



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

Provisional

9725th meeting

Monday, 16 September 2024, 10 a.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Žbogar	(Slovenia)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Japan	Mr. Yamazaki
	Malta	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sierra Leone	Mr. Kanu
	Switzerland	Mr. Baeriswyl
	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: On behalf of the Council, I would like to note that, with regard to rule 37 and rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, the Council's approach will be to consider only those requests for participation that were submitted before the start of the meeting.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Israel to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza pursuant to resolution 2720 (2023); and Mr. Jorge Moreira da Silva, Executive Director, United Nations Office for Project Services.

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

I give the floor to Ms. Kaag.

Ms. Kaag: This will be a sober and sombre assessment of the situation on the ground. I remain deeply mindful of the profound responsibility the international community bears in addressing the tragedy of the war.

Nearly a year has passed since the horrific terror attack by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups against Israel on 7 October 2023, which claimed 1,250 Israeli and foreign lives and led to the abduction of approximately 250 hostages. At least 101 hostages are reported to be still alive and still held in Gaza. They are still denied humanitarian visits. All hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally. For as long as they are held in accordance with international legal obligations, they must be treated humanely and allowed to receive visits and assistance from the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The essence of our common humanity is at stake. In Gaza, more than 41,000 Palestinians have been killed, and more than 93,000 have been injured.

Recent data from the World Health Organization (WHO) estimate that more than 22,000 people have sustained life-altering injuries. Severe limb injuries number between 13,000 to 17,000, often resulting in amputation. They are a sad reflection of the tragedy of the war. Many of those injured have more than one injury. The health infrastructure, already crippled, has been further decimated.

At least 625,000 children remain out of school — children whose futures are marred by trauma, loss and deprivation. Every parent hopes for a better, more prosperous future for their children. In Gaza, that universal parental desire is dimmed by the grim realities of destruction and hopelessness.

Time is slipping away as a man-made humanitarian crisis has turned Gaza into the abyss. It cannot be repeated enough: we need an immediate ceasefire, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and unimpeded, continuous humanitarian access to deliver aid at scale throughout the Gaza Strip. The continued lack of effective protection for civilians in Gaza is unconscionable. The infrastructure that civilians rely on must be protected, and their essential needs met. As the Secretary-General has reiterated, all parties must refrain from using schools, shelters, or the areas around them for military purposes. All parties to the conflict must comply with international humanitarian law at all times. Equally, humanitarian workers need an enabling environment to ensure unimpeded and safe access to people in need. Tragically, in Gaza, nowhere is safe.

Diseases such as the polio virus, which had been consigned to history in the Gaza Strip, have now reappeared owing to the collapse of essential services. Following the detection of the virus, the Israeli authorities immediately engaged with my team. Following intensive coordination, the first round of a two-round vaccination campaign led by the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and UNICEF has successfully been completed. The second phase of the vaccination campaign should commence in approximately four weeks. I visited Gaza, as I regularly do, a week and a half ago. Agreed pauses in fighting allowed parents and children to safely visit health centres and clinics, providing them with a very brief glimpse of relief and respite. The polio campaign shows that, even in the direst of circumstances, with sufficient political will and real-time political commitment, humanitarian action

is possible. The polio campaign equally underscored the vital role UNRWA plays, not only in accordance with its mandate but also as a critical, trusted partner in the social fabric of Gaza and as the backbone of our humanitarian operations.

The outbreak of polio is also a stark reminder of the desolate living conditions in the Gaza Strip. Given the ongoing hostilities and the lack of a proper enabling environment, effective deconfliction and a timely implementation of commitments made, the United Nations and partners remain constrained in their ability to address the catastrophic situation.

Taking one step back, 11 months ago Gaza was largely cut off from most of its supply lines, with all but one access point closed. When resolution 2720 (2023) was adopted, in December 2023, it was not foreseen that the war would rage on for this long without a ceasefire. In that context, and despite the complexity of the situation, my mission has negotiated and strengthened supply lines and systems as well as additional routes with the intent to facilitate, accelerate and expedite, in a sustained and transparent manner, the flow of supplies into Gaza. Those routes cover supplies from or via Egypt, Jordan, Cyprus, the West Bank and Israel. That required the streamlining of intricate logistics and relevant regulations. The Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Under-Secretary-General Jorge Moreira da Silva, will update you on the operationalization of the mechanism.

The systems in place today are not a substitute for the political will required to reach civilians and respond to their needs. Systems do not save lives nor provide dignity for those who have lost everything. Effective humanitarian operations require the right quality and quantity and a broad range of goods to meet the daily needs of civilians in Gaza. That goal is not being met.

Ongoing hostilities across the Strip, the breakdown of law and order and looting of supplies are additional significant impediments to the United Nations ability to distribute assistance to the Palestinian population in Gaza. Furthermore, the operating conditions for humanitarian workers include denials, delays, a lack of safety and security and poor logistical infrastructure. That continues to hamper relief operations, despite the recent approvals provided for trucks, satellite phones and other equipment. My mission continues to engage on those vital issues with a view to seeking immediate redress. Commitments and intentions must

be translated into tangible actions on the ground. Any delay in implementation comes at a direct cost to human lives. The Security Council is fully aware of the asks of the humanitarian community. I will highlight a few critical areas.

First, my mission continues to focus on securing access to Gaza for a diverse range of goods from the humanitarian and commercial sectors. Modest progress in select areas, such as waste and sewage management, has been made. However, that does not address the totality of needs. For example, the need for cash, prepositioned adequate volume in fuel and hygiene items are urgently needed. The scope of humanitarian items allowed entry remains too restricted for effective humanitarian operations. Furthermore, the United Nations itself also urgently needs the entry of further vital security communications and tracking equipment in order to work in Gaza.

With regard to coordination and deconfliction, a joint coordination board is operational. Recent security incidents, including shootings at humanitarian convoys, are unacceptable and demonstrate that agreed protocols and procedures still require comprehensive on-time implementation. The recent medical evacuation of 251 patients and family members — in this case to the United Arab Emirates — the largest thus far, is a good development. However, much more is needed. More than 14,000 patients require specialized treatment outside of the Gaza Strip, and I would like to take this opportunity to call on all Member States to extend their solidarity by hosting those patients and their families.

Progress on all of that becomes even more important as winter nears, and the humanitarian catastrophe deepens. The United Nations team on the ground continues to coordinate with the Israeli authorities to ensure the implementation of a winterization plan.

Humanitarian assistance is only a temporary pathway to alleviate suffering. A comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East can only be realized through a two-State solution and the achievement of an independent, democratic, contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders with Israel, whose legitimate security concerns must be addressed. In that light, the recovery and reconstruction of Gaza should not wait, and members have heard me say that before. As much as political conditions will dictate the pace and nature of this process, children

need to learn, they need to be in school, health care should be provided to all, and the refurbishing and rebuilding of housing needs to start.

It is important that governance and security arrangements are established without further delay. The United Nations position is clear: the Palestinian Authority must resume its full responsibilities in Gaza. And Prime Minister Mohammed Mustafa's Cabinet has developed comprehensive plans to restore local governance and security and re-establish the rule of law. International planning efforts by the United Nations, the European Union, the World Bank and others are ongoing in support of the Palestinian Authority. My mission has also developed financing options for the international community to consider. Rebuilding Gaza offers an opportunity to involve all members of Palestinian civil society. Fostering a conducive environment that enables the Palestinian business community to play its role is equally important. Palestinian businesspeople and investors have the drive, the knowledge and the commitment to contribute in a meaningful way.

