



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

9099th meeting
Tuesday, 26 July 2022, 10 a.m.
New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Costa Filho	(Brazil)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
	Gabon	Mrs. Koumba Pambo
	Ghana	Ms. Oppong-Ntiri
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 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 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Cuba, Egypt, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, the Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to participate in this meeting.

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Lynn Hastings, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, to participate in this meeting.

There being no objection, it is so decided

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite the following to participate in this meeting: Mr. Thibault Camelli, Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations; His Excellency Mr. Maged Abdelfattah Abdelaziz, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations; His Excellency Mr. Arrmanatha Christiawan Nasir, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; and Ms. Amina Kader, Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to the United Nations.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations to participate in the meeting, in

accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Hastings.

Ms. Hastings: I am pleased to deliver this briefing on behalf of Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland, covering the reporting period of 27 June to 21 July.

While the specific developments of the conflict fluctuate, the structural reality has not changed. We continue to witness concerning levels of violence against civilians, which exacerbates mistrust and undermines a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

For years, illegal settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has been steadily shrinking the land available to Palestinians for development and livelihoods, limiting their movement and access and eroding the prospects for establishing a viable Palestinian State. Three hundred and ninety-nine demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures and evictions in Area C this year have left over 400 Palestinians displaced. There is a growing sense of hopelessness among many Palestinians, who see their prospects for statehood, sovereignty and a peaceful future slipping away.

Internally, they also see a crumbling and constrained Palestinian economy, lack of progress in advancing intra-Palestinian unity and governance reform and the urgent need for renewed legitimacy to national institutions, including through a democratically elected Parliament and Government in Palestine.

Many Israelis also understand the perils of continuing along the current path. They see endless cycles of violence, the constant risk of escalation and the absence of prospects to end the conflict.

Against that worrisome backdrop, the visit by President Biden of the United States to the region earlier this month signalled renewed consensus for a two-State solution based on the 1967 lines. During the visit, for the first time in years, Israeli, Palestinian and American leaders also reiterated their support for a two-State solution as essential for the future of Palestinians and Israelis alike. In addition to meeting with Prime Minister Lapid and President Abbas, President Biden made a noteworthy visit to Augusta Victoria Hospital

in East Jerusalem. We must build on those reaffirmed commitments and work collectively to encourage steps that allow for a return to a meaningful political process.

Daily violence continued throughout the occupied Palestinian territory during the reporting period. Three Palestinians were killed in the occupied West Bank during search and arrest operations, and 287 Palestinians, including 28 children, were injured by Israeli security forces during demonstrations, clashes, search-and-arrest operations, attacks and alleged attacks against Israelis and other incidents in the West Bank. Israeli settlers or other civilians perpetrated 27 attacks against Palestinians, resulting in 12 injuries and/or damage to Palestinian property, including 1,000 olive trees

In all, 18 Israeli civilians, including two women, and seven Israeli security personnel were injured by Palestinians in shooting and stabbing attacks, clashes and the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails and other incidents. In total, Palestinians perpetrated 50 attacks against Israeli civilians, 39 of which were stone-throwing incidents, resulting in injuries and/or damage to Israeli property.

On 29 June, Israeli security forces shot and killed a 25-year-old Palestinian in the context of clashes following an arrest operation conducted in Jenin, in the West Bank. According to the Israeli security forces, the man had thrown explosive devices towards Israeli soldiers. Palestinian Islamic Jihad later claimed the man as a member.

On 2 and 6 July, Israeli security forces fatally shot two Palestinians in the village of Jaba'a, near Jenin.

On 2 July, according to video and eyewitnesses, a 17-year-old was shot from some 30 metres as he was turning away, after having thrown stones towards the soldiers. The Israeli security forces said they fired after the boy had thrown a Molotov cocktail.

On 6 July, a Palestinian man was shot and killed as he left his house during a nearby Israeli security forces arrest operation. Israeli security forces said the man had been shot after trying to run away.

On 5 July, an Israeli man was seriously injured after being stabbed on a pedestrian bridge in Bnei Brak in central Israel. On 6 July, the Israeli security forces announced they had arrested a Palestinian man suspected of carrying out the attack.

On 19 July, an Israeli was stabbed and moderately injured by a Palestinian on a bus in Jerusalem. The assailant was subsequently shot and injured by an Israeli civilian.

On 2 July, the Palestinian Authority transferred the bullet that killed Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh to United States authorities to undergo forensic testing. On 4 July, following an analysis overseen by the United States Security Coordinator, the United States announced that the examiners could not reach a definitive conclusion regarding the origin of the bullet, due to its damaged condition. The United States also said that, after viewing the results of both Israeli and Palestinian investigations into Abu Akleh's death, it had concluded that gunfire from Israel Defense Forces positions was likely responsible and that it found no reason to believe that that was intentional.

Settler-related violence continued during the reporting period, with particularly concerning incidents in the West Bank community of Ras Al-Tin.

On the night of 6 July, individuals believed to be Israeli settlers set fire to four points around the community, damaging several structures, including tents. The attack comes on the heels of additional settler attacks against the community in recent weeks, during which two residents were injured.

I reiterate that perpetrators of all acts of violence must be held accountable and brought swiftly to justice. I also reiterate that security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life.

On 20 and 21 July, thousands of Israelis participated in a widely publicized campaign by a settler organization to establish settlement outposts across the West Bank. In advance of the campaign, Israeli Defense Minister Gantz issued a statement that such efforts are illegal activities that the security services are preparing to thwart. The Israel Defense Forces and Israeli police also issued similar statements. On 21 July, the Israeli security forces removed the seven makeshift encampments that had been set up and evacuated the Israeli civilians from the area.

I welcome the statements and actions by the Government of Israel to prevent the establishment of new outposts. I reiterate that all settlements are illegal under international law and remain a substantial obstacle to peace.

During the reporting period, Israeli authorities demolished, seized or forced owners to demolish 77 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and five in East Jerusalem, displacing 61 Palestinians, including 31 children. The demolitions were carried out due to the lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain.

In the wake of the 4 May ruling by the Israeli High Court of Justice allowing the eviction of the communities in Masafer Yatta, in the southern West Bank, to proceed due to their presence in an Israeli-declared “firing zone”, Israeli forces continued to adopt restrictive measures negatively affecting Palestinian communities and humanitarian actors providing support. Such measures include ongoing military training, related movement restrictions, arrests, including those involving use of force, as well as restrictions on the access of staff of international organizations and Palestinian non-governmental organizations to the area. I remain deeply concerned about the potential implications of the High Court’s ruling and the humanitarian toll on the communities in question if the eviction orders are carried out.

In a positive development, on 12 July, Israeli authorities announced that they would advance six plans for Palestinian construction in Area C. I urge Israel to further advance such plans and to issue building permits for all previously approved plans for Palestinians in Area C and in East Jerusalem.

On 21 July, Israel’s Supreme Court partially accepted the appeal of a Palestinian family under threat of eviction in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan, freezing the eviction order until proceedings are completed in a lower court.

I call on Israeli authorities to end the displacement and eviction of Palestinians, in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law, and to approve additional plans that would enable Palestinians to build legally and address their development needs.

On 30 June, the Israeli Knesset voted to dissolve itself and call for new parliamentary elections, now scheduled for 1 November. Due to the coalition agreements, on 1 July, Yair Lapid became Israel’s Prime Minister and will head the interim Government through the upcoming elections and Government-formation process. I congratulate Prime Minister Lapid, and the Special Coordinator looks forward to continuing to work with him to advance steps towards a

two-State solution and a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Between 13 and 15 July, United States President Biden visited Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, meeting with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. During the visit, the President announced a series of initiatives to support the Palestinian people, including a new multi-year contribution of \$100 million to the East Jerusalem Hospital Network, subject to congressional approval; \$201 million in funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); an additional \$15 million in humanitarian assistance for Palestinians aimed at addressing food insecurity; and two new grants under the Middle East Partnership for Peace Act.

On 16 July, in the context of President Biden’s meeting with regional leaders in Saudi Arabia, the United States announced that Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates also each pledged an additional \$25 million to the East Jerusalem Hospital Network.

The Biden Administration’s announcement that Israel has agreed to allow the Allenby Bridge, between the West Bank and Jordan, to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by the end of September will go some way to reduce the long wait thousands undergo at the crossing. The United States also said Israel had agreed to accelerate the transition to 4G technology in the West Bank, and then in Gaza, and to convene the long-dormant Joint Economic Committee with the Palestinian Authority.

I welcome the crucial United States and regional support pledged to East Jerusalem hospitals, vital Palestinian institutions that provide health care to patients from across the occupied Palestinian territory. Support for structural reform of the health sector is still needed for sustainable operations of the heavily indebted Hospital Network. I also welcome and look forward to the implementation of the important commitments made by Israel to improve movement and access for Palestinians at the Allenby Bridge and the transition to 4G technology to support economic growth.

In advance of President Biden’s visit, on 7 July, President Abbas and Defense Minister Gantz met in Ramallah, and on 8 July Israeli President Herzog and Prime Minister Lapid spoke with President Abbas by phone. The continuing high-level contacts between Israeli and Palestinian officials are encouraging. I urge

leaders on all sides to expand that engagement to encompass the underlying political issues. In addition, on 12 July, Israeli authorities announced the approval of the registration of 5,500 previously unregistered Palestinians and the expansion of a crossing in the northern West Bank to include vehicular traffic between Israel and Jenin for the use of Israeli Arabs. On 21 July, President Abbas visited France and met with President Emmanuel Macron. At a joint press conference following the meeting, President Macron affirmed his willingness to help mobilize the international community in efforts to support the resumption of a political dialogue towards a just and lasting peace.

Statements issued by 10 European Foreign Ministries announced that their Governments had reviewed the 21 October designation of six Palestinian NGOs as terrorist organizations. The statements highlighted that no substantial information had been received that would justify a review of the Member States' policies, and, in the absence of such evidence, they confirmed that they would continue their cooperation with and strong support for civil society in the occupied Palestinian territory. Going forward, the Ministry of Defence has requested that the three lawyers representing the six NGOs seek approval before continuing to do so. On several occasions in July, Palestinian legal associations organized demonstrations in Ramallah, attended by hundreds of participants, to protest the Palestinian Authority's practice of issuing and amending laws by presidential decree. Protesters called for the election of a new Legislative Council and a resumption of regular legislative procedures.

The situation in Gaza remains fragile, as efforts by the United Nations and other partners continue to deliver vital humanitarian and development assistance and to further ease restrictions on the movement of people and goods into and out of the Strip. On 16 July, following a period of relative calm, militants in Gaza launched four rockets towards Israel. According to Israeli authorities, one rocket was intercepted by the Iron Dome system, while the others landed in open areas in Israel. No injuries were reported. In retaliation, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) conducted air strikes against what it said were Hamas targets in the Strip, with no injuries reported. On 19 July, Israeli authorities announced that they had found a bullet in Netiv HaAsara, in southern Israel, which they determined had been fired earlier that day from the Gaza Strip, damaging an industrial building. Subsequently, the IDF launched missiles at

what it said were Hamas targets in the Strip, once again with no injuries reported.

The reconstruction and repair of damages incurred during the 2021 escalation still requires additional funding as well as the timely disbursement of funding that has already been pledged. There remains a funding gap of at least \$45 million for the reconstruction of ruined housing units and \$9 million for repairs to damaged housing. On 3 July, on the occasion of the Muslim holiday of Eid Al-Adha, the Israeli authorities announced that 400 permits would be issued for men over the age of 55 and women over the age of 50 to visit Jerusalem from Gaza. They are the first such permits to be issued since 2017. In addition, it was announced that some 500 permits would be issued for Gaza residents to visit first-degree relatives in the West Bank and Israel over the holiday.

In June, some 72,000 crossings of people holding Israeli-issued permits through the Israeli-controlled Erez crossing were recorded, the highest number in one month since the tightening of the Israeli closures following Hamas's takeover of the Strip in 2007. June also witnessed an increase of imports into Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing between Israel and Gaza, with a 12 per cent increase in the number of trucks compared to May. The number of trucks entering Gaza through the informal Salah ad-Din crossing between Gaza and Egypt increased by 45 per cent compared to May 2020.

Across the occupied Palestinian territory, soaring commodity prices continue to have a negative impact on Palestinians' lives. The UNRWA emergency food assistance programme requires an additional \$72 million by September to meet the food assistance needs for 1.1 million Palestinian refugees in Gaza in the fourth quarter. The World Food Programme needs an additional \$24 million to continue providing assistance until the end of the year to compensate for the drop in purchasing power. In that context, I welcome recent announcements by the United States and the European Union confirming their 2022 contributions to UNRWA, which will allow the Agency to maintain education, primary health care and other critical services to Palestine refugees during the summer months. I encourage additional contributions from Member States to ensure that the needs on the ground can be met.

With regard to the region in general, while the ceasefire between Israel and Syria continues to be

generally maintained, the situation remains volatile with continued violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement by the parties. The latest reported incident was brought to the attention of the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General through identical letters of 22 July from the Permanent Representative of Syria concerning the situation between Israel and Syria. It is important that the parties respect their obligations under the terms of the Agreement and prevent an escalation of the situation between them.

