briefing on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). I also thank the civil society briefers for their insights from the ground.

I would like to begin by reaffirming India's unwavering commitment to the peaceful resolution of the Palestinian issue. India strongly supports a negotiated two-State solution leading to the establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, taking into account the legitimate security concerns of all the parties concerned.

India has consistently called for direct peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine based on the internationally agreed framework to achieve the ultimate goal of a two-State solution. Resolution 2334 (2016) calls for advancing that two-State solution through negotiations, as well as for reversing the negative trends on the ground. It also calls for preventing all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, and for both parties to refrain from provocative acts and unilateral measures.

Furthermore, resolution 2334 (2016) emphasizes the need to create conditions for peace negotiations for advancing the two-State solution. In that regard, we appreciate the regional and international efforts, including under the auspices of the Middle East Quartet, towards de-escalation and resuming those direct negotiations. We have noted the outreach efforts made between the Israeli Government and Palestinian

Authority, as well as the announcements made by Israel to alleviate the socioeconomic conditions in the West Bank.

The planned loan of 500 million Israeli new shekels to the Palestinian Authority, additional building permits for construction of Palestinian homes in Area C and increased numbers of work permits for Palestinians to travel to Israel for employment are all steps in the right direction. We hope those measures will provide impetus for further strengthening the economic and administrative relationships between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

India has always placed great emphasis on the socioeconomic development of the Palestinian people and the strengthening of their national institutions. Our development partnership with Palestine is geared towards those objectives. Access to stabilized and enhanced revenues by the Palestinian Authority is a necessary precondition for Palestinian socioeconomic development and institution-building. In that regard, we support a dialogue between Israel and the Palestinian Authority to resolve outstanding issues related to the transfer of tax revenues.

The regular and predictable entry of construction material will facilitate the early reconstruction of Gaza. It is also important that the international donor community support the reconstruction of Gaza through the Palestinian Authority. The commencement of cash assistance transfers to vulnerable Palestinian families in Gaza through the United Nations is an important development, as it will provide much-needed relief to those families. We also appreciate the work of the United Nations and its agencies in ensuring the delivery of critical aid to Palestinians in Gaza. We call for the timely transfer of aid and other essential items to Gaza to ease the humanitarian situation and facilitate early reconstruction, as well as for the appropriate use of such aid.

The recent high-level interactions among Israel, Palestine and key States in the region provide a window of opportunity for the resumption of direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine. The Council and the international community, in particular the Middle East Quartet, should use that opportunity to make renewed efforts to kick-start negotiations, as they provide the best platform to resolve all final-status issues and achieve a two-State solution. India stands ready to support such efforts.

**Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the participation of Special Coordinator Wennesland, as well as Ms. Rothbart and Ms. Farsakh, in this meeting.

My delegation expresses its concern about the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process. The transfer of settlers, the seizure of land, the demolition of more than 670 structures and the consequent displacement of the Palestinian population are all contrary to international law and represent an obstacle to any peace initiative. An additional example is today's attack on Palestinian civilians in southern Hebron.

Mexico calls, in line with resolution 2334 (2016), for an end to Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as to any actions that limit the Palestinian population's access to safe drinking water, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law.

Nevertheless, Mexico welcomes the recent announcement by the Palestinian Central Elections Commission that it will organize municipal elections next December. Those elections will surely contribute to strengthening the institutions of the Palestinian State.

We express our dismay at incidents targeting Palestinian organizations and human rights defenders, limiting their freedom of expression and association. We also urge Palestinian and Israeli law enforcement agencies to protect the human rights of Palestinian civil society.

Moreover, we commend the efforts to bring to justice those responsible for the death of activist Nizar Banat. Mexico also condemns the firing of rockets and incendiary devices into Israel from Gaza, as well as the disproportionate use of force by Israel against Palestinian demonstrators in the vicinity of the border fence.

We underscore the importance of continuing to strengthen the ceasefire in Gaza and, therefore, welcome the recent meeting between the Israeli Prime Minister and the Egyptian President. We also welcome the announcement of initiatives for the economic reconstruction of Gaza, as well as the easing of certain blockade restrictions, which will allow for an expansion of the fishing area, as well as the entry of some building materials. We welcome the implementation of the United Nations cash assistance programme. Nonetheless, we

must reiterate our call for the full lifting of the blockade of Gaza.