Over the past 10 months, my mission has fostered partnerships and enhanced coordination among Member States, United Nations agencies and the many humanitarian partners. The team established pursuant to resolution 2720 (2023) has continuously engaged on issues of access and addressed obstacles and proposed solutions to enable assistance by all humanitarian partners, including — and it goes without saying — UNRWA. My mission has proposed solutions to overcome political and operational impediments, maintaining a lean, agile and efficient operation through a hybrid model with UNOPS and seconded experts from certain agencies. Routes have been established, systems are in place and proposals have been made to the parties concerning the option to re-open the Rafah border crossing. That is just one of the many examples.

But despite those continuous efforts, the only credible measure of change and progress are the actual conditions on the ground in Gaza, and the horrors of the past 11 months have made it painfully clear that a political solution is the only sustainable path forward. Without a political solution, the cycle of suffering will continue. In the face of the tragedy that befell innocent civilians, our shared humanity demands that we respond with compassion and humility. We have a responsibility to provide protection and aid, remaining steadfast in our duty to advocate for a lasting peace,

a secure Israel and a fully independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian State.

The President: I thank Ms. Kaag for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Moreira da Silva.

Mr. Moreira da Silva: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the invitation to brief the Security Council on the operationalization of the mechanism for Gaza established under resolution 2720 (2023).

I would like to start by thanking the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, for her leadership and tireless efforts. They have been not only fundamental to enabling the activation of the mechanism, but also crucial in bringing the key stakeholders together on the critical political decisions that enable our work and that of our humanitarian colleagues. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) is committed to supporting the mandate of the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator, along with our other efforts to enable the work of the United Nations system and humanitarian responders in Gaza.

In January, during my visit to Gaza, I had the chance to speak with not only colleagues from UNOPS but also colleagues from the United Nations system about the truly challenging environment and its impact on their work. When UNOPS was asked by the Secretary-General to support Ms. Kaag's mandate in December 2023, we delivered a design of the mechanism that was meant to deliver a single, comprehensive humanitarian aid supply chain management system for Gaza, address the unpredictability of pipelines, delays at the screening points, multiple inspection and transloading points, and build confidence and transparency in the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Since May, the mechanism has been running the integrated database covering humanitarian consignments going through Cyprus and, since June, those along the Jordan corridor. It has also captured consignments being sent from the West Bank and from inside Israel. The database moves away from counting trucks and provides the capacity to look at actual supplies entering Gaza, compared to the identified needs. It is publicly accessible to anyone who wishes to send humanitarian aid to Gaza. Since its activation, 229 humanitarian aid consignments have requested clearance through the mechanism, 175 consignments have been approved, 101 have been delivered, 17 are

pending clearance and 37 have been rejected. That information is available. That translates into more than 22,000 metric tons of humanitarian aid cargo delivered to Gaza through the mechanism's facilitation, of which more than 20,000 metric tons were food and nutrition consignments, close to 1,000 metric tons of shelter consignments, 400 metric tons of washing supplies, more than 170 metric tons of medical aid and close to 50 metric tons of protection supplies and smaller consignments of other humanitarian aid supplies. Those figures are also publicly available on the mechanism's live dashboard, which was launched early last week.

The consignments were primarily delivered through the Jordan corridor, the direct route from Jordan to Gaza that was formalized and regularized under the mechanism to provide much-needed predictability and regularity and to address the backlog challenges that accompany convoys undergoing multiple inspection and transloading points. The humanitarian aid consignments delivered through the Jordan corridor pass through one single inspection point in Jordan and a single transloading point in Gaza, compared to three inspection points and four transloading points on the back-to-back route before the mechanism.

A smaller portion of the aforementioned consignments was delivered through the Cyprus corridor, which represents a vital supplementary route for delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza. It is not intended to replace or divert attention from existing land or sea corridors, but rather to enhance overall capacity. Responding to donor requests for a United Nations-led and humanitarian-focused approach, UNOPS stands ready to address the Cyprus corridor's current logistical challenges by offering an end-to-end solution, ensuring the coordinated, efficient and transparent delivery of aid.

In order to support the regularization of those corridors under the mechanism, UNOPS has deployed 14 international monitors to Cyprus and Jordan. They verify the humanitarian nature of each consignment, facilitate the approval for the consignments to proceed to Gaza and track the consignments from their point of origin until they are handed over to the final consignee in Gaza for onward delivery. That very mechanism fosters confidence-building among all and provides transparency by informing all of us that what was sent to Gaza indeed made its way to its final destination. For consignments that are not permitted, the mechanism requires a justification from the concerned parties.

Together with the Office of the Senior Coordinator, we continue to call for more items and consignors to be allowed to enter Gaza. Eleven of our international monitors are also ready to deploy inside Gaza in order to reinforce that important verification and tracking mechanism, as an additional enabler of our collective efforts to accelerate the delivery of and increase the amount of humanitarian aid reaching the civilian population in Gaza.

Regarding the Egypt corridor, over the past 11 months the Egyptian route has served as a vital lifeline for delivering aid to the people of Gaza. We are working closely with the Egyptian authorities to fully integrate that route into the resolution 2720 (2023) mechanism. Initial approval has been secured, and my team is in Cairo this week to finalize the integration process. Once completed, the resolution 2720 (2023) mechanism will provide a comprehensive, real-time overview of all humanitarian cargo entering Gaza from every supply route. That will enable better prioritization, tracking and monitoring of relief efforts right up to the point of delivery. Through the resolution 2720 (2023) mechanism's joint database, we will strengthen coordination and efficiency, ensuring that aid reaches those who need it most swiftly and effectively.

As part of the mechanism, we have committed to support the full operational capacity of each corridor. That is why I would just like to add two more elements that strengthen that aspect. UNOPS is procuring 280 trucks for the Jordan corridor, constructing 10 additional warehousing spaces for the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization and establishing two truck-holding areas at the King Hussein Bridge crossing and inspection site in Jordan. In addition, we are procuring 38 trucks for use by the humanitarian community inside Gaza, in order to enable the delivery of the humanitarian aid consignments arriving via the different corridors.

We have procured the necessary armoured vehicles, communications and other security equipment that will ensure the operational capacity of the mechanism's 11 international monitors inside Gaza, without exerting pressure on the already limited resources of the rest of the humanitarian community. Our progress toward the design, establishment and operationalization of the mechanism would not have been possible without the generous and dedicated support of the Member States that have made financial contributions in support of the mechanism. Here, I would like to specifically recognize the Governments of Australia, Denmark, Estonia, the

Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America, the Minderoo Foundation and the Governments of Canada and Germany, which have pledged additional contributions.

I would also like to thank the Member States and our local partners who are enabling the operations of the mechanism on the ground. We cannot overemphasize the challenges of delivering humanitarian response in Gaza right now. The design and the implementation of the mechanism matter immensely, and we remain committed to excellence. Yet, the effective delivery of aid at the scale required simply will not be possible without political will, the necessary security and safety guarantees and an enabling environment.

Along with the rest of the United Nations family, UNOPS is determined to stay and deliver for the people of Gaza, both to respond to immediate humanitarian needs and to support the immense recovery and reconstruction efforts that are so desperately needed. Allow me here to also emphasize the critical and irreplaceable role that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East plays in Gaza as the key implementer of our collective will.

The President: I thank Mr. Moreira da Silva for his briefing.

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

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): As is customary, I would like to begin by thanking the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services, Mr. Jorge Moreira da Silva, for their briefings. Switzerland welcomes the remarkable commitment of his team and that of the team of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to setting up the mechanism established pursuant to resolution 2720 (2023) in order to increase the supply of humanitarian aid to Gaza. His regular briefings to the Council are particularly useful, given that, as we have just heard once again, the humanitarian catastrophe continues to worsen throughout the occupied Palestinian territory.

In Gaza, hostilities continue to claim numerous civilian casualties, and Israeli evacuation orders are putting additional pressure on an already desperate population, many of whom are children, limiting

access to essential services. In addition, more than 100 hostages remain in captivity, and we once again call for their immediate and unconditional release. Switzerland reiterates its condemnation of all violations of international humanitarian law committed by all parties, which must cease immediately.