In Lebanon, following the parliamentary elections of 15 May, efforts to form a new Government continue. It is crucial that a new Government be formed as soon as possible and that progress be made on reforms needed to address the country's multiple crises. I also underscore the risks to stability posed by incidents such as Hizbullah's launch on 2 July of three unarmed drones from Lebanon towards the Karish offshore natural-gas field. I urge all the parties to exercise restraint and avoid provocative actions that could lead to escalation. On 15 and 16 July, President Biden visited Saudi Arabia, where he met with leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Egypt, Iraq and Jordan. Following the summit, the United States and the GCC issued a joint statement reaffirming their commitment to preserving regional security and stability and supporting diplomacy with the aim of regional de-escalation.

Immediate steps to reverse the negative trends and to support the Palestinian people are essential. The violence must stop. The tensions that have been mounting, particularly in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, amid continued settlement activity and settler-related violence, must be addressed. However, there is no substitute for a legitimate political process that will resolve the core issues driving the conflict. As history has so painfully demonstrated, the factors contributing to the corrosive situation, if left unaddressed, will only deteriorate further. We must focus on reaching the ultimate goal — two States, living side by side in peace and security, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions, previous agreements and international law. The United Nations remains committed to supporting Israelis and Palestinians to move towards a just and lasting peace, and we will continue to work with the parties and regional and international partners to achieve that objective.

The President: I thank Ms. Hastings for her statement.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): Allow me at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting, and to reiterate our appreciation to Brazil for its leadership of the Security Council this month. We also thank Ms. Hastings for her briefing this morning and for all her and her team's tireless efforts to address the humanitarian situation on the ground in occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem.

States are currently discussing preparations for the Summit of the Future. Let me therefore talk about the future. We know what the future will look like if nothing is done differently. For Palestinian children, it is a future of fear, harassment, intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, injury and death. The Secretary-General's recent report on children and armed conflict (S/2022/493) once again highlighted the vast array of violations of which Palestinian children are victims. The Secretary-General stated,

"I am shocked by the number of children killed and maimed by Israeli forces during hostilities, in air strikes on densely populated areas and through the use of live ammunition during law enforcement operations, and by the persistent lack of accountability for these violations." (S/2022/493, para.93)

The lack of accountability demonstrates that nothing has been done to truly address the situation.

The Secretary-General has warned that a repeat of Israeli violations similar to those of May 2021 would lead to the listing of Israel among the violators of child rights. However, what the report described was not a one-time event but a persistent pattern over the years of abject disregard for the lives and rights of Palestinian children that justifies listing Israel several times over, not merely warning it of such a prospect.

The Palestinian nation and this Palestinian generation are full of potential. That can be seen in every field despite the terrible circumstances — from Loay Elbasyouni, who made his way from Gaza to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, to the Gaza Sky Geeks who shaped a horizon despite the blockade; from Hanan Al Hroub, who received the

Global Teacher Prize, to Iqbal Al-Assad, the youngest doctor in the world.

However, the Palestinian story is also one of unrealized potential and interrupted journeys — from the journalist Yasser Murtaja, who was killed while covering the violent repression by the Israelis of the Gaza Great March of Return, to the journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, who was shot dead while covering yet another Israeli military raid in the refugee camp of Jenin.

It is the story of the families in Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan and Massafer Yatta, who are under the constant threat of being forcibly displaced from their homes, like many before them. It is the story of entire families buried under the rubble of their homes — what was to be their safest haven. It is the story of more than 2 million people trapped by a medieval blockade. It is the story of thousands who are arbitrarily detained and imprisoned, including children — their minds, bodies and souls traumatized. It is the story of human rights and humanitarian non-governmental organizations that are labelled as terrorist organizations. It is the story of the victims being blamed for their fate and an oppressor claiming the right to oppress the people and steal the land.

What does the future hold for Palestine? What does the future hold for Palestinians? It is an entire nation fighting to exist to live in freedom and dignity on its ancestral land. It fights for justice. For a century, it has fought just to exist. From the day Palestinians are born until the day they die, they are acutely aware that they have no control over their life and that at any point and for no reason, they can be killed, arrested, injured or denied entry to or exit from their own country, the right to education, access to health care, the freedom to worship at their holy sites without fear or harassment, the right to live with their loved ones and the right to a safe home and a secure life.

They know that a settler or a soldier has been endowed with the right to take away their life, while enjoying blanket immunity. They know that, whatever happens, Palestinians will be deemed to be guilty and Israelis will be deemed to be innocent in Israeli courts. They know that the world, too accustomed to that pattern of tragedy and injustice, will express dismay and then look away.

At a time when the international community rightfully proclaims that we are entitled to equal

measures of freedom, security and prosperity, Israel persists in denying us all three. What will the Security Council and the broader international community do about it?

United States President Biden's visit to the region provided an occasion to reaffirm fundamental principles about ending the occupation and the conflict, including the two-State solution based on the 1967 borders; opposition to unilateral measures, including settlement activities, demolitions and evictions; and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and a sovereign and independent State.

The Jeddah communiqué stated in no uncertain terms the enduring commitment to the two-State solution, wherein a sovereign and contiguous Palestinian State lives side by side in peace and security with Israel, as the only way to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in accordance with the internationally recognized parameters and the Arab Peace Initiative. However, Israel announced yesterday, only days after the visit of President Biden, that it was yet again advancing hundreds of settlement units, including in occupied East Jerusalem — our capital.

It is time for the political and financial engagement of the international community to translate into a common agenda for freedom, justice and peace — a common agenda to protect the Palestinian people, fulfil Palestinian rights and achieve peace for all. It is time for the international community to determine what steps need to be immediately taken to allow us to reach our common objectives. I repeat, we must determine what practical steps need to be immediately taken to allow us to reach our common objectives. The fate of an entire nation cannot be held hostage by Israeli politics or the settlers' agenda. The stakes are too high, the issue too serious and the implications too grave.

Ten years ago, the General Assembly adopted a historic resolution (resolution 67/19) granting Palestine observer State status at the United Nations. Many members present today voted in favour of that resolution, and we thank them. Since then, we have demonstrated our ability to be an effective and constructive actor in the international community. Our leadership and chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China for a whole year is a clear testimony to that fact. We have every right to be a Member of the United Nations. Nothing justifies delaying that prospect. We have every right to freedom and independence. Our right to self-determination,

sovereignty and territorial integrity is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Six years ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 2334 (2016), which set out a clear path towards salvaging a two-State solution, ending the occupation and achieving a just and secure peace. It is the responsibility of the Security Council and its members to ensure that we embark on that path. If we act now, together, peace is possible. I know that everyone around this table and beyond wants peace. The only question that remains is whether we are ready to do what is necessary to achieve it. Is the Security Council, entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, ready to achieve our collective objective?

The Secretary-General has rightly warned that we risk losing the opportunity for a two-State solution altogether. Ms. Hastings also reflected that notion in her briefing today. The future will be determined by what we do right now. There are two tasks that cannot be deferred or delayed, and they are providing protection to the Palestinian people — and we are working with the Secretary-General and his teams in that regard — and preserving a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders. If there is to be a different future, that is what needs to happen in the present. We must act now before it is too late. What the Council needs to do is act. The Council members know what the objective is and what our common position is. Reiterating it is not sufficient. Action is what is needed.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Erdan (Israel): I am now nearing my two-year benchmark as Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations, and I have to admit that I am feeling deeply frustrated. The main reason is that these debates on the situation in the Middle East and the Palestinian question are supposed to be dedicated to two primary topics, the Middle East and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Yet at every one of these meetings, the most dangerous threat to the region is hardly discussed, while the true obstacles to solving the conflict are never addressed. When it comes to the situation in the Middle East, everyone knows that the biggest threat to the region is the nuclearization of the radical Ayatollah regime in Iran, as well as its funding of terror and hegemonic ambitions — threats that are almost never discussed here.

When we discuss the Palestinian question, the debates do not focus on productive ways forward, collaborative progress or building a bottom-up peace, all of which are entirely possible. Instead, we dedicate our time and resources to biased reports, often condemning the decisions of Israeli courts or discussing trivial local conflicts between Palestinians and Israelis. We take a century-old conflict and put it under a supermicroscope to analyse its most useless and insignificant aspects, rather than looking at the bigger picture and seeking real solutions to our real problems. Sadly, nothing noteworthy has been achieved as a result of these debates — nothing, for decades. How can it be that the Council cannot see the true barriers to peace? The current approach is broken and now is the time to work together to fix it. Let us start by taking a look at some of the primary challenges.

Despite what has been presented here today, as always, the main obstacle to peace was not and is not the Jewish presence in Judea and Samaria. After all, the Palestinians refused to live with us in peace even before 1967. It is a fact that no progress was made even when Israel unilaterally disengaged from the Gaza Strip — indeed, the opposite happened. It is a fact that no progress was made even when peace plans that were presented and supported by several Israeli Prime Ministers and American Presidents — and that included far-reaching Israeli concessions — were all rejected by the Palestinians, one after another. The members of the Council are all aware that the Palestinians' absurd prerequisite to negotiations is that Israel has to accept all of their radical demands before even sitting down at the table. Is such rejectionism not a topic that should be discussed in these debates? Why does the Council allow it to be forgotten? What about the endless incitement to terror coming from the highest offices of the Palestinian Authority, which is poisoning the minds of an entire generation? Is that colossal barrier to peace not worthy of discussion? Every year, President Abbas pays hundreds of millions of dollars to terrorists as part of the Palestinians pay-for-slay policy. Sickeningly, those payments use a sliding scale. The more horrific the terror attack, the greater the reward. Does that twisted practice not warrant a discussion here?

What about Hamas, the radical terror organization that rules over Gaza with an iron fist? It targets Israeli civilians with its rockets while using its own civilians as human shields. Everyone here knows that the reason there have been no elections in the Palestinian territories

for 17 years is out of fear that Hamas's influence and power will only grow. That is a huge obstacle to peace. Today Israel does not even have a possible partner for negotiations, because President Abbas does not represent all of Palestinian society. And nevertheless, despite the heinous actions of Hamas, the Council remains silent. That sadistic terror organization took Hisham Al-Sayed hostage — a Muslim Israeli suffering from mental health issues — and after seven years of silence, recently released a video of a dazed Hisham breathing through a ventilator. The Council is so quick to issue statements regarding events that happen in the Palestinian territories. Where is the statement condemning Hamas for Hisham's kidnapping and torture? When Hisham's father, Shaaban, heard that I would bring his son's plight before the Council today, he asked me to share his heartfelt message. Here is a very short video of what he begged me to say.

A video recording was shown in the Chamber.

Here is the father of a son with special needs, who is begging the Security Council and its members to take action. Hamas is using his boy as a sick bargaining chip, and the world remains silent. I hope that we all internalized his words.

Hamas is undoubtedly one of the most critical barriers to any advancement between Israelis and Palestinians, but it seems from the United Nations reports that the murderous terror group does not even exist. If each debate feels exactly like the last, and no progress has been made, perhaps the time has come to revise the approach. Rather than focusing on the minutia of the conflict, it is time to put the Security Council's microscope away and look at the bigger pictures.

If we are interested in moving forward towards a better future, the starting point should be analysing best practices, and we do not need to look far to find success stories of regional peace. Just two weeks ago, during President Biden's violence visit to the region, the evolution of a big part of the Middle East from conflict to coexistence was openly displayed for the world to see. Without baseless condemnations, repetitive debates or poisonous libel, countries of the region chose peace and, as a result, received progress. That is what happens when one chooses the future of one's people over conflict — a concept that the Palestinians, who still sadly hate us Israelis more than they love their own children, have yet to adopt. During President Biden's visit, President Abbas lied again when he announced

that the Palestinian Authority was committed to renouncing violence. Nothing could be further from the truth. Not only does President Abbas himself praise and finance terror attacks; he incites them, and members of his party even commit them. The time has come for the Security Council to address the rampant culture of hate that the Palestinian Authority has been cultivating for decades.

Security Council members should look at what can happen when the path of collaboration and coexistence is chosen. The fruits of our new regional architecture are being enjoyed across the Middle East and far beyond. With the help of the recent free trade agreement, in the first six months of 2022, trade between Israel and the United Arab Emirates surpassed \$1 billion. Last week, the Israeli military chief of staff travelled to Morocco in order to build and cement growing defence ties between our nations. The Negev Forum, held in Israel with Secretary Blinken and four Arab foreign ministers, is a symbol of our shared commitment to future cooperation. It is a taste of what can be achieved when we work together to overcome shared challenges.

When I mentioned that the peace can be felt far beyond the region, I truly meant it. We should take, for example, the recent I2U2 Virtual Summit. The leaders of Israel, India, the United Arab Emirates and the United States held a meeting discussing how to work together to tackle the greatest global challenges, from combating water scarcity and food insecurity to new initiatives regarding energy, health care, transportation and space exploration. The Palestinians can also benefit from all those gains and collaborative projects if they only put the well-being of their people ahead of breeding hatred and incitement against us. Our new peace accords have also reinvigorated far-reaching projects with our old partners, Egypt and Jordan, and those projects are changing the face of the Middle East and beyond.

The momentum that that peace has ignited is pushing us to even higher peaks. Following President Biden's visit to Jerusalem and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia opened its airspace to Israeli airlines. That is a crucial step, and we thank the American Administration and President Biden for helping to facilitate it. Israel looks forward to further developments with Saudi Arabia.