Mexico lauds the commitment made by the Palestinian Authority, Egypt and Jordan at the tripartite summit, held at the beginning of this month, to developing a vision for the resumption of political negotiations and to working with partner countries to revive the peace process, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions and under the auspices of the Middle East Quartet. We also welcome cooperation between Israel and Palestine for civilian and security purposes. We highlight in particular the \$150 million loan provided by Israel to the Palestinian Authority.

I reiterate Mexico's support for the two-State solution, based on provisions that address Israel's legitimate security concerns and lay the foundation for the establishment of an economically and politically viable Palestinian State, within pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with relevant United Nations resolutions.

Before concluding, I am pleased to inform the Council that Mexico has made an additional contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to support health-care operations and provide medical supplies.

**Mr. Geng Shuang** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing. I also listened carefully to the briefings by Ms. Farsakh and Ms. Rothbart.

Four months after the last round of conflict in Gaza, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory remains turbulent. China calls on all parties concerned, in particular Israel, to exercise restraint and cease hostile acts, with immediate effect, to avoid an escalation of the situation. We support Egypt and other countries in the region in their efforts to enhance mediation, promote stability and ease tensions. We commend Qatar for its cooperation with the United Nations in providing relief to the people of Gaza and support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in its work to improve the humanitarian situation in Palestine.

Press statement SC/14527, issued by the President of the Security Council in May, called for reconstruction and recovery in Gaza. Israel has the responsibility to open relevant crossings in Gaza, remove obstacles to the



entry of humanitarian aid and reconstruction material and fully lift the blockade on Gaza as soon as possible.

The issue of settlements is a major one that bears heavily on final-status negotiations for Palestine and the prospects for the realization of the two-State solution. Resolution 2334 (2016) clearly states that settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory are in breach of international law. For some time, Israel has continued to demolish Palestinian homes, evict Palestinians and expand settlements. Violence against Palestinian civilians has also intensified. China urges Israel to earnestly implement the relevant Security Council resolutions and return to the path of the two-State solution and the Arab Peace Initiative.

In his statement at the just-concluded general debate of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly (see A/76/PV.12), President Abbas expressed his readiness to work on the delineation of borders and on solving final-status issues. At the end of August, Palestine and Israel also engaged in high-level contact. We hope that Palestine and Israel will take the opportunity to continue to build momentum, gradually rebuild mutual trust, opt to engage in strategic peace talks and resume dialogue, on an equal footing, as soon as possible.

Last week, the Security Council and the Arab League troika had an in-depth exchange of views on situations in the region, including the Palestinian question. China supported the strengthening of coordination and cooperation among the Security Council, the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. We support the holding of a United Nations-led international peace conference, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and various stakeholders in the Middle East peace process. We call on the country with considerable influence on the parties to hold an objective and impartial position and refrain from favouring one side over the other or using double standards.

Over the past few days, during the general debate of the General Assembly, the Palestinian question was one of the most frequently mentioned regional hotspot issues. The vast majority of countries expressed their support for the just cause of the Palestinian people, striving for their national rights. They also support the two-State solution and the realization of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question, through dialogue and negotiation. That reflects the

sentiments of the international community for fairness and international justice.

China stands ready to work with the international community to increase efforts to promote peace through continuous action and to make unremitting efforts to help alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people and settle the turmoil in Middle East.

**Mr. Khoroshev** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Tor Wennesland for his informative briefing. We listened carefully to the briefings by Ms. Mai Farsakh and Ms. Meredith Rothbart.

The stalled Middle East peace process, compounded by the fact that its core issue, the Palestinian question, remains unresolved, creates a constant hotbed of tensions in the region. Following the escalation of violence in May, the pressing issues are maintaining the ceasefire, providing humanitarian assistance to Palestinian victims and reviving the peace process. Potentially dangerous unilateral actions are ongoing — the expropriation and demolition of Palestinian property, settlement building, arbitrary arrests and violations of holy sites and violence.