Almost nine months after the adoption of resolution 2720 (2023), the provision of humanitarian aid remains more vital than ever in Gaza. Allow me therefore to highlight three particularly important aspects related to the implementation of resolution 2720 (2023).

First, the resolution places a strong emphasis on humanitarian access. Switzerland once again calls on all parties to implement their human rights obligations and their obligations under international humanitarian law. That includes allowing and facilitating safe, rapid and unhindered humanitarian access to civilian populations through all crossing points. We condemn the incident at a checkpoint on 9 September involving a United Nations team responsible for carrying out the vaccination campaign in Gaza. Such incidents are unacceptable. As the occupying Power, Israel has an obligation to meet the basic needs of the population under its control. We also recall that the deliberate use of starvation as a method of warfare is a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Secondly, the protection of civilians, including humanitarian and medical personnel, must be guaranteed at all times. The use of heavy weapons, which have a destructive capacity that makes it impossible to distinguish between civilians and combatants in densely populated areas, is unacceptable. Furthermore, the civilian population, persons hors de combat and civilian infrastructure such as residential buildings, schools and hospitals must not be the targets of attacks. Switzerland condemns such attacks, which constitute violations of international humanitarian law, in the strongest possible terms. The deadly consequences of Israeli military operations in areas in which civilians have taken refuge are intolerable, as we saw last Wednesday, for example, when a school used as a refuge for 12,000 people was once again attacked. The attack resulted in many casualties, including six staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and we offer our condolences to their loved ones. Establishing reliable protection and security guarantees for humanitarian personnel is an obligation. The Council reaffirmed that fact by adopting resolution 2730 (2024).

Switzerland recalls that international humanitarian law prohibits any party to a conflict from using the presence of civilians or persons hors de combat to shield a military objective from attack. Nonetheless, even if that rule is violated, in no way is the obligation on the other party to the conflict to adhere strictly to international humanitarian law in the conduct of hostilities suspended. Civilian property, including schools and places of worship, are protected by international humanitarian law.

Thirdly, we welcome the implementation of the polio vaccination campaign, which Switzerland has supported with funding of 1 million Swiss francs. The campaign has shown what the United Nations and their humanitarian partners are able to accomplish if the parties to the conflict discharge their duty to ensure safe and unimpeded access. That, however, does not suffice. As we have repeated on numerous occasions and as the Council has decided, an immediate ceasefire is necessary.

Despite the considerable efforts of the Under-Secretary-General and her team, the reopening of all crossing points is required given the magnitude of the needs. The reconstruction that Council members had envisaged nine months ago in resolution 2720 (2023) also requires an immediate ceasefire and the prospects of a peace process. Compliance with international law and the Council's resolutions constitute a further *sine qua non* for de-escalation, including regional de-escalation, and a first step towards establishing lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. We reaffirm our strong support for a negotiated solution entailing two States, Israel and Palestine, of which Gaza is an integral part, living side-by-side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services, Mr. Moreira da Silva, for their briefings on the situation in the Strip and their efforts to ensure humanitarian access to the territory as part of the implementation of resolution 2720 (2023).

Unfortunately, as we warned, without a full-fledged ceasefire in Gaza, that document has essentially remained a dead letter. Today's statement by the Senior Coordinator generally confirms that, although we understand that Ms. Kaag has been most cautious in her

choosing her words, because today, if United Nations officials give a frank assessment of Israel's actions, they are immediately put on Israel's stop list and denied entry to the Gaza Strip, and their efforts are obstructed.

The Security Council, however, operates according to a different paradigm: it simply has an obligation to call things what they are. The humanitarian situation in the Palestinian Strip is dire and that is because of the ongoing Israeli military operation, which Israel has been conducting with no regard for international humanitarian law or the Council's decisions. Such self-assurance stems from the unconditional support for all of its actions by the United States, which for almost a year has been blocking any slightly meaningful Council resolution.

Meanwhile, the number of Palestinian civilian deaths caused by Israeli bombardments, armed incursions and ground operations has exceeded 42,000, with almost 100,000 wounded and tens of thousands missing. In the past week alone, shelling by the Israeli armed forces claimed the lives of approximately 100 civilians. There is no justification, nor can there be any justification, for that. Nor is there any justification for the 11 September attack targeting a school run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Nuseirat refugee camp, killing 18 people, including women and children. Among the dead were six UNRWA staff members. Today there was another strike on the camp and the school, taking more than 10 lives.

Aside the immediate danger of hostilities, United Nations staff are enduring frequent pressure from the authorities of West Jerusalem, which takes various forms—frequent detentions, interrogations, restrictions on movement and, in general, an information campaign unleashed against United Nations staff. Not only does all of that put their lives in danger, but it also endangers the people whom they are helping. Humanitarian workers have been increasingly subjected to violence by Israel. Last month, Israeli soldiers shelled a World Food Programme (WFP) vehicle that was clearly marked as such. The WFP was forced to suspend operations in the Strip for several days. In early September, another incident took place in which Israel Defense Forces heavy equipment rammed a United Nations food convoy. The soldiers threatened United Nations staff with weapons and took them away for interrogation. That incident happened even though the humanitarian missions had been coordinated with Israel in advance

and shows, yet again, that neither deconfliction nor the notorious notifications system are actually working.

We find it regrettable that, with rare exceptions, fellow Council members are unable to summon the courage to talk about that. Western countries are particularly hypocritical. When it comes to giving an honest assessment of what is happening to the Palestinians, they just clam up. After all, if it were any other State, they would vociferously condemn such actions. And now, on the eve of the anniversary of 7 October 2023, instead of discussing the situation in the Strip during the high-level week, our Western colleagues are actively engaging in a public relations exercise for the Ukrainian president, who is past his expiration date. I hope that those Council members realize how hypocritical their words sound today, given the circumstances.

In the context of active military operations and constant pressure from West Jerusalem, it is extremely difficult for humanitarian workers to deliver aid. Incidentally, the delivery of humanitarian aid continues to be another problem. All the data from humanitarian organizations indicates that there has been no meaningful progress in that regard. The most important artery for the delivery of supplies, the Rafah border crossing, is closed. The establishment of a maritime corridor from Cyprus and the floating pier failed miserably.

Humanitarian workers are increasingly voicing their concern not only about the meagre supplies of food, fuel and medical supplies delivered, but also about the obstacles created by Israel and its frequent refusals to allow humanitarian operations to take place. For example, in August, according to the United Nations, the number of refusals doubled as compared to July. It is clear that the routes now open from Jordan, Egypt and Israel do not allow the necessary volumes of humanitarian aid to be delivered. In fact, the average daily capacity is now only 70 trucks, whereas before the crisis 500 trucks entered Gaza every day. The figures speak for themselves.

If things continue this way, the United Nations might have to halt operations in the Gaza Strip. If so, more than 2 million Palestinians will be left to face death alone. That is not a figure of speech, but a real prospect. And we cannot allow it to happen. Council members must do their utmost to prevent such a scenario from occurring — a scenario in which part of

the Israeli establishment is not concealing its interest. The Security Council has all the necessary tools, but what is lacking is political will on the part of the United States and its satellites.

In essence, the only thing that the United Nations can now take credit for is the ongoing campaign to vaccinate children against polio. We hope that humanitarian pauses for vaccination will be effective. However, there is no point in emphasizing those efforts today, as the polio situation is but one of the multitude of problems confronting the Strip's inhabitants. With the complete destruction of the sanitation and health-care system in the Strip, there could be an outbreak of other infectious diseases at any moment. In Gaza, stocks of routine vaccines for tuberculosis or for immunization against diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough are almost exhausted. Patients with serious chronic diseases suffer from shortages of medication such as insulin. Those patients are doomed. The supply of basic medication to Gaza is a problem that needs to be urgently addressed. And Israel, as far as we can see, is impervious to such requests.