While the good of our peoples was the driving factor behind that deep people-to-people peace, there was also another factor at play that is hardly ever discussed

here — the nuclearization process of the radical and dangerous Iranian regime. Iran's dangerous nuclear ambitions and its axis of terror proxies pushed the moderate Powers of the region together. The peace that we have built is also a by-product of the international community's inaction. As we sit here, hearing the same grievance every month, the writing on the wall has never been clearer. From the forced removal of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) oversight to the expanded enrichment of uranium to almost weapons-grade level, those are not the actions of a country with innocent intentions. Is stopping a radical regime from acquiring nuclear weapons not high on the Security Council's priority list? What are we waiting for? Mere days ago, the IAEA's Director General, Mr. Grossi, warned of Iran's galloping advances, while leaving his Agency in the dark. That may lead to an immense and pressing threat to global security. But we could also hear that directly from the Iranians themselves. Kamal Kharrazi, Ayatollah Khamenei's foreign policy adviser, openly stated that Iran was now capable of building a nuclear bomb. A fanatical regime, which blatantly calls for Israel's annihilation, claims to have the capabilities to build a nuclear weapon, and we are sitting here using a magnifying glass to identify minor conflicts in every village in Judea and Samaria.

Kharrazi's statement, coupled with the Supreme Leader's poisonous vitriol, presents a clear threat not just to Israel, but to the entire region. Here are some of Ayatollah Khamenei's recent tweets. I would love to hear what participants think of them and what they mean for the future of the Middle East.

"The plague of Zionism should be exposed, in any way you can. These Arab and non-Arab States that shook hands, kissed and held meetings with the Zionists will not benefit from what they did at all, not at all. This will only be to their loss."

"Today, Zionism is an obvious plague for the world of Islam. The Zionists have always been a plague, even before establishing the fraudulent Zionist regime. Even then, Zionist capitalists were a plague for the whole world. Now they are a plague, especially for the world of Islam."

Those are not just words. That is pure anti-Semitism. That is a blatant call to commit terror against Jews and Israel. The diplomatic route was tested with Iran time and again. It has failed. Now the Security Council must take action or, at the very least, it must use these debates

to start addressing the Iranian nuclear Shia elephant in the room.

As the centrifuges spin and Iran's stockpiles of enriched uranium grow, the Ayatollah's terror proxies continue to spread chaos and destruction throughout the region. After all, Iran takes its role as the world's number one State sponsor of terror very seriously. If only the Iranian people were given the care and attention that their leaders give to Hizbullah, Hamas and the Houthis, then maybe the people of Isfahan would have water to drink.

Last week, we commemorated two deadly Iranian-sponsored terror attacks — the horrific 1994 attack in Buenos Aires, which killed 80 people and injured hundreds, and the 2012 attack in Bulgaria, which killed five Israelis. But Iranian terror is not a thing of the past. Over the past couple of weeks, armed Iranian hit squads were caught in Istanbul moments before murdering innocent Israelis. Meanwhile, Hizbullah, Iran's terror army in Lebanon, is doing everything in its power to destabilize the already fragile country. Productive advances between Israel and Lebanon are under way. Yet Hizbullah is taking every possible step to torpedo any potential progress. We should make no mistake: all Hizbullah's attempts to destabilize negotiations between Israel and Lebanon are with Iran's permission and blessing. While the Iranians go to great lengths to clean up the evidence of their involvement in global terror, every member of the Security Council knows exactly who is responsible.

Nevertheless, here we are, moving from one biased anti-Israel report to the next, focusing on inaccurate supposed building-violation conflicts, with zero influence on the bigger picture.

Just two weeks ago, Hizbullah launched three drones at the Karish gas field in Israel's economic borders. Such brazen acts will not be accepted by Israel, and we hold Lebanon, as a sovereign State, responsible for Hizbullah's military expansion and attacks. I can no longer count how many times I notified the Council, whether in writing or in person, that Hizbullah will wreak havoc on Lebanon. Yet the Council's silence is deafening.

The time has come for the Council to take action, not only against Iran and its nuclear programme but also against its proxies. Hizbullah must no longer get a free pass, just as Lebanon must not get a free pass.

Action against those sowing discord and destroying peace must be taken now.

If we wish to bring stability and prosperity to our region, which has seen perpetual conflict for the past century, then the time has come to rethink our ways. The time has come to put away our microscopes and our magnifying glasses. The time has come to remove the blinders from our eyes. By repeating the same argument while ignoring the groundbreaking progress, the only thing we accomplish is the tarnishing of this debate's credibility and the perpetuity of the conflict.

I truly hope that our subsequent debates come to reflect a safe and prospering Middle East — one devoid of radical terror, teeming with cooperation and driven by coexistence. That is the future we all want and deserve.

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

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): At the outset, let me thank Deputy Special Coordinator Hastings for her briefing.

Today I would like to share an update from President Biden's visit to Israel and the West Bank this month, which demonstrated the strength of the bilateral relationship between the United States and Israel, including our continued steadfast commitment to Israel's security. The trip also highlighted our determination to bolster the United States-Palestinian relationship, which has roots going back to the 1800s.

The President had productive meetings with Israel's President Isaac Herzog and Prime Minister Yair Lapid, as well as other Israeli leaders, on the full range of issues that define our strategic partnership. He was also able to visit Yad Vashem, where he met with some of the last living Holocaust survivors — a powerful reminder of the sacred promise we have made: "Never again." President Biden commended the Abraham Accords and Israel's normalization agreements with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco, which, alongside Israel's peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, contribute to security, prosperity and peace in the Middle East.

The I2U2 Virtual Summit of India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the United States that the President convened showed the potential of closer cooperation between Israel and other countries in and outside the region. And Saudi Arabia's announcement that it would

allow Israeli airlines to use Saudi airspace was another important step in building a more integrated region.

Critically, the President also highlighted the opportunity those normalization agreements provide to advance Israeli-Palestinian relations and address the needs of the Palestinian people. As we have repeatedly said in the Council, normalization agreements are important in their own right, but they are not a substitute for a negotiated two-State solution. Indeed, President Biden reiterated the Administration's commitment to a two-State solution and emphasized the importance of promoting a future in which Israelis and Palestinians alike can enjoy equal measures of security, freedom and prosperity. After their meeting, Prime Minister Lapid also expressed support for a two-State solution.

The President also acknowledged Jerusalem's importance to the multiple faiths and nationalities when he said:

"Jerusalem is central to the national visions of both Palestinians and Israelis — to your histories, to your faiths, to your future. Jerusalem must be a city for all its people."

During his visit, President Biden also met with President Mahmoud Abbas in the West Bank and reaffirmed our shared commitment to strengthen the Palestinian economy and improve the quality of life for Palestinians. To that end, as we heard, he announced several initiatives to support the Palestinian people, including expanding 4G digital connectivity to Gaza and the West Bank, improving accessibility to the Allenby Bridge and providing \$316 million in new assistance — all for the benefit of the Palestinian people. That aid includes a plan to provide up to \$100 million in support for the East Jerusalem Hospital Network, which delivers specialized care and emergency services to 50,000 patients from East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza annually. We were pleased that Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates committed to provide an additional \$100 million to those Jerusalem hospitals, and we urge other countries to support the Palestinian people.

Our new assistance also includes \$201 million for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to continue delivering critical services to the Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. We fully support UNRWA's life-saving work and continued efforts to improve its operations and to

guarantee that its works fully support and respect the principles of neutrality, tolerance, respect for human rights, equity and non-discrimination. We call on others to join us in supporting UNRWA in order to ensure its services can continue.

Finally, President Biden announced that the United States is providing \$15 million in additional humanitarian assistance to support 210,000 vulnerable Palestinians who are food-insecure among a growing global food security crisis exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In short, the President's visit demonstrated that the United States remains deeply committed to peace and prosperity in the Middle East.

We urge all parties in the region and around the world to support — in word and deed — the goal of a peaceful and prosperous region, including through bolder action to create the conditions for a two-State solution.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I would like to thank Deputy Special Coordinator Hastings for her briefing. I also want to thank the Permanent Representative of the United States for updating us on President Biden's visit to the region.

Last month, the Security Council held an open debate on strengthening accountability and justice for serious violations of international law (see S/PV.9052). Accountability is vital across all files on the Council's agenda, particularly in the context of the issues that we are discussing today.

In the first six months of this year, 60 Palestinians were killed and more than 5,900 injured by Israeli security forces. We are concerned about the pervasive culture of impunity for incidents of possible excessive use of force by Israeli security forces, or even for potentially unlawful killings. An independent investigation into the killing of Shireen Abu Akleh remains essential. It is now well overdue.

We strongly condemn settler violence and other ideologically motivated violence. Action to bring perpetrators to justice remains extremely limited. We urgently need to reverse that trend and hold those responsible accountable.

Ireland remains of the view that ongoing Israeli settlement activity gravely undermines the prospects of a two-State solution. Immediate action is required to preserve the viability of that goal. That applies particularly to those settlements, including Givat

Hashaked, Lower Aqueduct, Givat Hamatos and Area E-1, that would gravely undermine the viability and contiguity of a future Palestinian State.

Ireland is particularly concerned about the situation in Area C, which is part of the occupied Palestinian territory and, in line with the Oslo Accords, should be gradually transferred to Palestinian jurisdiction. We reiterate the critical importance of social and economic development in Area C and call on Israel to allow more access and control for the Palestinian Authority (PA).

We also call on Israel to cease evictions and the demolitions of Palestinian homes and related structures, in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law. The recent Masafer Yatta eviction decision in the South Hebron Hills in the occupied West Bank is one of the more egregious examples, which increases the risk of the forcible transfer of some 1,200 Palestinians and the demolition of their homes. Recent removals of water tanks are gravely concerning.

The people of the Gaza Strip continue to suffer. Cycles of violence and war and an illegal blockade have resulted in extreme hardship, including poverty and food insecurity. We welcome Israel's granting of additional permits and its easing of some restrictions, but such measures will never be a substitute for ending the blockade.

During the escalation of hostilities in May 2021, Israeli attacks may have violated international humanitarian law principles of distinction, proportionality and feasible precautions, as documented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. However, more than a year later, we are not aware of any criminal investigation of those incidents. Neither have there been any measures to ensure accountability for the indiscriminate firing of rockets towards Israel in breach of international humanitarian law or for other possible violations of international humanitarian law.

Civil society has a vital role to play in shining a light on violations of international law and promoting accountability for those responsible. We are alarmed at the reduced space for civil society in the occupied Palestinian territory. We will continue our strong cooperation with and support for Palestinian civil society, as affirmed by Ireland and eight other member States of the European Union in a statement made on 12 July. Ireland supports the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' call on Israel to

revoke the designations against Palestinian civil society organizations as terrorist entities.

Moreover, Ireland calls on the Palestinian Authority to ensure a safe space for civil society and human rights defenders, who must be allowed to operate freely without fear of being subjected to intimidation, arbitrary arrest or abuse. We call on the Authority to exercise greater responsibility, within the constraints faced under the occupation. The PA must work to reduce tensions and violence, reinvigorate preparations for essential, inclusive elections and increase meaningful efforts on intra-Palestinian reconciliation.

Ireland underlines our support for the work of the United Nations in the occupied Palestinian territory and calls on Israel to facilitate that work. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East plays a vital role in regional stability and merits strong support, including regionally.

As I leave for a new posting next month, this is my last statement on this file as Permanent Representative of Ireland. Unfortunately, the prospects of reopening a political horizon for meaningful negotiations between the parties on achieving a two-State solution are as remote today as when I arrived at the United Nations five years ago, in 2017. I deeply regret that.

The same can be said for accountability. Accountability is not something separate from the peace process and a political horizon. It cannot wait for political conditions to be right, and it cannot be substituted by economic development. Ireland will continue to draw attention to violations by all duty bearers and will continue to call for accountability.

In conclusion, Ireland calls on the Council to reinvigorate its efforts through coherent and effective action towards ending the occupation.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank Deputy Special Coordinator Hastings for her briefing. I would also like to thank the representative of the United States for her update. We were pleased to see President Biden's visit to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories this month and the announcement of United States funding for East Jerusalem hospitals and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

We welcomed Israel's commitment during that visit to restart the Joint Economic Committee and accelerate the transition to 4G cellular technology in the occupied

Palestinian territory. Those are important steps that have the potential to bolster the Palestinian economy. We echo President Biden's calls for urgent progress in both cases, and the United Kingdom stands ready to provide support.

Recent direct discussions held by Prime Minister Lapid, President Herzog and Defence Minister Gantz with President Abbas and other Palestinian Authority leaders are similarly welcome. Such cooperation and dialogue are essential to tackling shared challenges.

However, the situation on the ground remains fragile. We note with concern the latest report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the increase in fatalities. In the first six months of 2022, 60 Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces during law enforcement operations in the West Bank. In the same period, 19 Israelis were killed in terror attacks. Terrorist attacks against civilians are abhorrent and unacceptable. We call on all parties to de-escalate tensions and stop the continued loss of life.

We welcome the United States engagement with Israel and the Palestinian Authority to seek the truth surrounding Shireen Abu Akleh's death, and we now urge accountability for those responsible.