We urge Israeli authorities to refrain from unilateral steps, which would create an irreversible situation on the ground. Nonetheless, we understand the need to consider Israel's natural security concerns. In that regard, we are of the view that the top priority is to attain lasting stability and for parties to refrain from provocative and unilateral actions. It is also important to create the conditions for the peace process to be revived on the broadly recognized international legal basis, including the two-State solution.

It is important to underscore that similar positions were put forward by world leaders during the general debate of the General Assembly. It was noteworthy that the vast majority of all those who mentioned the Middle East settlement process spoke in favour of the two-State solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and confirmed that the approaches of the international community to the issue remain unchanged.

Regrettably, levels of tension in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip remain high. In that regard, we urge both sides to show restraint and reject unilateral steps and provocative actions. We believe that the main immediate challenge is to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to all those in need and to the victims on the Gaza Strip.

There is also a need to step up efforts to assist Palestinian authorities in addressing socioeconomic difficulties. The coronavirus disease pandemic continues to have an adverse effect in that area. The Palestinians cannot cope with it alone. We give particular importance to providing comprehensive humanitarian assistance to those in need in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as well as to Palestinian refugees in neighbouring Arab States.

We support the efforts of relevant international organizations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. We continue to work with the parties in conflict, as well as with interested international players in the region. For example, on 9 September, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov met with the new Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Lapid.

We believe that, in order to overcome the crisis, it is important to have the Palestinian problem back in the focus of attention of the new Israeli leadership, and also to have elections convened in the Palestinian territories. We also consider it important to continue to build an international consensus on a fair solution to the Palestinian problem. An important role in this regard is played by the Quartet, which remains the only internationally recognized mechanism to assist the Palestinian-Israeli settlement process. We also attribute great importance to Egypt's efforts aimed at overcoming intra-Palestinian disunity, which is a precondition for reviving the peace process. In particular, we welcome the recent summit between Palestine, Jordan and Egypt, which took place in Cairo. We cherish the hope that it will be an important first step towards a qualitative improvement in the current deadlocked status quo.

**Ms. Juul** (Norway): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his updates. I also thank Ms. Meredith Rothbart and Ms. Mai Farsakh for their valuable remarks.

Let me begin by welcoming the resumption of broader dialogue between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The August face-to-face meeting between President Abbas and Minister of Defence Gantz is a first, crucial step towards broader engagement. We encourage the parties to further expand this dialogue, including to political issues.

For example, given the precarious financial situation, it is urgent to agree on amendments to the Paris Protocol to improve the long-term fiscal situation and institutional capacity of the Palestinian

Authority. Palestine needs a stronger Palestinian Authority. A strong Palestinian Authority is one that is well-functioning, accountable and enjoys democratic legitimacy among the Palestinian people.

We are also encouraged by the seemingly more stable situation in Gaza. The delivery of cash assistance to tens of thousands of vulnerable families in Gaza following the memorandum of understanding between the United Nations and Qatar is especially important. It is critical that assistance continues to reach those most in need. Additionally, efforts to secure a long-term and sustainable ceasefire must be strengthened. And we welcome the additional lifting of restrictions on Gaza by Israel. Norway calls on the de facto rulers of Gaza to keep the situation calm, act in the best interest of the people of Gaza and protect civilians.

The Special Coordinator's briefing today has yet again showcased the negative impact of Israeli settlement activity, house demolitions, evictions and settler violence. While we note that there have been no new announced housing units in the reporting period, we remain concerned about the projects in the pipeline.

We again underscore that Israeli settlement activities are illegal under international law. They fuel violence and undermine the prospects of a contiguous Palestinian State and a viable two-State solution. Norway is concerned that, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the number of house demolitions in 2021 has increased by 40 per cent compared to last year. Displacement has nearly doubled. This trend is alarming and unacceptable.

We are also worried about the security situation on the West Bank, including the high number of violent clashes between protestors and Israeli security forces. We are particularly concerned that children continue to be victims of violence. Children should never be targeted or put in harm's way. Just the opposite: they must be afforded special protection. Let me reiterate the need to ensure the protection and security of all civilians, especially during this volatile time at the start of the olive-harvest season. We urge all actors to de-escalate and refrain from actions and rhetoric that fuels tensions.