Let us not mislead anyone. With Israel's military operation continuing for more than 11 months now, sponsored and overseen by the United States authorities, adequate assistance to the population of the Strip is simply impossible. Humanitarian workers are powerless, they are defenceless in the face of Israeli strikes. It is simply inhumane to demand that they die in those strikes while Council members have been going around in circles for almost a year and have been unable to compel the Israeli authorities to stop their punishing war machine. Let us recall that if the Security Council decision on a ceasefire, which we have already formally adopted, is not being enforced, then Council members can consider measures to ensure its implementation. The Security Council has the relevant experience and all the necessary leverage and means, including in the context of its peacekeeping presence in the Middle East.

We are all perfectly cognizant of the fact that, as long as intense fighting is under way, it is unrealistic to bank on any meaningful progress in stabilizing the humanitarian situation on the ground or stepping up humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza. We must recognize a simple fact — the problem lies not in the presence or absence of any mechanism for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, but in the absence of the conditions for that due to the ongoing hostilities, in

which the Israelis are not making exceptions for schools, hospitals or United Nations humanitarian convoys.

Therefore, regardless of what has been said in this Chamber today about humanitarian operations, the priority remains the same — we must ensure an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire in Gaza. However, this time there must not be empty words, such as those in resolution 2735 (2024), which was not viable even when it was adopted — and we have talked about that on numerous occasions — rather a focus on a real, explicit demand from the Council. Only then will it be possible to engage in meaningful discussions to address the challenges related to delivering humanitarian assistance to civilians.

As for the calls we have heard to focus on the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip, that is, of course, extremely important. However, that is a long-term objective. Before we talk about the day after tomorrow, we must at least understand what tomorrow will look like, and that implies assessing what is happening today, rather than shamefully sweeping the facts we have at our disposal under the rug. What will remain of Gaza if Israel's military operation continues at the current pace? And what will happen to the surviving Israeli hostages? Is their fate of no concern to the Israeli authorities? Have they already taken the decision to sacrifice most of them? That is, unfortunately, where things are heading. We hope that all members of the Security Council will ultimately have a sense of collective responsibility for what is happening in the Gaza Strip, and that they will be able to work together to urgently develop the necessary de-escalation measures and ensure their implementation. So far, unfortunately, we have not seen that happening. And we continue hear empty and hypocritical calls in this Chamber.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag for her briefing and especially for her tireless commitment on the ground. France supports her mandate and calls for the full and immediate implementation of resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023), 2728 (2024) and 2735 (2024).

I would like to stress on two points.

First, international humanitarian law must be respected by all parties. The protection of humanitarian workers must be guaranteed under all circumstances. The proliferation of incidents targeting them is intolerable. Deconfliction mechanisms must be implemented. The smooth operation of the anti-polio

vaccination campaign shows that this is possible. It is essential to remove obstacles to assistance. It must be possible to use all access points, as Gazan civilians are in a situation of absolute emergency, and the International Court of Justice demanded that. The goods entering Gaza must correspond to the reality of humanitarian needs and reach their intended recipients. There are still too many restrictions on the goods and supplies that can enter Gaza, in particular for health infrastructure, but also for water, sanitation and waste treatment. The United Nations and humanitarian actors must have access to equipment to carry out their work on the ground. Finally, France calls for the release of all the hostages.

Secondly, we must restore a horizon for the people of Gaza. An immediate and permanent ceasefire is essential. However, we must also immediately work with the countries in the region to create the conditions for rebuilding with early recovery projects to restore basic services. France supports the work of the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza to that end. Undoubtedly, it will be necessary to review the terms of her mandate. The lives of 2 million people are at stake.

A political settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is urgently needed. Only the establishment of a unified, independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian State, living in peace and security alongside Israel, will guarantee security in the Middle East. A strictly humanitarian response will not suffice, nor will a purely security-related response. Otherwise, the current crisis will repeatedly erupt.

France will remain committed to ending the crisis on the basis of a two-State solution. At the same time, we need security guarantees for the Israelis, to whom France reiterates its solidarity following the terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023. The Palestinian Authority has a central role to play in that process, both in the West Bank and in Gaza, which are to be part of the Palestinian State.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I thank the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services, Mr. Jorge Moreira da Silva, for their important briefings.

As we have listened in this Chamber almost every week to reports about the humanitarian and security situation in the Gaza Strip, one can hardly imagine

what it is like for the men, women and children who are living the harrowing, nightmarish reality of deaths, torture, displacements, hunger and disease every day.

The adoptions of resolution 2720 (2023) and all other resolutions of the Council regarding the conflict in the Gaza Strip were seen as beacons of hope, particularly in underscoring “the importance of coordination, humanitarian notification, and deconfliction mechanisms” in paragraph 5 of resolution 2712 (2023) and the need to facilitate, coordinate, monitor and verify the expedited delivery of humanitarian assistance to the civilian population in the Gaza Strip, with the appointment of a Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator. Regrettably, almost a year to the current phase of the escalation of the conflict and months after the adoption of resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023), 2728 (2024) and 2735 (2024), their full implementation is disturbingly lacking. Violence and deliberate obstruction continue to undermine humanitarian efforts. Aid workers must deal with many bureaucratic measures aimed at preventing them from accessing the devastated population in the Gaza Strip or are outrightly denied access at checkpoints during major humanitarian deliveries.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the frequency of denial of access by Israeli authorities nearly doubled in August, as compared to July. It is also reported that persistent obstacles hampering the entrance of aid vehicles through the Kerem Shalom crossing are causing shortages of medical supplies throughout the Gaza Strip. It is even more alarming when humanitarian personnel themselves are subject to violent attacks, contrary to international humanitarian law.

In that regard, we reiterate the strong condemnation by the Secretary-General of the attack on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) school serving as a shelter in Nuseirat, in central Gaza, which killed six UNRWA personnel, as well as women and children. Those actions, which violate international law, including international humanitarian law, cannot be justified under any circumstances.

Repeated evacuation orders are shrinking the so-called safe zones in the Gaza Strip and increasing danger for many displaced Palestinians sheltering in makeshift sites. The report of an Israeli air strike on

10 September in Al-Mawasi, part of Khan Younis, confirms that unacceptable narrative.

The constant bombardment and exchange of rockets between the Israel Defense Forces and Hamas and the other militant groups in the Gaza Strip for the past 11 months has severely affected critical infrastructure and cropland. A satellite assessment conducted by the United Nations Satellite Centre revealed that 68 per cent of the roads and cropland across the Gaza Strip have been destroyed. It is estimated that there has been over \$18.5 billion of infrastructural damage to the area.

Full operationalization of resolution 2720 (2023) would require achieving an immediate and permanent ceasefire and restoration of law and order in a society now characterized, at the minimum, as a war crime scene, with lawlessness, looting and social disorder. The absence of internal security structures has increased risks of attacks on aid convoys and humanitarian personnel.

As we collectively pursue the objective of making humanitarian aid delivery processes faster, efficient and directly beneficial to civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory and as we assess the reconstruction outlook, Sierra Leone would like to make several points.

First, we acknowledge the importance of facilitating, coordinating, monitoring and verifying unhindered humanitarian aid delivery into Gaza and the significance of rebuilding the Gaza Strip and the work of the Office of the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator, including through meaningful engagement at all levels with relevant stakeholders. Sierra Leone remains supportive of that work and its continuation, and we emphasize that the provision of and access to humanitarian aid and essential services, which are in scarce supply in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, should remain a priority during the allocation of relief consignment.