We continue to be deeply concerned about the imminent risk of the forcible transfer of more than 1,000 Palestinians at Masafer Yatta and the recent detention of staff members of humanitarian organizations seeking to aid the community. This month, we saw the disbandment of the community at Ras Al-Tin, following the demolition of its residents' homes and settler attacks. We urge Israel to abide by its obligations under international law in order to ensure that the residents of Masafer Yatta and other communities in Area C are protected and that humanitarian access is permitted, and to refrain from further evictions and demolitions. We also call on Israel to halt plans to advance 1,900 settlement units in East Jerusalem on 25 July. Settlements are illegal under international law and threaten the physical viability of a two-State solution.

The United Kingdom believes that Palestinians and Israelis deserve equal measures of peace, security and prosperity. A negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian State remains the best way to achieve that outcome.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Lynn Hastings, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for her briefing.

France continues to support a two-State solution with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, and is determined to work for its implementation, as set out under international law, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the agreed parameters. It is the only solution that meets the legitimate aspirations of both peoples and protects Israel's security interests and the region's stability. We must act with a sense of urgency to prevent another deadly spiral like the one that took place in Gaza in May 2021. To that end, it will be essential to establish a political horizon for addressing the root causes of a deadlock that has lasted for far too long. President Macron reminded President Abbas of that during his visit to Paris on 20 July. It is in the direct interests of both countries' peoples and their security. France will remain committed to ensuring Israel's security, and we condemn the recent rocket strikes that targeted Israeli territory.

In the short term, the priority is to end the unilateral measures that are increasingly undermining the viability of a future Palestinian State, day after day. That is crucial, together with the measures announced by Israel for easing restrictions on Palestinians' freedom of movement and facilitating the development of the Palestinian territories. France firmly condemns the advancement of plans for expanding and building settlements, in particular in Area E1, and for evicting Palestinian families and demolishing their homes. We are very concerned about the recent developments in Masafer Yatta and call for an end to the evictions and demolitions, which are in breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Over the medium term, the priority should continue to be facilitating a resumption of direct political dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. President Macron underscored that point to President Abbas and Prime Minister Lapid during their recent visits to Paris. In that regard, we welcome the recent positive gestures by the parties, such as the most recent call between Mr. Lapid and Mr. Abbas and the prospects for a resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Economic Committee. Such gestures are crucial, as we must rebuild trust and reopen a path to peace. That said, we will see long-term results only with the cessation of unilateral measures on the ground. For now, France will

continue to fully support the Palestinian people with bilateral assistance, assistance through the European Union and support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Such support is even more important in the light of the global food insecurity caused by the war in Ukraine

The Council has an important role to play in establishing a credible political horizon. To that end, we invite all members to make an active contribution.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Ms. Lynn Hastings, the Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process, for her briefing on the situation the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

Once again, we have to note that the fact that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict continues unresolved triggers frequent outbreaks of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories that undermine regional and international security. The deadlock in the peace process, compounded by provocative unilateral measures, is capable of igniting the situation in the conflict zone at any point. We are particularly concerned about reports that the Israeli settlements designed to expand and entrench the occupation in the West Bank have not ceased their attempts to create a series of outposts, which are illegitimate even from the point of view of Israel's much-criticized legislature.

Against a backdrop of impunity for crimes against the Palestinian people, the number of acts of violence continues to grow steadily. In the past month at least four Palestinian civilians have been killed and more than 50 wounded. In Masafer Yatta, more than 1,200 Palestinians continue to face the threat of forced evictions and confiscations of their property. Besides that, Palestinians are targeted by ongoing arbitrary arrests and a disproportionate use of force by the Israeli armed forces, whose victims are often women and children. Another telling incident was the murder on 11 May in Jenin of the Al Jazeera correspondent Shireen Abu Akleh. In the opinion of an overwhelming number of experts, as well as the conclusion reached by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on 24 July following an investigation into the tragic incident, the shots that killed the journalist and wounded her colleague were fired by Israeli security forces.

We once again underscore the importance of stepping up the efforts to consolidate the international

consensus on a settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict based on the principle of a two-State solution and the existing international legal framework, including the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council and the Arab Peace Initiative. We consistently advocate for a resumption of direct Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, which should lead to the creation of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, while taking account of Israel's national security concerns. We believe that it is essential to ramp up the multilateral efforts for this, including in the format of the Middle East Quartet of international mediators. In that regard, we reiterate our focus on cooperation with the partners in the Quartet, aimed at improving the effectiveness of this Council-approved format. At the same time, we should emphasize the importance of coordination between international mediators and regional partners. That is what is behind Russia's initiative to hold an expanded ministerial meeting of the Middle East Quartet with key members of the League of Arab States. Regrettably, that has still not been decided, thanks to the United States' lack of interest in resuming the Quartet's activities.

It will be impossible to see sustained and long-term progress in the peace process without intra-Palestinian unity that is grounded in the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the holding of Palestinian general elections. In that regard, we support the initiatives of Egypt and Algiers aimed at conducting another round of negotiations between the representatives of Fatah and Hamas. Our proposal for making use of Moscow's potential as a platform is still on the table. We also consider it very important to provide comprehensive humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as to refugees in neighbouring Arab States. We support the activities in this area of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which is a key organization for supporting Palestinians in need.

In conclusion, we once again underscore that the Russian Federation will continue its efforts to coordinate joint initiatives to revive the Middle East peace process and bring about a just solution to the Palestinian question. As we have seen, attempts to monopolize the settlement efforts and impose an economic peace on the Palestinian people rather than finding a fair way to fulfil their aspirations for the creation of their own independent State have not produced tangible results and never will.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I thank Deputy Special Coordinator Hastings for her briefing.

We remain concerned about the situation on the ground. The tensions remain high, and violence continues to harm civilians. We want to reiterate once more our firm condemnation of any terrorist attacks on Israel. Nothing ever can or will justify such attacks. Rocket fire, the launching of incendiary devices and other attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups remain unacceptable. Albania will continue to call on all parties to avoid actions and provocations that undermine the prospects for peaceful coexistence between Israelis and the Palestinians. Evictions and settler violence serve only to exacerbate tensions and should be properly investigated.

We reiterate our support for a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition, with Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States. Israelis and Palestinians have a right to live in peace with one another and with full and equal enjoyment of human rights and freedoms. Despite the difficulties, challenges and setbacks, we should not let that goal fade away. The hopes of millions are invested in it.

We value every effort that seeks to bring the parties closer together and establish a political horizon for a resumption of talks within the United Nations framework to find a lasting solution to the conflict. In that context, we welcome President Biden's recent visit to the region.

An improved atmosphere and better relations among the countries of the region promotes stability for the benefit of all. It is important that the Palestinians also be involved in, and benefit from, that process. The announcement by Saudi Arabia that it will allow overflights rights to all carriers, including Israeli airlines, is welcome and will further contribute to efforts towards building a robust regional architecture by deepening the ties among the countries of the region.

We believe that cooperation is always a better choice and a more secure path, as its dividends benefit all those involved. In that respect, the announcement of 4G wireless Internet access in the West Bank is welcome and should contribute to improving economic prospects for Palestinians.

We condemn all forms of incitement to violence and hate speech and call on all sides, especially political leaders, to firmly and continuously condemn such acts. Hate speech stigmatizes others, erodes social cohesion, divides solidarity and undermines trust. It can lead to hate crimes, and unfortunately very often does. It should not be tolerated. Cases should be investigated and perpetrators held accountable.

As we see in every conflict, innocent civilians, women and children are disproportionately affected, even when they are not directly targeted. We deplore any loss of civilian life. Civilians should always be kept out of conflicts, and no effort must be spared in protecting civilians in accordance with international humanitarian law. Civilian life is the same, whether it is Israeli, Palestinian or anyone else's. Civil society is a vital pillar of any democratic society and must be protected. All impediments to the operation of civil society must be removed. It is our firm view that democratic institutions based on respect for the rule of law and human rights are vital everywhere, including for the Palestinian people.

We reiterate our opposition to unilateral actions that exacerbate the conflict and undermine efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive solution. In line with international law, settlements and their expansion are an obstacle to peace and the realization of a two-State solution. We think that they are wrong and should be stopped.

We reiterate our support for the preservation of the status quo of the holy sites and our respect for Jordan's custodian role, as well as the need to prevent all attempts to disrupt them.

In conclusion, we welcome any steps towards concrete and continued engagement between the parties to restore what many of our colleagues have rightly highlighted as a missing political horizon. There is no alternative to the path towards peace for all through a negotiation process, which should be launched as soon as possible. Finding solutions to difficult issues is always a matter of continued efforts of persistence, goodwill, confidence and trust, and everything must be done to help that process.

Ms. Oppong-Ntiri (Ghana): Let me begin by thanking Ms. Lynn Hastings, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for her comprehensive briefing, which highlighted the efforts

of the United Nations and other stakeholders to bring lasting peace to the Middle East region.

Ghana also associates itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

In furtherance of Ghana's firm and long-held belief, we reiterate our call on Israel and Palestine, as well as the countries in the region, to commit to a negotiated, just and peaceful resolution of the protracted conflict with a view to pacifying the region and ensuring an equal measure of security, freedom, opportunity and dignity for all countries. We are therefore concerned about the worsening security and humanitarian situation in the region. Since March, at least 52 Palestinians have been killed in the occupied West Bank. We are equally concerned by the death in Israel of 19 persons and condemn all such violence.

We believe that the growing insecurity in the Middle East, especially the West Bank, does not augur well for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Accordingly, we urge the parties to de-escalate existing tensions and build confidence to generate political momentum for negotiations. We also call for maximum restraint and urge both Israel and Palestine to refrain from unilateral actions that could escalate tensions and prejudice the mutual trust urgently needed to stabilize the situation and reverse the negative trends on the ground.

Ghana is therefore concerned about the activities of Israeli settlers in six locations across the occupied West Bank, including Ramallah, Salfit and Hebron. We urge Israel to respect the inalienable rights of all those in the West Bank and the occupied territories and abide by its legal obligations and responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilian persons in time of war.

We also encourage Israel to protect the religious freedom of all, as well as to implement measures to ensure the viability of the historic Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities in Palestine and Israel and the entire region.

In conclusion, we reiterate our position that the path towards lasting peace and stability in the Middle East runs through the internationally negotiated two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side on the basis of the 1967 borders. The realization of goals for the Middle East process, however, requires the Council and the wider international community to

sustain the engagement of the parties, whose efforts in good faith are required to resolve the decades-long conflict.

Mrs. Koumba Pambo (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Lynn Hastings, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for her enlightening briefing. I also welcome the participation in this meeting of the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine.

While it is clear that peace in the Middle East is not a foregone conclusion, it remains an achievable goal. The pacification of the region, which we are all anxious to see, is essentially based on the establishment of peace between Israel and Palestine. That is an absolute imperative that requires the firm commitment of all. My country, Gabon, reaffirms its commitment to a two-State solution, with Palestine living side by side with Israel on the basis of the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital.

The exposure of the communities of Masafer Yatta to the imminent risk of forced evictions, arbitrary displacement and forcible transfers is a source of concern, and we note the decision of the Israeli High Court of Justice to that effect.

We also note the findings of the first report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel of 7 June.

We note with great interest the meeting on 7 July held between President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Defense Minister, Mr. Benny Gantz, which resulted in the latter's approval of a series of confidence-building measures between the parties.

Therefore, 5,500 persons will be added to the Palestinian population register, in addition to the 12,000 whose registration has already been approved. In addition, a further 1,500 Gazans will be allowed to enter Israel to work or conduct business, bringing the total quota to 15,500 Gazans. We will continue to monitor developments on the issue, and we encourage Israel to continue on that path in the hope that it will help to rebuild trust between the parties. We also welcome the continued dialogue between the parties and their ability to work together to find solutions on issues of common concern.

It is worth recalling the humanitarian consequences of the crisis, particularly in the Palestinian territories,

which have been exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic. According to the latest report of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs thereon, the number of children killed, maimed or otherwise abused is worrisome.

The strong commitment of the international community is therefore essential in order to ensure predictable funding for humanitarian assistance, which must of course also be extended to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which is doing its best to continue to provide basic services, such as education, health and food services, to the displaced and vulnerable Palestinian population. It is therefore essential to close the funding gap of that important body. We call on donor countries to increase their contributions and support. Without that financial support, the risk to vulnerable civilian populations is a drastic increase in social unrest on the ground: poverty, hunger, psychosocial problems and violence.

On the issue of the return of human remains to the families, we call on the parties to find an agreement that will clearly help to create a climate of trust conducive to peacebuilding.

In conclusion, we call on the parties to relaunch negotiations in order to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian crisis for a genuine and lasting peace, based on respect for the principles agreed by the parties and the application of the rules of international law. We reiterate our support for, and solidarity with, the Palestinian and Israeli civilian populations, who have paid a heavy price since the beginning of this conflict.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank Ms. Lynn Hastings for her comprehensive briefing.

After myriad complex crises and challenges in our region, we have seen intensive diplomatic efforts during the reporting period that have focused on regional security, sustainable development and effective diplomacy. The momentum generated by those efforts aligns with the long-established approach of the United Arab Emirates since its founding to restore security and stability throughout the region, so as to provide its peoples economically prosperous and peaceful societies. Those objectives can be achieved through initiatives that strengthen cooperation and strategic partnerships regionally and internationally.