We welcome the recent improvement in dialogue between Israel and Jordan, especially given Jordan's historical role as custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem and in maintaining stability in Palestine.

We regret that the ministerial-level meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, planned for 23 September, had to be postponed. It is urgent that the parties, as well as donors, meet in person for these important discussions. Let me assure the Security Council of our commitment to reconvene as soon as possible. We are hopeful that a meeting can be arranged later this fall.

Finally, let me conclude by restating the fundamental truth that only a broad political solution can solve the underlying problems of the conflict. We reiterate our call for a two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 lines, relevant Security Council resolutions, international law and internationally agreed parameters.

**Mr. Kimani** (Kenya): I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his observations and recommendations during this reporting period. We also welcome all constructive grass-roots efforts in advancing the peace process, including the observations and insights shared with the Security Council by Ms. Meredith Rothbart and Ms. Mai Farsakh.

I reaffirm Kenya's condemnation of all acts of violence and other breaches of resolution 2334 (2016), by all parties, including terrorist acts, all acts of provocation, incitement to violence, evictions, collective punishment and the destruction and demolition of civilian infrastructure. Nevertheless, we have noted that there has not been advancement of expansion of housing units since June.

Kenya continues to strongly condemn the recent launches of rockets from Gaza by Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other militant groups. We again repeat: no cause can justify the deliberate targeting of civilians, and these acts of terror must cease. The use of civilian infrastructure for weapons storage or disguise or as human shields must also be addressed.

As Kenya has stated before, the practicality and full implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) will need to address the issue of settlements, territorial contiguity and the viability of the two-State solution. The establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian occupied territory, including East Jerusalem, in violation of international law, remains a major obstacle to the fulfilment of the vision of a two-State solution, where two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace and within secure and recognized borders based on the 1967 lines.

The recent engagements between senior Israeli and Palestinians officials are also important positive steps towards forging cooperation in the areas of security and economic policies. We urge that the recent ease of restrictions of entry of goods between Gaza and Israel continue to be strengthened to this end.

Kenya welcomes the ongoing efforts by the Qatari Government aimed at rebuilding Gaza in partnership with the United Nations programme. The strengthened role and reinforced funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East will also go a long way towards addressing a broader set of socioeconomic challenges in the occupied Palestinian territory. As the needed focus is being directed to Gaza, we must not lose sight of the security and economic challenges in the West Bank.

Every single effort in advancing the Middle East peace process at the ground level through local actors, Israeli and Palestinian leaders and key regional partners needs to be affirmed and encouraged. I would like to thank Ms. Rothbart for her reminder that the conflicts we are dealing with today are a result of what was done 20 years ago, and that what we are trying to do today is not only to respond to the present crisis but to lay the groundwork for peace in 20 years. I thank her for that insight, which I think can inform the Security Council in many of its situations.

The gains achieved also need to be safeguarded to reinforce the underlying principles of resolution 2334 (2016), namely, achieving the stabilization of the situation, reversing the negative trends on the ground and creating conditions for successful direct final-status negotiations.

**Mr. Jürgenson** (Estonia): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing. I also thank Ms. Rothbart and Ms. Farsakh for their statements.

More than four months after the most recent round of violence in and around Gaza, the tensions and violence between the parties have unfortunately not subsided.

The continued launching of rockets and incendiary balloons towards Israel is unacceptable. Israel has a right to defend itself, while ensuring the safety and protection of the civilian population. We call upon the parties to continue to respect the ceasefire and do their utmost to avoid further violence.

We are also worried about the continued incidents of violence on the West Bank, including the clashes between the Palestinians and the Israeli security forces, with several deaths and hundreds of injured during the past weeks. We call on all parties to refrain from violence, incitement and acts of provocation.

Such developments once more underline the need for international and regional efforts to restore the conditions for direct negotiations aimed at a two-State solution, based on international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions, as the only viable path to a lasting peace.