Secondly, we reiterate our call for all conflicting parties to strictly adhere to their obligations under international law, in particular international humanitarian law and all relevant resolutions of the Council aimed at protecting civilians, including humanitarian workers and civilian infrastructure. An effective deconfliction mechanism is also necessary in order to guarantee the safety and security of all humanitarian personnel and to allow for the rapid facilitation of humanitarian relief.

We welcome the operationalization of the United Nations mechanism that supported the timely delivery of 1.6 million doses of polio vaccine type 2 to the Gaza Strip, currently being administered to the at-risk children. As the first round of the polio vaccination campaign has ended, it is absolutely critical that medical and aid personnel are able to continue with the next round throughout Gaza.

We maintain our view that an immediate and permanent ceasefire would significantly improve the humanitarian situation on the ground. We therefore call on the parties to the conflict to recommit to the ongoing diplomatic efforts and explore options to resolve outstanding issues and conclude the negotiations.

An end to the current conflict would enable the start of the arduous, but vital task of rebuilding Gaza in order to make it habitable as a home to its people. The establishment of State functions for governance, security and law and public administration; the reconstruction of essential services for water, sanitation, transportation and housing; and the establishment of structures, systems and processes for private sector revitalization can be achieved only through a cessation of hostilities.

In our maiden statement on the Middle East/Palestine question this year (see S/PV.9531), we noted the significance of the prevailing context, that is, the continuing occupation by Israel of the Palestinian territories and the escalation following 7 October. Accordingly, the issue of humanitarian aid coordination and reconstruction must now be gleaned through the lens of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

With regard to the germane issue of the right to self-determination, the Court opined that, while it is for the General Assembly and the Security Council to determine the modalities required to ensure an end to Israel's illegal presence in the occupied Palestinian territory and the full realization of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, all States must cooperate with the United Nations in order to put those modalities into effect.

In addition, all States parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention have the obligation, while respecting the Charter of the United Nations and international law, to ensure that Israel complies with international humanitarian law, as embodied in that Convention.

In effect, the response needed to bring about a lasting, sustainable reconstruction of Gaza and other parts of the occupied Palestinian territories is to put an end to the unlawful occupation and to ensure that the necessary modalities be put in place by the General Assembly and Security Council, including the declaration of a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, in line with the United Nations Charter. It has been made clear that this is a legal obligation that requires the cooperation of all Member States.

Let me conclude by continuing to look at the future from the perspective of Sustainable Development Goal 4 and leaving no one behind. Sierra Leone, a strong advocate for education, remembers the children in the Gaza Strip and other parts of the occupied Palestinian territory who have been denied access to learning due to the ongoing hostilities and displacement. We stand in solidarity with those young minds, acknowledging the devastating impact of this prolonged conflict on their education. With this future generation in mind, we will continue to work towards a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict. Without a doubt, in order to rebuild or re-engage the mind, let alone the land, there must be a ceasefire.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): I thank Senior Coordinator Kaag and Mr. Moreira da Silva, Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services, for their informative and sobering briefings.

Gaza's agony continues. Japan is appalled at the ever-increasing death toll, which has now exceeded 41,000, including many civilians, mostly women and children. We remain concerned that Israel's repeated evacuation orders have left nearly the entire population of the Gaza Strip squeezed into only 10 per cent of the land. Much of it is not fit for human habitation, and basic essentials such as food, clean water and sanitation are difficult to come by.

The swift, effective and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid is crucial if we are to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians. But that requires a safe operating environment, which Gaza unfortunately does not have. While Japan welcomes that humanitarian pauses have led to a successful round of the emergency polio vaccination campaign, it is gravely concerning that humanitarian access remains severely constrained due to insecurity and long delays.

Israeli attacks in densely populated areas continue unabated. The recent air strike on a school in Nuseirat

killed six United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East staff members.

Japan deplores the casualties among aid workers, who are working tirelessly to deliver the necessary relief supplies to the people of Gaza. We are frustrated and deeply disappointed that our appeal for protecting humanitarian personnel and United Nations staff has not been heard and that their lives continue to be cut short. That is totally unacceptable, and actions need to be taken in order to make real changes on the ground. United Nations staff and partners must be able to safely carry out their duties. Let us be clear — compliance with international humanitarian law is not a matter of discretion, but an obligation for all Member States, including Israel.

Japan praises the efforts, led by Ms. Kaag and her team, to increase the flow of aid through multiple corridors and to improve coordination and access. We also note that the mechanism established by resolution 2720 (2023) is consulting with key parties and within the United Nations to ensure preparedness for a ceasefire by pre-positioning supplies and utilizing all aid routes into Gaza. Those facts show that Ms. Kaag's mandate and her reporting to the Council under resolution 2720 (2023) remain critical. Japan expresses strong support for the renewal of her reporting mandate and will actively participate in Council discussions to that end.

As stated by many of our colleagues around this table and echoed by voices around the world, a ceasefire in Gaza is the only path towards peace, security and stability in the region. Japan continues to extend our strong support to the diplomatic efforts by the United States, Qatar and Egypt towards an immediate ceasefire, the release of the remaining hostages and the delivery of humanitarian aid at scale in Gaza. At the same time, a ceasefire will be only the first step towards a sustainable peace in Israel and Palestine. Ultimately, only a two-State solution can finally resolve this tragic conflict.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I thank Ms. Kaag and Mr. Moreira da Silva for their briefings.

The adoption of resolution 2720 (2023) represented a glimmer of hope for the people of Gaza last December, and we are truly appreciative of Ms. Kaag's tireless efforts over the past eight months. Unfortunately, the situation on the ground remains beyond desperate. Despite endless appeals by the international community,

military tactics are still being used to deny essential services to the Gazan population. It is heart-wrenching to see the people of Gaza suffer acute hunger, with famine conditions affecting more than 1 million people.

Eighty per cent of the population have faced repeated evacuation orders, complicating the extremely insufficient aid deliveries taking place. Entire communities have been crammed into so-called humanitarian zones, which are regularly targeted by the Israeli military. Markets, schools, mosques, churches, hospitals, health clinics, roads, water mains and electricity lines have been destroyed. More than 70,000 tons of explosives have been dropped onto the Strip in the past 11 months. The official toll stands at 41,000 killed and 95,000 wounded.

It is deeply troubling that those who are dedicated to assisting the most vulnerable are at risk of becoming targets themselves in Gaza and the West Bank. Less than two weeks ago, a clearly marked World Food Programme convoy in Gaza came under fire from the Israeli forces. On 9 September, a fully notified and deconflicted United Nations convoy, carrying 12 staff members for a polio vaccination campaign, was rammed with tanks and bulldozers, and shots were fired. On 11 September, a school of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Nuseirat that was sheltering 12,000 people was struck by missiles. Thirty-four people lost their lives, including six UNRWA workers. That incident is the latest in a long line of attacks that have, this year alone, resulted in the deaths of approximately 200 United Nations and humanitarian staff in Gaza. The repeated targeting and intimidation of the United Nations in Gaza is deeply concerning.

If there is to be any cessation of the destruction and unabated violence in Gaza, we, the members of the Council, must demand and ensure the full implementation of all Security Council resolutions, adherence to international law and accountability. Countries with influence over the parties must also continue to strive to bring the bloodshed to an end.

The full and immediate implementation of the International Court of Justice provisional measures is an essential first step, particularly as they relate to the unhindered facilitation of humanitarian assistance and the cessation of attacks against the civilian population.

We stress that humanitarian assistance must never be up for negotiation. It is a legal obligation enshrined in

the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols Additional. States providing military support must also ensure that their armaments are used in a manner that is consistent with international humanitarian law.