In addition to those positive trends, we have also witnessed several developments that we hope will restore confidence between the Palestinian and the Israeli sides, pave the way towards the revival of the Middle East peace process and create an environment conducive to a return to the negotiations. One of those developments is the recent high-level communication between the two parties, which we hope will constitute a glimmer of hope for new opportunities to engage in dialogue.

Furthermore, the United Arab Emirates commends a series of recent measures that included approval for the reunification of 5,500 Palestinian families, six structural maps for Palestinians in the West Bank and the reopening of a crossing point into the city of Jenin, in the northern West Bank.

The international community should support recent positive steps and encourage further steps to help both parties return to the negotiating table and reach a two-State solution based on relevant international resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations.

The tension, escalation and violent clashes that we have seen in the occupied Palestinian territory during reporting period require the parties to refrain from taking any provocative measures that may exacerbate the situation. We also emphasize the need to stop all illegal practices in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, that undermine the two-State solution and the prospects for peace. Those practices include the construction and expansion of settlements, as well as the confiscation of Palestinian lands and property.

In the light of the deteriorating economic, health and humanitarian conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, my country continues to uphold its historic commitment to support the brotherly Palestinian people in various fields, including humanitarian, health, social and educational fields. To that end, the United Arab Emirates recently announced a donation of \$25 million in support of Al-Makassed Hospital, an integral part of the East Jerusalem Hospital Network that represents the backbone of the Palestinian health system. We urge the international community to continue providing humanitarian and development assistance to the Palestinian people. In that context, we appreciate the United States announcement of an assistance package this month to support the economic and health sectors in the occupied Palestinian territory.

It is important for the international community, and particularly the Security Council, to seize the existing opportunities in the region to revive the Middle East peace process and to reach a two-State solution with an independent and sovereign Palestinian State based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with resolutions of international legitimacy, international law and the relevant agreements.

One of the most important aspects of the current diplomatic initiatives in the Middle East is that they lead to regional efforts that reflect genuine will to achieve peace for all our peoples and creates prospects for cooperation in vital areas that will help countries tackle crucial challenges. That can be seen, for example, in the recent summits held in the region, including the Jeddah Security and Development Summit and the I2U2 Virtual Summit, which yielded decisions coinciding with the recent visit of United States President Joe Biden to the region. We look forward to building on those efforts to achieve security, stability and prosperity for our region and the world.

Mr. Kiboino (Kenya): I thank Deputy Special Coordinator Lynn Hastings for her briefing on recent developments and the current situation on the ground. I welcome the participation of the representatives of Israel and the Observer State of Palestine in this open debate.

My delegation reaffirms that peace efforts, at both the official and the grass-roots levels, that comprehensively integrate the socioeconomic development of all sectors of the society are, and will be, critical to the stability and peace of the region in the interim and for the long term.

In that regard, we note that the joint statement issued by the summit of the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and the United States also highlighted efforts to enhance contributions to the East Jerusalem Hospital Network. Kenya welcomes that and other cooperation initiatives, including the 23 June pledging conference to ensure adequate and predictable funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and other recent practical confidence-building measures in the area of commerce between the Israeli and Palestinian authorities. They speak to what is immediately practical in the context of an elusive peace process when it comes to addressing the challenges in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

We have also noted the importance of championing grass-roots efforts that contribute to harmonious coexistence and conducive conditions for official negotiations. The important work of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force remains vital to the stability of the subregion. Nonetheless, the success of every initiative requires the resumption of the political process and dialogue between both parties, not only for the sustainability of such initiatives but also for the stability and peace of the region.

My delegation once again reaffirms that the actualization of the long-held goal of a region where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace and within secure and recognized borders, based on the 1967 lines, will require a meaningful commitment to the peace process by all parties, in line with international law, the Charter of the United Nations, Security Council resolutions, including the comprehensive pillars of resolution 2334 (2016), and the existing regional peace initiatives and frameworks. We believe that such a commitment by both Israeli and Palestinian leaders and its urgent operationalization will contribute to addressing persistent challenges and inject much-needed hope and trust in the multilateral system by the general public.

A united response, including ongoing regional efforts to revive intra-Palestinian reconciliation, can also contribute to addressing the persistent spoilers of peace in the region.

Kenya continues to strongly condemn the launches of fire rockets from Gaza, including the recent launches during President Biden's official visit to the region. Again, no cause can justify the deliberate targeting of civilians.

But beyond condemnation, we urge armed and militia groups that pursue ideological aims far outside the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, to publicly renounce terrorist acts and genuinely commit to the peace efforts facilitated by regional and international mechanisms.

Commitment to an independent, sovereign, viable and contiguous Palestinian State also means the immediate and complete cessation of Israeli settlement activity in occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as demanded by resolution 2334 (2016). We are concerned about the human and property

implications of the recent announcements of settler expansions, outposts and increasing settler violence in the West Bank, including in Masafer Yatta. We note the declaration and efforts of the Israeli authorities to mitigate the settler outposts, as we heard today.

As I conclude, let me reaffirm that Kenya's interest remains to support an end to this protracted conflict, whose damaging effects have proved to be far-reaching. We urge all parties to avoid unilateral steps that stand in the way of a resumption of the political process and the peace and stability of the region. Kenya again calls for real commitment, actual movement and tangible outcomes that are in keeping with the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Council's resolutions.

Mr. Raguttahalli (India): I thank Deputy Special Coordinator Lynn Hastings for her briefing on the situation in the Middle East.

We remain concerned about the developments in Israel and Palestine, in particular the continued violent attacks, the killing of civilians and the acts of destruction and provocation. We have consistently advocated against all such acts of violence and reiterate our call for their complete cessation.

All unilateral measures that unduly alter the status quo on the ground and undercut the viability of the two-State solution must be eschewed. The international community and the Security Council must send a strong signal against any step preventing the possibility of durable peace between Israel and Palestine.

We urge the parties to focus on addressing the urgent security and economic challenges, including the precarious financial situation of the Palestinian Authority, and chart a clear path for discussing key political issues. In that regard, we recognize the international community's recent confidence-building measures for the Palestinians and the important steps Israel has taken to ease Palestine's economic situation. Such initiatives are in the interests of both parties, help maintain stability and serve to prevent the recurrence of terror and violence. Moreover, those initiatives should create a conducive environment leading to political dialogue.

We reiterate the need for an early resumption of the political course by launching credible direct negotiations on all final-status issues. India has consistently called for direct peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine, which, we believe, is the best path

towards achieving the goal of a two-State solution. Those negotiations must be based on the internationally agreed framework, taking into account the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for statehood and Israel's legitimate security concerns.

Intra-Palestinian unity is critical for the well-being of the Palestinian people. We hope that efforts to achieve reconciliation among the Palestinian parties will soon bear fruit and help overcome the current stalemate, leading to legislative and Presidential elections in Palestine.

In response to the financial crisis of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), India enhanced its annual pledge to the Agency from \$1.25 million to \$5 million and has contributed \$20 million over the past four years. We have also pledged \$5 million for UNRWA's programme budget for 2022. I am pleased to inform the Council that the first tranche of our pledged commitment for this year has already been released.

India has a vital stake in peace and prosperity in the Middle East. During a recent I2U2 Virtual Summit, the leaders of India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the United States agreed to increase joint investment in six key areas — water, energy, transport, space, health and food security. We are confident that, with I2U2, we will make significant contributions to energy security, food security and economic growth in the Middle East and South Asia.

We believe that the peaceful resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict would bring lasting peace and stability to the region. The absence of a political settlement between Israel and Palestine does not augur well for long-term regional peace and stability. Therefore, in addition to the stated political support for a two-State solution, the international community must expend energy and political capital to reinvigorate the Middle East peace process.

Given our long-standing and firm commitment to the establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine within secure, recognized and mutually agreed borders, living side by side with Israel in peace and security, India remains fully supportive of all efforts to restart the peace process.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I thank Deputy Special Coordinator Hastings for her briefing.

Long-term solutions are needed to bring peace and prosperity to the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. The two-State solution — based on the 1967 lines — remains the only viable pathway to settle this conflict.

We welcome the recently announced commitments by Israel to increase the number of permits for Palestinians in Gaza to work in Israel, roll out digital infrastructure for 4G connectivity in the West Bank and Gaza, resume discussions in the Joint Economic Committee and increase access to the Allenby Bridge. The overcrowding and severe delays seen at the crossing last week underscore the urgent need to enhance the efficiency of its operations.

We also commend the efforts under way on the measures agreed in Brussels during the May meeting of the donor group. We urge the parties and their partners to make serious progress before the planned ministerial meeting in New York in September.

We welcome the announcement of increased financial support by the United States as well to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which delivers critical services to millions of vulnerable Palestine refugees. And we applaud the United States for its intention to extend funding to the East Jerusalem Hospital Network, which Norway has long supported.

While those are all positive steps, they cannot replace the need for a comprehensive peace process that addresses the underlying drivers of conflict. There is an urgent need for a political horizon with the ultimate goal of implementing the two-State solution.

The settlements on occupied land are illegal under international law. They undermine the prospects of a two-State solution and escalate the conflict. Norway repeats its call to Israel to halt all settlement expansions, evictions and demolitions. We remain deeply concerned about attempts by Israeli settler groups to establish outposts in Area C of the West Bank. We welcome the efforts of the Israeli authorities to stop those recent attempts.

The situation in Masafer Yatta, however, with the planned demolition orders and expulsion of 1,200 civilians, remains alarming. We call on Israel to immediately halt those plans.

It is imperative in all circumstances to protect civilians. As of 30 June, 60 Palestinians had been killed this year by Israeli security forces in the West Bank. We

call on Israel to implement effective practices to protect all civilians, especially children. We will continue to call for accountability for the killing of the Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh.

Norway continues to support the normalization of relations between Israel and a number of Arab States. We hope that those changes in the region will help pave the way for resuming meaningful negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. Palestinians must be involved in and benefit from the process.

Lastly, I would like to note the important mediation efforts to establish a maritime delimitation line between Israel and Lebanon. Norway encourages the Governments of Lebanon and Israel to come swiftly to a mutual agreement to the benefit of both countries. That should also help solve the outstanding issues concerning the land border. We strongly oppose the use of any military means in or around the disputed areas, which could escalate to a new regional conflict. The relevant Security Council resolutions must also be fully respected and adhered to.

Mr. De La Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful to Deputy Special Coordinator Hastings for her briefing, and we welcome the delegations of Palestine and Israel to this meeting. We also thank the representative of the United States for updating us on President Biden's recent visit to the region. We welcomed the recent talks between President Abbas and President Herzog. We note that the conversation between Mr. Abbas and Prime Minister Lapid marks the first time in five years that an Israeli Head of Government has held a meeting with the leader of the Palestinian Authority. Similarly, we welcome the meeting between Mr. Abbas and Defence Minister Gantz, and we take note of the confidence-building measures promoted by Mr. Gantz.

In the light of the upcoming elections and formation of the next Israeli Government, all efforts to broaden civilian, fiscal and security cooperation are welcome. They are encouraging signs with regard to promoting the Palestinian economy, and the prosperity of the Palestinian population contributes to the prosperity and security of the Israeli population. It is now time for such encouragement to be matched by progress on the political horizon to address the underlying issues. The assistance provided by Arab States, in particular Algeria, which facilitated the meeting between leaders of the Palestinian factions at the beginning

of this month, is commendable. We hope that such efforts will continue and will further intra-Palestinian reconciliation. We once again stress the importance of calling for general elections in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and Gaza. We should note the increase in cooperation between Israel and Arab countries, and we hope that they will deepen and capitalize on those relations in order to promote dialogue with the Palestinian Authority and ultimately to resume peace negotiations.

We are concerned about the evictions in Masafer Yatta and the Israeli army's training activities in the firing zone that it has established, as well as the attacks on humanitarian personnel. We urge the Israeli authorities to prevent the more than 1,200 civilians involved from being displaced, as the appropriation and demolition of Palestinian property and their eviction and forced displacement contravene international law. With regard to the case of the journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, my delegation has taken note of the forensic analysis recently conducted by United States experts. We reiterate the call for carrying out an independent investigation to bring those responsible to justice. We welcome the fact that several European States have resumed their assistance to six civil-society organizations that had been designated by Israel as terrorists in November 2021. We reiterate our concern about the financial situation of the Palestinian Authority and that of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which, as has been said many times, plays a critical role in providing assistance and basic services to millions of Palestinians, and we therefore welcome the outstanding aid provided to the Palestinian hospital system in East Jerusalem.

Mexico once again condemns the attacks using rockets and other ordnance launched from Gaza on Israeli urban centres. We note with concern the resurgence of so-called lone-wolf activities, particularly in East Jerusalem, and the drone attacks on Israel's northern border. We call on the de facto authorities in Gaza, as well as organizations in the region, to exercise restraint and avoid further provocations.

In conclusion, I reaffirm Mexico's support for a two-State solution, which is the only way that we can address the legitimate security concerns of Israel and the creation of an economically and politically viable Palestinian State, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Deputy Special Coordinator Hastings for her briefing and welcome the presence of the representatives of Palestine and Israel at this meeting.