We welcome the first high-level meeting in years between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, held on 29 August. That was an important step of confidence, and we hope that it will pave the way for a sustained political dialogue, as well as further practical cooperation between the two sides, which would benefit both the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Estonia also fully supports the continued international and regional efforts for reconstruction in Gaza and to improve the dire and unsustainable humanitarian and socioeconomic situation in the Gaza Strip. We hope that the planned reconstruction process can begin promptly. In that context, we also welcome the proposals to create economic stability and improve the socioeconomic situation of the Palestinians.

We join the calls for the parties to show commitment to the two-State solution through concrete steps and to refrain from unilateral steps that undermine it. We remain worried about Israel's plans for advancing settlements on the West Bank, as well as the continued demolitions of, and evictions from, Palestinian property. We call upon Israel to refrain from those activities, as they are contrary to international law.

Finally, I would like to reiterate our concern about the recent arrests of Palestinian protesters in relation to the death of the political activist Nizar Banat. We call on the Palestinian Authority to ensure freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.

**Mr. De Rivi re** (France) (*spoke in French*): As I do every month, I reiterate France's support for a two-State solution. That is the only one that is consistent with international law, the agreed parameters and the resolutions of the Security Council, including resolution 2334 (2016). It is the only option to date that can bring about a just and lasting peace in the region, ensure

Israel's security, with which we will never compromise, and meet the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians.

In that context, France is concerned by the increasing negative trends on the ground, which jeopardize the two-State solution. The record increase in demolitions in 2021 is unacceptable. The issuing of building permits to Palestinians in Area C cannot justify the advancement of settlements, which is contrary to international law. We call on the Israeli authorities to stop the expansion of settlements, freeze demolitions and permanently suspend eviction procedures in East Jerusalem.

France will not recognize any change to the 1967 lines other than those agreed between the parties. We recall the obligation for all States to distinguish in their exchanges between the territory of Israel and the territories occupied in 1967.

We are also concerned about the continuing increase in violence in the Palestinian territories. The priority is, of course, to maintain the ceasefire in Gaza. We condemn any firing of incendiary balloons or rockets into Israeli territory. In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, France calls on Israel to use force judiciously, in accordance with international humanitarian law. We also call on the Palestinian Authority to shed full light on the assassination of Nizar Banat and to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the territories under its control. Strong democratic institutions, based on respect for the rule of law, remain crucial to the building of a viable Palestinian State.

The resumption of contacts between the parties is encouraging and must be accompanied by the implementation of confidence-building measures. France welcomes the first measures taken by Israel, including to allow the delivery of goods to Gaza. We call for such efforts to continue, in particular to facilitate the reconstruction of the enclave. In that regard, we welcome the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. We are also ready to work towards the implementation of the ideas expressed by the Israeli Foreign Minister concerning Gaza. It is important to focus on projects that can bring about a significant improvement in the lives of the Palestinian people. The Palestinian Authority must play its full part in that. We hope that the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to



Palestinians will be an opportunity to move forward in that direction.

France, together with its German, Egyptian and Jordanian partners, in the framework of the Amman Group, is determined to continue all specific reciprocal measures aimed at restoring trust between the parties, with a view to a resumption of the negotiations.

Confidence-building measures are necessary, but they will be effective only if they are part of a political process. It is more urgent than ever to restore that perspective. France is ready to work to that end, in conjunction with the Council members.

**Dame Barbara Woodward** (United Kingdom): My thanks go to the Special Coordinator for his briefing and the quarterly report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). I would also like to thank Mai Farsakh and Meredith Rothbart for their remarks, their insights and their work on the ground. I would like to pay tribute to them and to all those civil society members who work to build social peace and the foundations for peace.

The United Kingdom welcomes the recent engagement between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian leadership, including the meetings between Palestinian President Abbas and Israeli Defence Minister Gantz on 29 August. We urge further direct engagement and call on both parties to work together to tackle immediate and long-term threats to peace and stability. While appreciating the difficulties on both sides, we urge all parties to be open to further dialogue.

The United Kingdom wants to see greater cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians, including on economic initiatives, to help support the recovery of Gaza, boost the Palestinian economy and improve the lives of all Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territories. However, those initiatives need to be part of a political pathway. All parties need to take steps to avoid exacerbating tensions and avoid unhelpful rhetoric. Existing agreements must be respected, and all parties must refrain from harmful unilateral actions.