As we approach the one-year mark in this dreadful conflict, the Council must not reduce itself to simply commenting helplessly on the catastrophe. I repeat — a permanent ceasefire is needed without further delay. Nevertheless, that would just be the first step out of the nightmare. The road after that will be an even more arduous one. However, although we still cannot see the light at the end of this very dark tunnel, peace must never be regarded as an unattainable goal. On the contrary, we must never give up. We must redouble our efforts to make sure that, once the conflict is over, we lay the foundations to secure a just and lasting peace, a peace based on a two-State solution along the pre-1967 borders, addressing the legitimate aspirations of both sides, with Jerusalem as the future capital of two States living side-by-side in peace and security, in line with all the relevant Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters.

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria): I must begin by addressing a matter of grave concern. The recent loss of six staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Israeli air strikes is not merely condemnable — it is a stark reminder of the perilous erosion of international norms that we have long laboured to establish. Such incidents, along with attacks on other humanitarian personnel, including the World Food Programme convoy, strike at the very heart of the principles enshrined in international humanitarian law. We stand at a critical juncture. As Mr. Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of UNRWA, wisely observed, the longer impunity prevails, the more international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions will become irrelevant. That is a path we cannot afford to tread.

I thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag and Under-Secretary-General Moreira da Silva for their briefings. I commend Ms. Kaag for her efforts in implementing resolution 2720 (2023). That resolution, born of noble intent, sought to ensure the unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza's starving population. However, nine months on, we must confront an uncomfortable truth — the mechanism we established, while now operationally sound, has not yielded the intended impact.

The figures are before us as a reminder. The stark reality is that daily aid deliveries have decreased significantly since the adoption of resolution 2720 (2023), last December. According to United Nations data, only 62 trucks entered Gaza daily during the first 10 days of this month, as compared to 97 trucks in December 2023, before the resolution was adopted. There were more than 500 trucks last year. That is not a logistical shortcoming. It is the manifestation of a deeper, more intractable political impasse deliberately caused by the Israeli authorities. We must recognize that our well-intentioned efforts to address a political crisis through purely logistical or humanitarian means have proven insufficient. In that context, I must emphasize again and again that a ceasefire in Gaza, without conditions, is not merely desirable; it is imperative.

Even in these dark times, there are glimmers of hope. The recent polio vaccination campaign, which, by 13 September, had reached more than 560,000 of the total 625,000 children in Gaza, is a testament to what can be achieved if there is political will. We commend the work of the World Health Organization, UNICEF and particularly UNRWA towards that achievement. We also commend the work of Ms. Kaag and her team. That achievement demonstrates what is possible when there is political will and when there is effective coordination between United Nations agencies and international donors. It underscores several critical points.

First, while law and order have deteriorated in Gaza, that cannot justify the low level of humanitarian aid. The current situation is the result of the occupying Power's policy. Its cooperation is pivotal in facilitating humanitarian efforts, not opposing them by administrative means. For example, why have the 11 United Nations Office for Project Services members of staff been unable to reach Gaza for months now?

Secondly, inter-agency coordination is essential for effective action in Gaza.

Thirdly, UNRWA's role is indispensable, with its staff at the forefront of crucial initiatives. Again, that was highlighted during the polio vaccination campaign.

Fourthly, early-recovery projects must be prioritized to prevent the further deterioration of living conditions for Gazans. While polio is preventable through vaccination, other diseases may not be. We must act before it is too late.

The path forward is clear, although challenging. Fulfilling the mandate of resolution 2720 (2023) requires not only a ceasefire but also the restoration of stability in Gaza and the implementation of a comprehensive and well-coordinated reconstruction plan. Central to that effort must be the empowerment of the Palestinian Authority to govern Gaza effectively. The international community bears a weighty responsibility. It is incumbent upon us to work tirelessly towards achieving a ceasefire and laying the ground for a more stable, prosperous future for the region.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): Mozambique thanks the Slovenian presidency for convening this important briefing.

We highly value the updated information offered by Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Under-Secretary-General and Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza. Her briefing today gives us a picture of a gloomy humanitarian situation in Gaza, in the light of resolution 2720 (2023), of 22 December 2023. We wish to reiterate our strong support for Ms. Kaag and her team. We praise their devoted work for the Palestinian people, that is to say, for our own common humanity. We thank Mr. Moreira da Silva, Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services, for his briefing and for the work in Gaza and Palestine carried out by him and his team.

The Security Council's adoption of resolution 2720 (2023) is a testament to our collective recognition of the severe suffering faced by the civilian population in Gaza and the urgent need for coordinated efforts to provide relief and support. Regrettably, those Council efforts have not been matched by the action of the conflicting parties. Nine months after the adoption of resolution 2720 (2023), the situation in Gaza has worsened. The humanitarian crisis has deepened. And the resolution that we adopted in December is far from achieving its intended results.

In that regard, the prevailing situation continues to be a matter of great concern. It continues to demand our profound reflection and action, as this is one of the biggest humanitarian crises, and our inability to address this crisis adequately constitutes a blight on our conscience. From escalation to escalation, the conflict has been claiming more lives, it has been causing more displacement and it has been inflicting widespread and indiscriminate destruction of civilian infrastructure. In

short, an immense and horrendous tragedy has befallen the people of Gaza, with no end in sight.

We note, in that regard, that this degree of insecurity has a direct and negative impact on the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need, as it hinders the safe mobility of humanitarian workers on the ground.

The reconstruction of Gaza is a critical and urgent task, especially after 11 months of intense conflict and destruction. But we are also conscious of the fact that given the current state of conflict, the reconstruction of Gaza is a challenging undertaking, to say the least. The conflict poses a permanent risk to any reconstruction effort. Residences, schools, hospitals, health wards and places of refuge are a target of war and destruction. We can hardly speak of reconstruction under these circumstances.

As Council members, we must shoulder the obligation and responsibility to change the course of events. We must continue to work for the cessation of hostilities and a ceasefire. They are an urgent imperative for peace in Gaza and in the region. Only this option can pave the way for a sustainable plan of reconstruction, as it is clear that reconstruction without peace is not viable.

The recent humanitarian pause that has enabled the vaccination of children against polio, constitutes a clear indication that a ceasefire and peace are possible if the warring parties have the political will to follow the path of mutual accommodation and peace. That is why we place our hopes in and are encouraged by the diplomatic efforts of the United States of America, Egypt, Qatar and other countries of the region, aimed at finding a negotiated solution leading to a permanent ceasefire.

Mozambique wishes to underscore once again that the vision of a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, as full members of the United Nations, must continue to guide our collective efforts.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Senior Coordinator Kaag and Executive Director Moreira da Silva for their sobering briefings and for all of their efforts to get assistance to the Palestinian people in Gaza.

At the outset, let me reiterate my outrage and President Biden's outrage, at the death of Ayşenur Ezgi Eygi, an American citizen shot and killed in the

West Bank last week. No one should have to put their life at risk for simply attending a protest or freely expressing their views. This horrific tragedy should never have happened. We will continue to demand details and access into Israel's investigation and press for accountability regarding the circumstances that led to Ms. Eygi's death. I also offer my sincere and heartfelt condolences to her family and friends. Her death, like that of so many others over the past year, was tragic and unnecessary. We must not grow numb to human suffering, no matter whose suffering it is or where it occurs.

Notwithstanding the efforts of Senior Coordinator Kaag, her United Nations colleagues and humanitarian workers on the ground, the situation in Gaza remains catastrophic. Children are dying, suffering from preventable illnesses and missing school. Thousands have lost parents, relatives, teachers and friends — and have the physical and psychological scars to show for it. In recent weeks, there have also been numerous attacks in which United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers have been injured or killed. We offer our deepest condolences to the families of United Nations personnel killed and recognize the tragic and unprecedented toll this conflict has taken on the United Nations family.