The Middle East peace process remains at an impasse. The relevant United Nations resolutions have gone unimplemented for many years, and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people continue to be violated, further exacerbating their predicament, which is of great concern to China. The question of Palestine is at the heart of Middle East issues affecting regional peace and security and should not be marginalized, much less forgotten. The international community should fully acknowledge the severity of the situation and take immediate, concrete action to put a settlement of the Palestinian issue back on track as soon as possible.

First, there should be no more delays in reversing the situation on the ground. Israel continues to expand its settlement activities in the occupied territories, with more than 300 settlements built and more than 700,000 settlers moved in so far, which is further shrinking the Palestinian people's living space and undermining the contiguity of the occupied Palestinian territory and the prospects for an independent and sovereign Palestinian State. We urge Israel to abide by international law, implement resolution 2334 (2016) and immediately stop all settlement activities.

Secondly, we cannot defer achieving common security. Violent incidents in the occupied territory have continued one after another since the beginning of this year, and the clashes in Gaza are worrisome. According to statistics recently released by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 63 Palestinians have been killed and more than 6,000 injured in operations by Israeli security forces so far this year. The Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2022/493) noted that last year Israeli security forces killed 78 Palestinian children and maimed 982. Attacks on Israeli civilians that result in casualties also occur from time to time.

The security of Israel and Palestine is interdependent and indivisible. The two sides should uphold a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security concept and find a way to live side by side and in peace. Seeking absolute security by using one's advantageous position can lead only to a greater security dilemma.

The international community should attach equal importance to the security concerns of both Palestine

and Israel. As the occupying Power, Israel should fulfil its obligations under international humanitarian law by ensuring the safety of civilians in the occupied territories. We once again urge Israel to thoroughly investigate the killing of female journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, and the findings should stand the test of time and history in order to bring about justice for the victim.

Thirdly, there should be no delay in advancing the two-State solution. The Palestinian question has dragged on for more than 70 years. Piecemeal crisis management is no substitute for a comprehensive and impartial solution. The international community should work earnestly to promote the Middle East peace process. Countries with influence on Palestine and Israel should shoulder their dual responsibility, uphold an objective and impartial position and play their part in promoting the swift resumption of peace talks between the two sides.

The Council should take more active and vigorous actions on the Palestinian question and work with the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and other organizations to bring about broader and more effective efforts to promote peace. China calls for a larger, more authoritative and more influential international peace conference, in which the permanent members of the Council and all stakeholders in the Middle East peace process are invited to participate in exploring effective ways and means to find a political solution to the Palestinian question.

The Middle East is an ancient land that has given birth to impressive civilizations. The people of the Middle East have lived on that land for generations and are the true master of it. There has never been a so-called vacuum in the Middle East. There has never been a need for external countries to play a so-called leading role. Since modern and contemporary times, colonialism and foreign interference have brought untold suffering to the countries and the peoples of the region, and their negative effects persist.

Above all, the Middle East needs peace and security. The people of the Middle East primarily desire development and progress. The international community should help the countries of the region to seek peace through unity and development through cooperation, instead of stoking bloc confrontations or geopolitical rivalries, which will serve only to further destabilize the region.

As a strategic partner of the countries in the Middle East, China has always supported them in resolving regional security issues through solidarity and cooperation and supported their peoples in independently exploring their own development paths. We have worked with the countries of the region to fight the pandemic, advance the Belt and Road Initiative and make an active contribution to the development of the Middle East. China is willing to further contribute to the achievement of peace and development in the region.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that China supports the establishment of a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian State, based on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. We support the peaceful coexistence of Palestine and Israel and the common development of the Arab and Jewish peoples. China will continue to work tirelessly with the international community towards a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian question.

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

I thank Ms. Lynn Hastings, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for briefing the Security Council today.

Brazil remains concerned about the ongoing episodes of violence in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, and in Israel in recent months. There is no justification for any attacks on civilians. We call on both sides to exercise maximum restraint and protect the lives of civilians.

Brazil agrees with the assessment that the mere management of this conflict in perpetuity is not a viable option. There is no substitute for a legitimate political process to bring about lasting peace and stability. We must reflect on the role the Council should play in reinvigorating the peace process in the region, while paving the way for new negotiations.

Without a horizon for conversations, faith in peace wanes and the reality on the ground precludes the possibility of a viable agreement. The Abraham Accords offered renewed hope in dialogue and diplomacy. Some important high-level meetings continue to be held, but the involvement of relevant stakeholders in efforts towards the two-State solution has stalled. Important mechanisms established by resolutions of the Council remain practically inoperative.

In Brazil's view, we should seriously pursue the objective of promoting political negotiations for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on all relevant Security Council resolutions. That requires involvement and commitment from all relevant parties. Intra-Palestinian reconciliation is a crucial step towards resuming genuine dialogue within the framework of the peace process. International cooperation aimed at restoring and improving basic infrastructure and the economic empowerment of the Palestinian population can also improve prospects for reconciliation.

It is equally important to address the structural impediments imposed on the Palestinian economy, which needs support to strengthen its industrial and agricultural production. Brazil believes that fostering the Palestinian economy is one of the best ways to give peace concrete meaning.

Palestine has great economic potential in many sectors that can create job opportunities and raise the income of families, which means allowing Palestinian businesspeople to export their products to the world market.

Confidence-building measures on both sides must continue. Brazil commends the Israeli authorities' recent measures aimed at building trust with the Palestinians, including increasing the quota of workers from the Gaza Strip and the opening of a new vehicular crossing on the north of the West Bank, as well as measures to prevent the establishment of new outposts.

We are following the developments in the talks regarding the exchange of prisoners and hope the parties can come to an understanding. Last month, General Assembly President Abdulla Shahid convened a donor conference in support of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), a much-needed meeting as the Agency continues to face chronic underfunding against the backdrop of the competing needs of the growing number of refugees worldwide.

We commend the initiative of the President of the General Assembly and welcome the encouraging results of the conference. Brazil reiterates its commitment to UNRWA's tireless humanitarian action, which provides essential services to one of the most vulnerable refugee populations in the world. UNRWA plays a key role in stabilizing the region, in which poverty and political instability provide fertile ground for extremist forces.

Over the past few decades, the Agency has consistently strived to contain violence and improve the living conditions of Palestinian refugees. Last month, despite severe budgetary constraints at the national level, Brazil announced an additional financial contribution to UNRWA.

The ongoing violence must stop, which requires efforts by all parties to defuse tensions and reverse the negative trends that undermine the prospects for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Violent escalations prevent durable solutions. The lack of lasting solutions fuels frustration and despair, which in turn result in further violent escalations. Reinvigorating the political process should not be a goal for the distant future but a necessary condition for preventing violence in the present and breaking the cycle.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Brazil's long-standing commitment to achieving a just and sustainable peace in the Middle East, with Israelis and Palestinians living side by side in peace and security, in two democratic, prosperous and sovereign States, within secure and internationally recognized borders.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than three minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Ms. Mudallali (Lebanon): I would like to start by congratulating you and Brazil, Sir, on your presidency of the Council and on convening this meeting.

The Middle East has seen two important developments in the past month, the common position reached at the Jeddah Security and Development Summit, in particular on the Palestinian issue, and the visit of President Joe Biden of the United States and his reaffirmation of the long-held American position on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Those two developments showed that the Palestinian issue is still central to any peace efforts in the region. In the meantime, the situation in the Palestinian territories continues to be mired in tension, reminding us that the conflict is still unresolved. Daily Palestinian casualties remain a grim reality, making it clear to all that ignoring the plight of the Palestinians will not make the conflict go away. It also proves that the much-promised peace is still a pipe dream, while the peace process remains blocked,

leaving the Palestinian people more hopeless and without a political horizon.

The Jeddah Summit in Saudi Arabia came back to a consensus on the need to reach a just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of a two-State solution and the Arab Peace Initiative. It also called for a halt to all unilateral measures that undermine the possibility of a two-State solution and affirmed the historical status quo of Jerusalem, with the Hashemite guardianship over the holy sites in Al-Quds. The visit of President Biden also brought a much-needed change and rebalancing of the United States' position. President Biden reaffirmed the United States' commitment to a two-State solution along the 1967 lines, with land swaps mutually agreed by the Israelis and Palestinians. He highlighted the importance of direct negotiations leading to "an independent, sovereign, viable and contiguous Palestinian State alongside the State of Israel", enabling the two peoples to live side by side in peace and security, and called on both sides to avoid unilateral measures. Those pronouncements inspired hope in a new American peacemaking effort.

However, the President told the Palestinians that the ground was not ripe for new attempts to reach peace. The argument that the ground is not ready for a peaceful settlement is as old as the peace process itself. This theory permits unilateral measures and facts on the ground to put an end to Palestinians' dreams of a State of their own. The President also stopped short of reassuring Palestinians on two important issues, those of Jerusalem and the settlements. With regard to Jerusalem, he reiterated the previous United States Administration's position recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and stopped short of fulfilling his pledge to reopen the United States consulate in Jerusalem. He did not talk about East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian State either. Nor did the President take a strong position on the settlements, which remain the thorniest of the unilateral measures and which are considered illegal and the main obstacle to peace by Palestinians, Arabs and the international community. The key to peace in the region, as Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has said, is simply ending the occupation.

Prime Minister Najib Mikati of Lebanon and his Government are upholding their role as a caretaker Government and continuing their positive work on the reform steps that the Prime Minister's Cabinet started and that have to be followed up with the

international community, especially the International Monetary Fund. The Prime Minister was asked to form a new Government during a very trying time for the country and is continuing his efforts to do so. The new Government will also play an important role in making sure that the presidential elections take place on time and in a safe, healthy atmosphere this autumn.

The situation in south Lebanon regarding peace and security is calm but fragile. Lebanon is committed to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace for the conflict in the region, based on international legality and the relevant Security Council resolutions. In that regard, Lebanon reiterates its commitment to the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) in its entirety and calls on Israel, the other party to the conflict, to do the same. The daily Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty add to the tension in the region and must stop. Lebanon is proceeding with negotiations and is committed to finding a peaceful solution to the question of its maritime border, based on guaranteeing its national rights to its gas and oil resources. The good offices of the United States and the United Nations in its sponsorship and hosting of the talks have offered a peaceful path to a resolution of the issue through negotiation at a time that is very difficult for Lebanon on the economic and financial fronts. That opportunity should not be missed, and Lebanon therefore appeals to the international community to help it achieve a peaceful, equitable and fair resolution of the maritime border dispute. Lebanon is not interested in conflict or in escalating tensions, and with the help of its friends will continue its efforts to bring about a good conclusion to the negotiations.

In a month's time, the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) will be up for renewal. UNIFIL has been an indispensable force for stability in south Lebanon in partnership with the Lebanese army. We support the important role that UNIFIL plays in peace and security in the south of the country, and we hope that its mandate will be renewed without any changes. We also hope that the Council will extend UNIFIL's support for the Lebanese army, especially in providing the Lebanese Armed Forces with provisions at this difficult time in Lebanon. We count on the support of the Council and its members.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): At the outset, Japan reaffirms its commitment to supporting a two-State solution based on the relevant Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters, in which both Israel and a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian State can live side by side in peace and security.

However, we remain deeply concerned about the level of violence in Israel and the West Bank, which has led to many casualties, including the killing of the Al-Jazeera correspondent Shireen Abu Akleh. We call for an independent and transparent investigation into her killing and stress the need for those responsible to be held accountable. Japan also strongly condemns the firing of rockets by Palestinian militants in Gaza into Israel hours after the visit of President Biden of the United States. The Israeli settlements in the West Bank remain deeply alarming, as they flagrantly violate international law.

We call on all the parties to exercise the utmost restraint and avoid provocative unilateral actions. It will be crucial to reverse the negative trends on the ground that are undermining the prospects for a two-State solution. Japan hopes that evolving regional partnerships in the Middle East such as the Negev Forum will help ease tensions and contribute to regional stability. In that context, Japan, Egypt and Jordan are working together closely in a trilateral consultation format to discuss regional peace and prosperity and contribute to the Middle East peace process.

Given the precarious financial situation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), we welcomed the holding on 23 June of a pledging conference for the Agency with a view to ensuring the delivery of life-saving services to Palestinians. Japan contributed more than \$50 million to the Agency in 2021 and has already provided \$28 million for 2022, including emergency food aid. We call on other donors to increase their contributions to UNRWA as well.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Japan's determination to spare no effort to achieve a two-State solution.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Ms. Ershadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The situation in occupied Palestine remains dire, as the Israeli regime's brutality and grave and systematic violations of the human rights of the Palestinian

people continue unabated. According to a United Nations report, the Israeli regime continues to kill innocent people, including women and children, as well as seizing and demolishing Palestinian houses and forcibly evicting Palestinians from their homes. At the same time, in blatant violation of international law and the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the establishment of settlements in occupied Palestine continues.