We remain concerned about Israel's ongoing settlement expansion, as well as the demolition of Palestinian property and the resultant displacement of protected persons, such as prospective demolitions and evictions in Silwan, Al-Walaja and Sheikh Jarrah. We urge Israel to allow for more legal avenues for Palestinian construction. As has been noted previously, we have seen a worrisome upward trend in Palestinians killed

by Israeli security forces' live fire throughout 2021, particularly around Beita, where eight Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli Defense Forces since May.

We urge restraint on all sides. Israeli investigations should be transparent and comprehensive and, where there has been excessive use of force, those responsible should be held to account. We condemn any incidents of violence by settlers against Palestinian civilians and aid workers. We express particular concern about the reported attack on 15-year-old Palestinian Tareq Zubeidi on the 17 August. Communities must be protected from violence and harassment. Such incidents must be investigated fully, and those responsible brought to justice.

We continue to call on the Palestinian Authority to adhere to international standards on freedom of expression, association and assembly, and urge respect for human rights. Reform is needed to rebuild trust with the public. I reiterate that the United Kingdom condemns unequivocally Hamas' indiscriminate attacks against Israel, including the use of incendiary balloons. We call on Hamas and other terrorist groups to permanently end their rocket fire against Israel.

Finally, turning to Gaza, the United Kingdom welcomed Israeli Foreign Minister Lapid's speech proposing positive policy suggestions to support economic development in Gaza and greater security for Israel. A long-term solution for Gaza is needed, not only to end the cycle of violence, but also to make progress towards the two-State solution — a solution to which the United Kingdom remains firmly committed.

**Ms. King** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): I thank the briefers for their powerful and enlightening presentations.

The grave security situation that continues in the State of Palestine is of particular concern to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The Palestinian people and the territory of the State of Palestine are in more urgent need of international protection, as Israel continues its ongoing settlement activities and the demolition of Palestinian structures in the occupied territory.

We therefore reiterate here again today that the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territories constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and remains a significant threat to lasting and comprehensive peace. We call on Israel, the occupying Power, to cease all settlement activities and to abide by its legal

obligations and responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Furthermore, as reinforced by resolution 2334 (2016), we condemn all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967.

As we have said many times, freedom and justice for the Palestinian people can be achieved only through a lasting two-State solution that allows for the peaceful existence of the State of Palestine, based on the pre-1967 borders, and the full recognition of their sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence. Moreover, the continued oppression of the Palestinian people undermines their legitimate claims to dignity, equality and human rights.

On a positive note, we welcome plans for the reconstruction of Gaza, which will start in October. Notwithstanding, the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza continues to be exacerbated by the 14-year Israeli blockade. Yet again, we call on Israel to lift the blockade to allow humanitarian access, building materials and construction equipment for the reconstruction of Gaza. Furthermore, we condemn all punitive measures against the Palestinian people that exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Despite the many challenges, we commend the ongoing efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in providing humanitarian assistance to ease the plight of the Palestinian refugees. The certainty of support for UNRWA from the international community is critical to the Agency's ability to promote human development and meet the most urgent humanitarian needs of the Palestinian refugees.

In conclusion, we echo the warning of President Abbas that undermining the two-State solution based on international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions will open the way for other alternatives imposed on the Palestinians by the situation on the ground, as a result of the continued Israeli occupation of the State of Palestine.

**Mr. Dang** (Viet Nam): I thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Tor Wennesland, for his comprehensive briefing. I welcome the presence of Ms. Meredith Rothbart and Ms. Mai Farsakh at this meeting and thank them for their statements.

I would like to begin by expressing our serious concern about the recent increase in violence across the occupied Palestinian territory. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, we are troubled by continued incidents of violence, particularly the recent clashes between the Israeli security forces and the Palestinians. The number of casualties since the beginning of 2021 has been five times higher than that for 2020, with 58 Palestinians killed and more than 13,000 injured.

Incidents in other parts of the occupied Palestinian territory and clashes in the border areas of Gaza could lead to full-scale hostilities. We call on all parties to refrain from violence and incitement to provocation. We urge the Israeli authorities to observe their obligations under international humanitarian law, stop excessive use of force and settler attacks and apply the necessary measures to protect civilians, particularly children.