Many of these incidents were preventable. We will continue to raise the need for Israel to facilitate humanitarian operations and protect humanitarian workers and facilities, such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) school, targeted by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) last week in Nuseirat. We have also been unequivocal in communicating to Israel that there is no basis — absolutely none — for its forces to be opening fire on clearly marked United Nations vehicles, as recently occurred on numerous occasions. The IDF is a professional military and knows well how to ensure that incidents such as these do not happen. The United States therefore expects that the IDF's leadership will implement fundamental changes in the way the IDF operates, including changes to its rules of engagement, and will take steps to fix the obvious shortcomings in how the deconfliction procedures are implemented.

At the same time, we continue to see Hamas hiding in, taking over and otherwise using civilian sites to conduct operations and pose an ongoing threat. There is no clearer evidence of Hamas's total indifference to Palestinian civilians in Gaza. For their sake and that

of innocent people on all sides of this conflict, this must stop. All sides to the conflict must adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians.

These recent incidents underscore, once again, the urgency of reaching a ceasefire with a release of hostages, as the Council called for in resolution 2735 (2024). That is the best way to ensure humanitarians can safely and effectively carry out their life-saving work and massively increase the flow of humanitarian assistance to those who desperately need it. Until such a ceasefire is reached, we continue to work hard towards that end. It is vital that Israel cooperate with the United Nations in order to improve humanitarian access and humanitarian conditions, generally. Palestinian civilians in Gaza have endured far too much suffering.

We are pleased that the first round of polio vaccinations in Gaza has been largely successful, reaching 90 per cent of its target population. And we commend the humanitarian community and all participating United Nations agencies for their life-saving work. We thank them for their commitment and their sacrifice. We also encourage the continued cooperation between Israel and the humanitarian community in order to make this campaign happen. This level of cooperation should be the norm, not the exception. Indeed, the polio campaign is evidence that this can be done, that life-saving assistance can get to those in need without undercutting Israel's security. And so, we call on Israel to invest just as much energy into the broader humanitarian effort in Gaza as it did for this first round of the vaccination campaign.

Three weeks from today, we will mark a grim milestone — one year since Hamas's barbaric 7 October attacks and one year since 1,200 citizens from Israel and many other countries were massacred and hundreds more taken into the tunnels beneath Gaza, where many still wait in captivity today. They must be released immediately to their families. We mark one year since the civilians of Gaza first began to bear the brunt of a terrible conflict, set in motion by Hamas. It bears repeating that it is manifestly in the interest of Israelis, Palestinians and civilians in every country in the region for this desperation and this devastation to end, for there to be a ceasefire. We continue to work with Egypt and Qatar in order to find a way forward in the negotiations that will be acceptable to both parties.

But as hard as we are going to work on texts and creative formulas, this is ultimately a question of political will — whether or not leaders on both sides are prepared to recognize that enough is enough — and that the time has come to make some hard choices and some difficult compromises to end this carnage. We urge all Council members with influence over Hamas to join others in pressing its leaders to stop stalling, make these compromises and accept the deal without delay. Lives depend on it. The future depends on it.

We remain committed to a two-State solution that would allow Israelis and Palestinians to live side by side in peace and security.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): At the outset, I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's briefing and I express our appreciation to Senior Coordinator Sigrid Kaag for her update on the implementation of the mandate given her pursuant to resolution 2720 (2023). I also thank Under-Secretary-General Jorge Moreira da Silva for his briefing.

The operating environment in Gaza has become extremely challenging and dangerous, primarily owing to the grave security situation. Humanitarian actors and United Nations personnel who continue to operate in Gaza do so at serious personal risk, as we have seen time and time again, including with the recent attack on the Nuseirat refugee camp, where six staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East were killed.

Indeed, this war is the deadliest for the United Nations, with 224 United Nations personnel senselessly killed. Guyana therefore applauds the unselfish and unflinching decision of those who press on in these unfathomable circumstances. It is unfortunate that the parties have to be continuously reminded of their obligations, under international humanitarian law, to ensure the protection of humanitarian actors. Those appeals have been to no avail, as evidenced by the continuing non-functioning of deconfliction and coordination mechanisms and the direct attacks and intimidation that many of them face. This must stop now.

Having examined the Senior Coordinator's update on the implementation of resolution 2720 (2023), as of 2 September, one sees tiny threads of optimism interwoven throughout the report. We note for example, that the Senior Coordinator has been able to engage the parties and other stakeholders at the highest political

level — resulting in improved access, enhanced logistical capabilities and the operationalization of the mechanism established by resolution 2720 (2023), *inter alia*.

While we commend the incremental progress, Guyana remains deeply concerned about assessments that show that the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains extremely dire. We note, for example, that ninety-six per cent of the population is facing acute food insecurity, civilian infrastructure continues to be destroyed — with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reporting significant damage increases since July, and violence and obstruction continue to impede humanitarian aid workers' ability to support those in need.

Most important, and foundational to all humanitarian efforts, a ceasefire appears to be elusive. Guyana believes that there will be a deal for a ceasefire only when there is sincere concern for the protection of civilians, including the persons taken hostage on 7 October. As of now, that concern is largely absent, despite narratives to the contrary.

Turning now to the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, this will be a monumental task with heavy financial implications. But let us not forget that the destruction of Gaza is not because of a natural disaster. It is Israel's doing. We are all familiar with the consistent spate of military operations against the Gaza Strip by Israel prior to 7 October and the resulting destruction of civilian infrastructure. The pattern of financing and refinancing reconstruction in Gaza is unsustainable and the international community, including the Council, must contemplate measures to end this cycle so that Palestinians are not left behind in the global quest for sustainable development. Guyana believes that the only viable reconstruction plan is one that includes a road map to the two-State solution, with the relevant security guarantees.

Against that backdrop, Guyana reiterates the following appeals.

First, we call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and for an end to all hostilities in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Guyana is prepared to work with fellow Council members both to mandate the permanent cessation of hostilities in the occupied Palestinian territories and to activate the relevant provisions of

the Charter of the United Nations in order to ensure compliance with this mandate.

Secondly, we demand the immediate and unconditional release of all persons taken hostage from Israel on 7 October. We reiterate that the taking of hostages is a war crime. We also call for the release of Palestinians detained in Israeli prisons without charge. In both cases, persons have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, to be free from torture and other forms of ill treatment and to be afforded humanitarian visits. Under no circumstance are they to be arbitrarily detained.

Thirdly, Guyana calls on Israel to comply with its obligations under international law, including the Geneva Conventions, and adhere to the demands of resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023), 2728 and 2735 (2024). We further demand Israel's compliance with all of the International Court of Justice orders directed at it, in response to its war in Gaza.

Finally, we demand that the highest priority be given to the protection and preservation of civilians. This necessitates, *inter alia*, improved humanitarian access, proper functioning of deconfliction mechanisms and the setting up of real safe zones for displaced persons. This war has gone on for far too long, and nothing justifies the horrors that have been perpetrated against innocent men, women and children in the name of self-defence. Civilians of Gaza are not just casualties of war but, in fact, victims of a senseless ideology in which one party refuses to see the other as it is — human beings desiring to live in peace and security. The Council must rescue the two-State solution because it is the only potent solution to the Palestinian question. I pray we all live to see it.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I join others in thanking Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator Kaag and Executive Director Moreira da Silva for their briefings.

The United Kingdom strongly supports the Organization's tireless efforts to scale up aid into Gaza and pays tribute to them and the whole United Nations community for their work under increasingly difficult circumstances. As Ms. Kaag said, her briefing was sober and sombre. It could not be otherwise, describing an intolerable humanitarian situation in Gaza. As we heard, more than 41,000 people have now been killed, tens of thousands more are injured, 17,000 children are without parents, and 101 civilians remain hostage

in Gaza, subject to horrific conditions for almost a year. We also remain concerned about the risk of wider regional escalation. We condemn the Houthi attack over the weekend, and we reiterate our demand for an immediate ceasefire and for Hamas to release all hostages.