The recent assassination of Shireen Abu Akleh, a veteran Palestinian journalist, was in line with Israel's long-running and well-documented campaign of harassment, intimidation and violence against journalists, with the ultimate goal of obscuring the atrocities committed by the Israeli regime against Palestinians. Meanwhile, the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2022/493) revealed that the Israeli regime continues to commit the most systematic and flagrant violations of children's rights in the Middle East. In 2021 the regime murdered 86 Palestinian children and imprisoned 637 more.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is tragic. According to United Nations reports, nearly 2 million Palestinians are locked in, with the vast majority unable to access the rest of occupied Palestine or the outside world. Long-standing Israeli policy on access restrictions against Gaza has egregiously impacted its economy, resulting in high unemployment, food insecurity and reliance on aid. As collective punishment against all its inhabitants, the continued blockade of Gaza constitutes a clear manifestation of a war crime and a crime against humanity. In accordance with international law, the blockade must be lifted immediately and completely.

Furthermore, the Israeli regime's destabilizing activities against countries of the region continue. The regime continues to violate Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity through its prolonged occupation of the Syrian Golan, as well as numerous attacks against civilian targets and civilian infrastructure within Syria, including the recent terrorist attacks against Damascus International Airport on 10 June.

The Israeli regime also continues to occupy and violate Lebanese territory in a flagrant violation of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular resolution 1701 (2006). We strongly condemn such grave violations and malevolent

and destabilizing activities, which clearly threaten the peace and security of the region.

The Security Council's inaction has emboldened the Israeli regime to continue its crimes against the oppressed Palestinian people, as well as its aggression and malicious activities against the countries in the region. The lack of accountability for such serious violations contributes to that impunity. The Security Council must uphold its Charter obligation to maintain international peace and security. The Council is expected to implement its own resolutions and to compel the Israeli regime to immediately cease its systematic violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Finally, the representative of the Israeli regime has once more abused this forum and made false accusations against my country, all of which are categorically rejected. Those unfounded allegations are intended to distract attention from the continuous atrocities and violations of international law committed by the Israeli regime in occupied Palestine and other countries of the region.

The weapons of mass destruction in the hands of the Israeli regime have made the regime even more dangerous for the entire region. The regime's nuclear arsenal, according to multiple reports, comprises 400 warheads, including thermonuclear weapons. It has access to all delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction. The Israeli regime has even threatened nuclear annihilation against the countries of the region. It has refused to adhere to any disarmament or control regimes for weapons of mass destruction and has ignored repeated international calls to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to accept the comprehensive safeguards agreement or to submit its nuclear programmes to International Atomic Energy Agency inspections.

It is high time for the Security Council to condemn the Israeli regime and force it to adhere to the international regimes banning weapons of mass destruction. The time to act is now.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Larbaoui (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the friendly delegation of Brazil for its capable presidency of the Security Council this month and

for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

Unfortunately, despite these repeated meetings and their unchanging outcomes, they are never equal to the suffering and sacrifice of the brotherly Palestinian people. For years the Council has adopted a conflict-management approach, which has led to the temporary containment of a violent conflict instead of looking for the necessary solutions that would put an end to the occupation and empower the Palestinian people to enjoy their legitimate right to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The occupation therefore persists, with its settlement policies and systematic actions to impose the status quo, including by changing the historical and legal nature of Al-Aqsa Mosque and attempts to Judaize religious sites in Jerusalem, in a manner that runs counter to the provisions of international law.

Such flagrant practices, which expose the region to risks that threaten peace and security, represent a blatant violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of worship, which are granted by all laws and faiths. We reject the silence about what is happening in Jerusalem, the first of the two Qiblahs and the third of the Two Holy Mosques, which contravenes all standards, whether Palestinian, Arab, Islamic or humanitarian.

Jerusalem, the flower of cities, is continuously subject to Judaization in an escalating and repeated manner. There are daily incursions into the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Settlements are being expanded inside Arab communities, and the residents of Jerusalem are forcibly displaced, detained and killed, while Arab institutions are closed and destroyed.

Algeria is steadfast in its position regarding the Palestinian question. We spare no effort to support the brotherly Palestinian people politically, economically and financially. We stress what was stated by the President of the Republic, Mr. Abdelmadjid Tebboune, that the international community, especially the Security Council, must shoulder its responsibility to put an end to the violations and aggression against the brotherly Palestinian people and provide the necessary international protection for them and for the holy sites in occupied Jerusalem.

We believe that a peaceful political solution is the only way to resolve the Palestinian question. Algeria

has worked to unite Palestinians by hosting a national Palestinian dialogue that promotes internal unity and the acceptance of all resolutions of international legitimacy in order to ensure that the brotherly Palestinians are ready to engage peacefully as one in any future negotiations. My country works hard to advance Palestinian reconciliation and unity.

The efforts of President Tebboune succeeded in uniting the Palestinians at a historic meeting held in the capital, Algiers, following years of inaction. That meeting was held on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of Algeria's glorious independence. Algeria will always uphold its principles and values in defence of Palestinian question and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, in line with resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative, which is one of the internationally recognized terms of reference. That is the only way to achieve a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question.

Those who allow time to impose the status quo in Palestine and wait for it to turn what is unnatural into something natural are holding on to a fleeting hope. They have not learned from lessons from history, which have proved that there is no legitimacy whatsoever to occupation. Those who have rights will always retain those legitimate and inalienable rights until they can realize them in practice.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to commend the efforts of Brazil in leading the work of the Security Council during the month of July. I also thank Ms. Lynn Hastings, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for her valuable briefing.

The Kingdom of Morocco and its King, His Majesty Mohammed VI, Head of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, attach great importance to the Palestinian question and the rights of the Palestinian people. Security and stability in the Middle East are linked to a just and comprehensive peace settlement of this question, based on international legitimacy and a two-State solution, as the international community has agreed. Regrettably, as a result of the impasse of the political process in the Middle East, what we have been seeing is an increase in violence, which amounts to an additional cause of extreme conflict, which in turn leads to further tension

and encourages hate speech in the entire region. That widens the gap between the Palestinian and Israeli sides and undermines the prospects for security and peace in the Middle East. Morocco therefore urges all the parties involved to avoid any action that could lead to an escalation in the region.

King Mohammed VI, Head of the Al-Quds Committee, has spared no effort, politically or diplomatically, to maintain the unique position of the sacred city of Jerusalem. That is why, in his announcement during Pope Francis's visit to Morocco in March 2019, His Majesty stressed the importance of preserving Jerusalem as the common heritage of humankind and maintaining its legal, historic and demographic nature as a destination for all believers of the three major monotheistic religions. The Al-Quds Committee plays a political and practical role in supporting the Palestinian people in general and the residents of Jerusalem in particular, while harmonizing the political efforts of King Mohammed and the work on the ground of the Bait Mal Al-Quds Al-Sharif Agency under his personal supervision. Morocco contributes nearly 89 per cent of the Agency's annual budget. Since its launch in 1995 the Agency has worked to preserve the rights of Arabs and Muslims in the holy city by supporting and financing a number of vital social, cultural, educational, health and architectural projects, with a major and tangible impact on the lives and resilience of Jerusalem's residents.

Through direct mediation by Morocco under the leadership of King Mohammed, the Israeli authorities decided to open the King Hussein Bridge (Allenby) Terminal, which links the West Bank to Jordan, while a joint mediation effort by Morocco and the United States has led to an agreement on permanently opening a bridge crossing for Palestinians. This border crossing, 50 kilometres from Amman, is soon to open once some logistical issues are finalized and will have a major positive impact on Palestinians' daily life through its facilitation of the movement of people and goods. The importance that His Majesty attaches to the Palestinian question and people continues to be demonstrated in these examples of mediation by Morocco.

Morocco believes that a settlement of the Palestinian question is central and vital to the future of the Middle East. It is also a priority for the international community. We consistently emphasize that position, based on our belief that the stability of the region and its prosperity are dependent on finding a just and lasting

solution to the issue that is in line with international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. In his solidarity address on 29 November 2021, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, King Mohammed said that Morocco's steadfast position is not conditional or a matter of mere politics, but rather is based on firm belief supported by a serious and meaningful diplomatic effort, along with concrete efforts on the ground, to reach a solution to the question of Palestine and of Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that Morocco will continue to invest in its historic and effective role regarding the Palestinian question. Our unique relationship with all the parties and other important international powers helps to create an environment that is conducive to a resumption of negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, which is the only path to achieving security and stability in the Middle East.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Mr. Al Omoush (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Brazil on its presidency of the Security Council for this month and to thank Ms. Hastings for her briefing.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan reiterates the importance of reaching a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, based on the existence of two States. There can be no security, stability or prosperity in the region without a solution that guarantees the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in security and peace with Israel.

We need effective action to make political progress that can lead to a just and comprehensive peace based on a two-State solution. The alternative is continued conflict, exacerbated by constant violations of the Palestinian people's rights and illegal measures that undermine the prospects for peace, and Jordan rejects any unilateral measures that contribute to that. We emphasize the importance of respecting the legal and historic status of Jerusalem and its holy sites, based on the historic Hashemite custodianship of Muslim and Christian holy sites undertaken by His Majesty King Abdullah. We must stabilize the situation and put an end to the unilateral measures undermining the possibility of a two-State solution and of reaching a just and comprehensive peace. We should work collectively

to create a mechanism that makes it possible to reach a genuine political horizon that can enable a return to serious, effective negotiations to resolve the Palestinian question, in accordance with international law, the resolutions of international legitimacy, the Arab Peace Initiative and the agreed parameters.

As the occupying Power, Israel has a responsibility with regard to what happens in Jerusalem and should therefore respect the current legal and historic status of the city, uphold the provisions of international law and international humanitarian law regarding the duties of the occupying Power and refrain from violating basic principles, especially with regard to the historic status of the Muslim and Christian institutions in Al-Quds, the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, all of which are under the Hashemite custodianship. In that regard, we reiterate that pursuant to the provisions of international humanitarian law, the Jordanian administration of Al-Quds and the Al-Aqsa Mosque is the only responsible party for managing all affairs related to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in its entire area of 144,000 square metres. Preserving calm means that Israel must respect the Mosque's legal and historic status and work for a genuine political future that guarantees the implementation of all the legitimate rights of our brother people of Palestine.

The continued efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to provide its services are essential until a just and lasting solution for Palestinian refugees can be found, ensuring their right to return and to redress, in accordance with international law and resolutions of international legitimacy, above all resolution 194 (III).

In conclusion, Jordan will continue to support our brother Palestinian people and to work to help them enjoy all their legitimate rights, especially their right to self-determination and the creation of a sovereign and independent State within 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Every time the Security Council holds a meeting on this agenda item, we find ourselves before new blatant Israeli aggression against the Arab people, be it in Palestine, Syria or south Lebanon. That comes amid complete and unacceptable silence on the part of the Council. Two days ago, the Israeli occupation

entity launched a flagrant attack on Syrian sovereignty from the Syrian Arab Golan, which has been under occupation since 4 June 1967. It targeted the suburbs of the city of Damascus, which led to three military martyrs and the injury of seven others, in addition to material losses.

The escalating and hysterical aggression of the Israeli occupation forces came under the protective umbrella of the United States of America and its Western allies. That led Israel to persist in targeting civilians and civilian facilities, as was the case in its aggression against Damascus International Airport on 10 June, which endangered civilians and fully halted airport operations for a few weeks, including halting United Nations humanitarian flights. That was preceded by similar aggression against the commercial port of Latakia at the end of last year, which led to massive damage to the civilian structure of the port and to humanitarian materials owned by the United Nations.

Our Arab people in the occupied Palestinian territories and the occupied Syrian Golan are subjected in parallel to aggressive practices by the Israeli occupation authorities, in clear violation of the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, in particular resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981). Israel, the occupying Power, continues its endeavours to entrench its occupation of the Syrian Golan, prolonging it through the confiscation of more Syrian properties and lands and the stealing of natural resources. It also continues to implement settlement projects and other illegitimate measures that aim to alter the legal and demographic nature of the Golan and void it of its Syrian identity. At the same time, the Israeli occupation authorities continue their incursion into Palestinian cities and towns, demolishing Palestinian homes, displacing Palestinians and confiscating their lands and uprooting their trees to build thousands of new settlement units.

The Syrian Arab Republic calls upon the Security Council to end its silence and urgently shoulder its responsibility to end the Israeli occupation of Arab lands and hold its authorities accountable for its violations and aggressive practices that escalate threats to regional and international peace and security. My delegation also calls upon the representatives of the Secretariat and the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process to shoulder their obligations and

not stand idly by before those Israeli practices, or cover them up in their reports and briefings.

The Syrian Arab Republic underlines once again that it upholds its right to restore the entire occupied Syrian Golan by all means, according to international law, since it is an eternal right that is not governed by statute of limitations. We also stress that all decisions and measures taken by Israel to annex the Golan or alter its legal or demographic nature or impose any laws, authorities or administrations upon it are null and void and have no legal impact, pursuant to international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, especially resolution 497 (1981).

My country stresses the right to respond adequately to the repeated Israeli aggression, in line with international law and the United Nations Charter. We also stress that we will continue to mobilize all international efforts to condemn Israel and to expose its aggressive goals, especially as it washes its hands of the implementation of any requirements to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in our region.

The Syrian Arab Republic reiterates its commitment to support the Palestinian question and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. We will stand by them in their legitimate struggle to end the Israeli occupation and establish an independent State on its territory, with Jerusalem as its capital. We also stand in solidarity with respect to the right of return of the Palestine refugees, in line with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Ms. Rizk (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation for Brazil's wise leadership of the work of the Security Council during this month. I would like to thank Ms. Hastings, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and United Nations Resident Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, for her briefing.