We remain concerned about the continued settlement policy of the Israeli authorities. While the announcement of the intention to grant construction permits to Palestinians in Area C is an initial and encouraging sign, the ongoing settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continue to violate international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. In that respect, we call on the Israeli authorities to cease all settlement activities, stop demolitions and definitively suspend procedures aimed at the expulsion of Palestinian families from Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem.

We are encouraged by the recent engagement and initial cooperation between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority. We welcome the stronger engagement between officials from both sides, which can contribute to creating an atmosphere of trust between the parties and meeting common challenges in humanitarian, health care, financial and economic areas. We hope that such contact and cooperation can be helpful in paving a pathway towards broad and significant dialogues and negotiations. We welcome all efforts by international actors to facilitate the building of that momentum.

With regard to the deteriorating socioeconomic and humanitarian situations in Gaza, it remains vital that Israel ensure regularized access into and out of Gaza, especially for humanitarian, medical and reconstruction purposes, in accordance with international humanitarian law. Meanwhile, it should be noted that external humanitarian and economic

support alone cannot address the challenges facing the Strip. The unemployment rate has reached 67 per cent, while the poverty rate has exceeded 70 per cent and food insecurity is affecting over 68 per cent of the population.

Therefore, we call upon Israel to lift the blockade imposed on Gaza as soon as possible, not only to facilitate humanitarian access, but also to ensure regular movement into and out of Gaza to improve the livelihood of Palestinians. We also call upon international donors to increase the level of assistance and humanitarian response in the occupied Palestinian territories, including through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and to support other relevant United Nations efforts.

Before concluding, we would like to reaffirm our strong support for a comprehensive, just and sustainable settlement of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Towards that end, we welcome all initiatives aimed at bringing the relevant parties together.

We reiterate our commitment to supporting a two-State solution that includes the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, living side by side with the State of Israel, within secure and internationally recognized borders based on the pre-1967 lines and a negotiated settlement.

**Mr. Abarry** (Niger) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Wennesland for his detailed briefing on the situation in the Middle East. I would also like to thank Ms. Rothbart and Ms. Farsakh for their valuable contributions to our discussions. I would also like to acknowledge the presence of the representative of Palestine among us today.

As usual, Mr. Wennesland's briefing was a catalogue of horror, detailing multiple violations of Palestinian rights, including the killing of young people, all of which seriously contravene the spirit and the letter of resolution 2334 (2016). How much longer will that go on?

The announcement by Israel of a recovery plan for the Gaza Strip, including the rebuilding of infrastructure, as well as the meeting between the Israeli Minister of Defense and the President of the Palestinian Authority, are positive signs and should be commended.

At this juncture, I would like to highlight that those welcome gestures, which seem to herald an easing

of tensions and increased trust in relations between Israel and Palestine, must be further consolidated and maximized in order to contribute to the restoration of peace and a peaceful coexistence among those two peoples, who have been exposed to violence, devastation and despair for far too long.

In order to give the resumption of peace process the best possible chance of success, certain requirements remain essential, if not unavoidable.

First of all, Israel must put an end to its policy of unbridled colonization in the occupied Palestinian territories and commit to respecting international parameters, as well as to General Assembly and Security Council resolutions enshrining the only viable solution to the conflict, namely, the two-State solution.

Secondly, it is equally important that the violence from Gaza cease and, with it, Israel's disproportionate responses that spare neither human lives nor essential infrastructure.

Finally, the international community, the Middle East Quartet and those Council members with influence on the parties, as well as regional actors, must continue to work for a rapprochement between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as to safeguard, at all costs, the realization of the two-State solution. Only then can we hope for the return of peace, which we have been seeking in the Middle East for almost 70 years.

In the context of efforts aimed at easing tensions between Israel and Palestine, the lifting of the illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip and the improvement of the humanitarian situation and general living conditions remain priorities that require effective action. It cannot be overstated that the climate of tension in Gaza reflects the deep frustration and profound despair of a predominantly young population whose entire lives have been undermined by the effects of Israel's colonization and prolonged siege. Since 2012, several United Nations reports have warned that, beyond 2020, the Gaza Strip, a veritable open-air prison, could become unliveable if Israel does not lift its illegal and inhumane blockade.

Those challenges require urgent responses, including through reconstruction and recovery plans for Gaza and the protection and survival of its population. We therefore call on the international community to show more compassion and generosity to that hard-pressed population by supporting the funding

of the Gaza construction process, as well as the vital programmes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which ensure the survival of thousands of Palestinian families.

It is equally crucial that Israel, as the occupying Power, fully comply with all of its obligations under international humanitarian law, including by ensuring the well-being and survival of the population under its control, especially in the fight against the ongoing coronavirus disease pandemic.

The prospects for holding elections in Palestine are to be encouraged and supported.

In conclusion, the Niger believes that only a return to respect for the internationally agreed parameters and the resumption of the peace process, with a view to achieving a solution with two viable, sovereign and independent States, can lead to a just and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In that regard, we commend the tireless efforts of Mr. Tor Wennesland and reaffirm our full commitment to supporting all efforts of the international community to bring about a successful solution to the dispute, which has had an undeniable impact on the peace and security and stability of the entire Middle East region and beyond.

**The President:** I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Ireland.

I want to thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing and extend a very special thanks to Ms. Farsakh and Ms. Rothbart. They show us the pivotal work that young women are doing day in, day out, as agents of change. We are very glad that they are with us today and we have heard their voices. In my view, it is their generation and perhaps their gender that hold the key to a brighter future for both Palestine and Israel.

I thank Ms. Farsakh for setting out the ongoing and worrying impact of settlements and related issues on the Palestinian population, which registered with us. I also thank Ms. Rothbart, whose work on capacity-building for strategic, sustainable and scalable peace efforts on the ground has given all of us here in the Council very useful insights and, in my case, some hope.

Ireland remains steadfast in its view that a two-State solution offers the strongest prospect for sustainable peace. Ongoing contacts between the parties and within the region are welcome, but they are no substitute for direct negotiations as part of a wider political process.

Today, we have heard another deeply concerning briefing from Special Coordinator Wennesland on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). Once again, his report reminds us that settlements remain a major obstacle on the path to peace. I reiterate Ireland's long-standing condemnation of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Ireland is extremely concerned at the increase in demolitions, evictions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. We call on the Israeli authorities to cease those activities and to provide adequate permits for legal construction in Palestinian communities, as well as for the development of Palestinian territories. In particular, I wish to clearly underline our serious concerns about the recent increase in the number of Palestinian families at risk of eviction in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan. That remains of serious concern. We again underscore the importance of maintaining the status quo at the holy sites, in particular at Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount.

Let us be clear — acts of violence, including rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel, continue to erode trust between the parties and trust within their own communities. All of that adds up to making a political settlement more difficult to achieve. Ireland condemns all acts of terrorism.

We are concerned about the increase in violence in the occupied Palestinian territory. We unreservedly condemn yesterday's incidence of settler violence in the South Hebron Hills, in which a young child was seriously injured. We call on the Israeli authorities to hold those responsible accountable and to end the culture of impunity around all such incidents of violence. We call out, in particular, the devastating impact of the occupation and violence on children, as we just heard from Mr. Wennesland.

We remind all the parties of their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We call on the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to use their influence and authority to reduce tensions, prevent violence and contribute to the resolution of long-standing issues.

Once again, we renew our call on Israel to end the blockade of Gaza. We welcome the decision by Israel to allow more reconstruction material to enter Gaza, its expansion of the fishing area and provision of more work permits for residents of Gaza. However, that is the



minimum we need to see to help Gaza residents on the path to recovery.

As we all know, Gaza remains far removed from normal economic activity and the situation there will continue to pose challenges, including a deepening humanitarian crisis, until the underlying issues are addressed. Ireland reiterates its view that it is incumbent on the Council, the Quartet, partners in the region and the international community to uphold international law and remain fully engaged in working to resolve the

Israel-Palestinian conflict. The time for that has long passed; we cannot simply afford to wait.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I shall now adjourn the meeting so that the Council can continue its discussions on the subject in closed consultations.

*The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.*