I would also like to associate ourselves with the statement made on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The suffering of the Palestinian people in their occupied territory has continued amid repeated violations by the Israeli occupation forces for decades, with no hope for ending those violations. The situation

is exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic, current international tensions and the hike in prices for basic goods, especially food.

The Israeli practices in the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem, have increased in frequency over the past few years in the light of the violations of the occupation forces and the settlers against unarmed Palestinian people. That was underlined in many relevant international reports. Settlement expansion has increased, which undermines the two-State solution. It has also led to the eviction of Palestinians, the demolition of their homes and increased detention, even of children. That is in addition to what has been documented by many international reports, which have stated that live bullets have been used increasingly against unarmed Palestinian civilians, leaving hundreds of martyrs, especially children, without any accountability on the part of the perpetrators.

Turning to the Gaza Strip, the situation is not any better. This year marks 15 years since the imposition of the blockade, with all its repercussions on the daily lives of the Palestinians in Gaza. In the light of the above, Egypt has stressed time and again that the status quo cannot continue. We must work on enhancing the situation on the ground and rebuilding trust between the two sides to achieve an environment conducive to the revitalization of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. That will lead to the independence of the Palestinian State along the 4 June 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with the agreed-upon decisions of international legitimacy, international law, United Nations resolutions, particularly resolution 2334 (2016), and the two-State solution.

Egypt welcomes the additional assistance announced by the United States of America during the visit of the United States President to Jerusalem this month, as well as the measures taken to enhance the situation. Egypt also welcomes the outcome of the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the Announcement of Voluntary Contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), held on 23 June, which garnered almost \$160 million in new pledges. We look forward to further support to UNRWA to fill its budget gap.

Needless to say that a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question is the only way to put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people.

That was stressed by President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi when he participated in the Jeddah Security and Development Summit this month. He described the Palestinian question as the primary Arab issue. He also emphasized the importance of intensifying our joint efforts, not only to revitalize the peace process track but to reach a final and irrevocable solution that would drive peace endeavours in the region.

Egypt would like to stress that the information provided by Ms. Hastings on the so-called Salah ad-Din crossing is incorrect, as the so-called Rafah crossing is currently the only border crossing for the movement of people. Egypt will spare no effort to support its Palestinian brothers.

Regionally, turning to developments in our sister State of Libya, with the participation of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General Egypt recently hosted three rounds of talks between the House of Representatives and the Supreme State Council on reaching an agreement on the necessary constitutional basis for holding parliamentary and presidential elections, which have been delayed since December 2021. The last round of talks was held between 12 and 20 June. Considerable progress was made on reaching a consensus on a number of controversial articles from Libya's 2017 draft constitution. We hope that the United Nations and all Member States will shoulder their responsibilities and encourage all parties to finalize the constitution, building on the progress made in Cairo, and avoid any measures that would prolong the status quo. That is particularly important given the expiration of the 18-month deadline for the maximum transitional period, in line with article 3 of the road map of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum held on 22 June. Egypt also stresses the need for concerted efforts to maintain the ceasefire in Libya and ensure the just and equitable use of Libyan resources in the interests of all Libyans, rather than in support of the narrow and individual interests of a few at the people's expense.

With regard to the crisis in Yemen, Egypt underscores its support to all efforts aimed at reaching a comprehensive settlement in line with the aspirations and ambitions of our brother people of Yemen. Egypt will continue to support the endeavours of Mr. Hans Grundberg, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, to achieve a comprehensive settlement through a political solution that can ensure Yemen's unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty and end the humanitarian suffering of the Yemeni people. It

should be in line with the primary terms of reference, particularly the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2216 (2015), as well as the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and its implementation mechanism and the outcomes of a comprehensive national Yemeni dialogue, in addition to the outcome of the recent Yemeni consultations in Riyadh, which led to the establishment of the Presidential Leadership Council. In that regard, Egypt stresses its firm position in support of Yemen's legitimate State institutions. We also welcome the truce renewal between the Yemeni parties and hope it will enable the completion of the transitional period so that our brother nation of Yemen can achieve security, stability and an intra-Yemeni consensus on ending the crisis and realizing a comprehensive solution.

In conclusion, Egypt stresses the importance of ensuring that the Security Council plays a more effective role in ensuring a political settlement and achieving peace and stability in the Middle East, while freeing all the Arab territories occupied since 1967 in Palestine, the Syrian Golan, Shebaa Farms, Kafr Shouba Hills and the area north of Ghajar village and environs.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

Mr. Camelli: I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania align themselves with this statement.

The European Union is worried about the persisting negative trends on the ground, including illegal settlement expansion, violence against civilians committed by all parties, terror attacks and increasing numbers of demolitions and evictions, which severely threaten the concept of a two-State solution. The EU affirms its commitment to a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition, and with Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States.

The EU condemns all acts of violence and calls for accountability. We deplore the increase in violence that has not only resulted in the tragic loss of lives but is also fuelling tensions and animosity. We firmly

condemn the recent terror attacks in Israel and remain committed to preventing and fighting terrorism and violent extremism. The European Union also firmly condemns the growing settler violence and calls for accountability. We are deeply concerned about the increasingly high number of casualties, including children. We would like to remind all concerned that any use of force must be proportionate and in line with international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law, and must be applied only as a last resort and when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life. The EU reiterates its call for a thorough investigation into the killing of the journalist Shireen Abu Akleh while she was covering an Israeli security operation in the occupied West Bank and for bringing those responsible to justice.

The EU's opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in that context, including in East Jerusalem, and especially in sensitive areas such as E1, is well known. We reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law and call for a halt to all settlement activities. Actions such as building the separation barrier beyond the 1967 line, demolitions and confiscations — including of EU-funded projects — evictions, forced transfers, including of Bedouins, illegal outposts, settler violence and restrictions on people's movement and access severely threaten the possibility of a two-State solution and will only escalate an already tense environment. The EU is concerned about the growing number of demolitions and evictions, including in East Jerusalem. It is important to ensure that Israel refrains from proceeding with any planned demolitions and evictions.

The European Union recalls the special significance of the holy sites and calls for upholding the status quo put in place in 1967 for the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, in line with previous understandings and with respect for Jordan's special role. The EU underlines the importance of also respecting the status quo for the Christian holy sites and of maintaining the peaceful coexistence of the three monotheistic religions. We will closely monitor developments in that regard and their implications on the ground, and we remain ready to contribute further to the protection and the viability of a two-State solution.

The European Union reiterates the vital importance of consolidating the ceasefire in Gaza and emphasizes its unequivocal position that rocket fire and the launching of incendiary devices and other attacks by Hamas and

other terrorist groups are unacceptable. The EU calls for lifting restrictions further and underlines the need for unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza. We call on all the parties to take necessary steps to produce a fundamental change in the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, including ending the closure and fully opening the crossing points, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns.

The European Union reiterates its call to the Palestinian Authority to organize the postponed national elections without further delay and urges all Palestinian factions to engage in good faith in the reconciliation process, adhere to previous agreements, renounce violence and terrorism, recognize Israel's right to exist and commit to democratic principles, including the rule of law. Democratic Palestinian institutions based on respect for the rule of law and human rights are vital for the Palestinian people, and ultimately for a two-State solution.

All the parties must allow Palestinian civil society to carry out its important tasks freely, while freedom of expression must be upheld. The EU recalls the need to hold accountable those responsible for the death of Nizar Banat. The EU is proud of its continued support to civil society, which contributes to peace efforts and confidence-building between Israelis and Palestinians. The EU urges parties to refrain from using anti-terrorism legislation to undermine civil society and its valuable work and contributions to the pursuit of accountability.

Until a just, fair, agreed and realistic solution to the refugee issue in accordance with international law is found, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) remains crucial for providing the necessary protection and essential services for Palestine refugees and supporting peace and stability in the region. The EU will continue to support UNRWA in all its fields of operations, including in East Jerusalem. We welcome the recent Ad Hoc committee of the General Assembly's announcement of voluntary contributions to the UNRWA conference on 23 June, and we call upon all partners to increase their contributions to UNRWA.

The European Union encourages further engagement between the parties to restore a political horizon and open the path towards the relaunching of the peace process as soon as possible.

The European Union welcomes measures to improve Palestinian livelihoods and calls for the

implementation of the commitments made at the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting in Brussels on 10 May. To that end, the European Union reiterates the importance of a deepened dialogue between the parties and encourages easing restrictions on Palestinian movement. Together with the necessary reform of the Palestinian Authority, that will also contribute to improving its dire fiscal situation.

More than decade after the start of the Syria conflict, the Syrian people continue to suffer from violence and hardship. It is essential that the international community keeps pursuing a sustainable and comprehensive political solution in Syria. The European Union remains firm in its commitment to that goal.

A durable solution to the conflict requires a genuine and inclusive political transition with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). The EU fully supports the efforts of Special Envoy Geir Pedersen to advance on all aspects of resolution 2254 (2015), including his steps-for-steps approach in furthering the political process.

According to the most recent report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, over 300,000 civilians were killed in Syria between 2011 and 2021 — that is, 83 per day — as a direct result of the conflict. The report confirms the extent of the human suffering in Syria. Civilians must be protected at all times. Therefore, once again, the EU echoes the call made by the Security Council for the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire.

The Syrian regime must fully cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, including in its investigations of the use of chemical weapons in the conflict.

All parties responsible for breaches of international humanitarian law and human rights law, some of which may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, must be held accountable. The EU reiterates its call to have the situation in Syria referred to the International Criminal Court.

Accountability and justice for victims is essential for a stable, peaceful Syria, based on a credible, inclusive and viable political solution in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015). In the absence of international

justice, the prosecution of war crimes under national jurisdiction where possible, now under way in several EU member States, represents an important contribution towards securing justice. In addition, the Netherlands and Canada are engaged in an important initiative to hold Syria to account for breaching the Convention against Torture. The EU will continue to support efforts to gather evidence with a view to future legal action, including by the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria and the work of the Commission of Inquiry.

Türkiye's security concerns stemming from northern Syria should be addressed through political and diplomatic means, not by military action, and in full respect of international humanitarian law. In that respect, recent announcements on another military operation in northern Syria are alarming, and we urge restraint.

The underlying causes of the refugee and displacement crisis must be addressed under resolution 2254 (2015). The EU continues to warn against any further displacements in any part of Syria, as well as against the potential exploitation of such displacements for the purposes of social and demographic engineering. Conditions for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees and displaced persons to their places of origin, in line with the parameters defined by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and in accordance with international law, must be met. The EU will be in a position to support returns only once those conditions are satisfied.

Early-recovery projects are also important for the dignity of the Syrian people and for their future. EU-funded projects are intended and designed for those in genuine need. The EU will not fund early-recovery efforts that could support social and demographic engineering

Humanitarian needs in Syria continue to increase. More than 12 million people — 55 per cent of the population — are food insecure. There is an estimated 14.6 million people in need inside Syria. The European Union and its member States are the largest donor and have provided €25 billion to meet the needs arising from the crisis over the past decade.

At the sixth Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, held on 9 and 10 May and hosted by the EU, the international community pledged close to €6.4 billion for 2022 and beyond.

Out of that amount, over €4.8 billion were pledged by the European Union, with over €3.1 billion coming from the European Commission and €1.7 billion from the member States. That funding will help people in Syria and the neighbouring countries hosting Syrian refugees. We will continue to demonstrate solidarity with the Syrian people and call on the international community to increase their commitments. We commend the neighbouring countries for hosting large number of Syrian refugees for more than a decade and call on all leaders to avoid divisive rhetoric regarding Syrian refugees.

On 12 July, the Security Council extended for six months, until 10 January 2023, the authorization for the United Nations to use the crossing point of Bab Al-Hawa from Türkiye to Syria for humanitarian deliveries, with a further extension of an additional six months requiring a separate resolution. The European Union regrets that the mechanism was not renewed for 12 months, as called for by the Secretary-General and the humanitarian community as a whole and supported by most members of the Security Council. The extension is a humanitarian imperative to preserve the functioning of a critical humanitarian lifeline for the 4.1 million Syrian men, women and children, including 2.8 million internally displaced persons, in north-west Syria, who depend on the vital humanitarian assistance delivered through the mechanism to help them survive.

The European Union will continue to advocate for all parties to depoliticize and allow unimpeded and

continued delivery of humanitarian aid to all those in need. Cross-border assistance will continue to be vital to meet the immense humanitarian needs in Syria, especially in the context of the increasing food insecurity in the region caused by Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression in Ukraine. The EU fully supports the renewal of this essential mechanism, scheduled to be voted on in January 2023.

The EU reiterates its call for a political solution and emphasizes that no normalization, lifting of sanctions or reconstruction will be possible until the Syrian regime engages in a political transition, in the framework of resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva process.

The EU looks forward to the report of the Secretary-General on a possible independent mechanism for an international mandate to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons in Syria.

The EU remains committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian State and calls once again on all parties to the conflict to advance a credible, sustainable and inclusive political solution based on the full and comprehensive implementation of resolution 2254 (2015). It is the only route to sustainable peace in Syria.

The President: There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. Given the lateness of the hour, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, I intend to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.20 p.m.