We welcome the news that the first round of the Organization's polio vaccine campaign in Gaza has now concluded, facilitated by Israel's implementation of agreed tactical pauses. Despite the challenges, including the attack on a United Nations vaccination convoy last week, this shows that deconfliction can work where there is political will.

First, we now need to see this capacity for deconfliction applied to the wider humanitarian operation. Israel has committed to flood Gaza with aid, but that has not materialized. This is unacceptable.

Secondly, mass Israeli evacuation notices and the use of heavy weaponry mean that nowhere is safe in Gaza. We join the Secretary-General's call for compliance with international law, especially the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in attacks. We are horrified by the further killing of aid workers. As mentioned by my colleagues, just last week, we heard appalling reports of 18 people, including six staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), as reported by the Secretary-General, killed by an Israeli military strike on the Al-Jaouni school-turned shelter. In total, 300 aid workers have been killed in this conflict, and we once again express our condolences to their families and their loved ones. We reiterate that humanitarian workers must be allowed to carry out their work safely.

Thirdly, the United Kingdom will continue to play a leading role in addressing this humanitarian crisis, including through our renewed funding for UNRWA and support for other aid agencies providing life-saving relief, as well as continued advocacy.

We are all rightly focused on the immediate priority of securing a ceasefire and hostage-release deal. We fully support United States, Qatari and Egyptian efforts and call on both Israel and Hamas to take the deal on the table. But we must also consider what comes next. There will be an enormous task in helping those in Gaza to rebuild. Early recovery will include clearing unexploded ordnance and rubble and providing essential services. The rebuilding of Gaza

must be accompanied by the rebuilding of hope — hope for an end to this cycle of violence, hope for long-term peace and security for Palestinians and Israelis alike. That can be achieved only with a two-State solution, which affords Palestinians their inalienable right to self-determination alongside security for Israel.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank Senior Coordinator Sigrid Kaag and Executive Director Moreira da Silva from the United Nations Office for Project Services for their detailed and sombre briefings.

At the outset, my delegation commends the improvements achieved by Senior Coordinator Kaag and her team, including the implementation of the mechanism established by resolution 2720 (2023), on the Cyprus maritime corridor through Ashdod port and the Jordan land corridor. We also appreciate the work of Ms. Kaag's Office in contributing the massive polio vaccination campaign throughout Gaza. We hope that Senior Coordinator Kaag keeps updating the Security Council on the implementation of her mandate for humanitarian aid and reconstruction in Gaza, which is critical even after the current hostilities cease.

While we once again condemn in the strongest terms the horrendous terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October, it is deeply regrettable that, due to the continuing Israeli military operations targeting civilian and humanitarian infrastructure, the repeated evacuation orders and the total breakdown of law and order, the delivery of humanitarian aid in Gaza has been seriously hampered. It is now clear that, without a fundamental change in the political stance of the direct parties, the logistical advancements cannot achieve the intended results of resolution 2720 (2023).

Under international humanitarian law, it is the legal obligation of the parties to this conflict to protect humanitarian workers and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians. The dangerous incident at a checkpoint in Gaza on 9 September is unacceptable, wherein a United Nations convoy sent to deliver polio vaccines, already approved by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), was held at gunpoint for more than 7 hours. We call on the parties to this conflict, especially Israel, to implement every measure to prevent similar incidents. Deconfliction and notification mechanisms must be respected.

We are also deeply troubled, once again, by repeated Israeli air strikes on civilian infrastructure,

including last week's attack on a United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) school, reportedly killing 18 people, including women and children, as well as six UNRWA staff members. We fully sympathize with the condemnation, frustration and anger expressed by Secretary-General Guterres in his recent statement.

The massive polio vaccination campaign shows what is urgently needed to bring about humanitarian improvements in Gaza — an immediate ceasefire or, at least, temporary humanitarian pauses. The Council adopted resolution 2735 (2024) three-months ago, calling upon parties to accept and implement the terms of the deal still on the table. It is profoundly disappointing that, despite the ongoing pressure on Hamas to accept the deal and on Israel to stick to its conditions, we are not seeing a finalization of an agreement regarding an immediate ceasefire and release of hostages, combined with a massive influx of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

However, even before the finalization of a deal or an implementation of a ceasefire, humanitarian aid must be expanded throughout Gaza. It is a miserable reality that since May, when the IDF began its operations in Rafah, the volume of humanitarian assistance into Gaza has remained far below even the minimum needs of 2.3 million people, most of whom cannot afford commercial goods. Denial of so-called dual-use items by Israel must be fully explained and the criteria must be transparent and reliable. As skin infections run rampant, we are deeply concerned that even items for basic hygiene, like soap, are being denied entry into the Gaza Strip. Israel must demonstrate to the rest of the world that it is actually doing its best to facilitate humanitarian aid to the Gazan people.

I would like to conclude my statement by reiterating a simple principle — all Security Council resolutions should be implemented without any delay, without any excuse. Both Hamas and Israel need to secure a ceasefire agreement, which should serve as the starting point for a permanent ceasefire and critical reconstruction efforts, as provided by resolution 2735 (2024), alongside the active participation of a reformed and strengthened Palestinian Authority, with the long-term vision of the two-State solution.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Senior Coordinator Sigrid Kaag and Executive Director Moreira da Silva for their briefings. China commends the Senior Coordinator and humanitarian

agencies for their efforts to expand humanitarian deliveries to Gaza over the past nine months. We support Ms. Kaag's continued reporting to the Security Council.

As we have heard from the briefers, despite the four resolutions adopted by the Council, the International Court of Justice orders on provisional measures and the herculean efforts of the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies, the humanitarian situation in Gaza has been steadily worsening, and violations of international law, in particular, international humanitarian law, have continued without stop. Just last week, a United Nations vehicle transporting polio vaccines, approved by Israel, was forcibly detained for nearly eight hours, during which shots were fired. Also last week, six United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) employees were killed in an air strike.

China strongly condemns such appalling attacks on humanitarian agencies and personnel, which are unacceptable. UNRWA is mandated by the General Assembly to provide relief for Palestinian refugees and is a pillar of strength for humanitarian operations in Gaza. Even at the most perilous of times, the Agency has not abandoned Gaza and to date, 240 of its staff have perished in the line of duty. We pay the highest tribute to all the humanitarian workers who continue their work and convey our deepest condolences over the deaths of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. We call on Israel to investigate in earnest all attacks on humanitarian workers and to hold the perpetrators accountable.

The successful conduct of the polio vaccination campaign is telling proof that when the parties show political will, scaling up humanitarian operations in Gaza is perfectly achievable. China renews its call on Israel to fulfil its obligations under international humanitarian law by putting lives and the spirit of humanity first, lift the blockade, open all crossings, abandon restrictions on humanitarian deliveries, cease and desist from attacking and suppressing the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies and allow access for the safe and unimpeded operations of those agencies — and it must do so without delay.

We are nearing the first anniversary of the conflict in Gaza. Over the past year, despite repeated strong joint international calls for a ceasefire and the cessation of killings, Israel has not halted its military operations, which have led to the death of more than

41,000 Palestinian civilians. That is alarming. It is beyond belief. The Security Council has the primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security. Why has it been unable to stop this human tragedy — the worst of its kind to this day?

An analysis shows that had the United States not stood in the way on all those occasions, the Council could have adopted a resolution demanding a ceasefire soon after the conflict erupted. Had the United States not shielded one side time and again, multiple resolutions of the Council would not have been flagrantly rejected and defied. We urge the United States to show a responsible attitude, use the significant influence it holds over the party and take tangible actions to persuade Israel to cease its military operations without delay, as demanded by the Council resolutions, in order to give the long-suffering Palestinian people a chance to live. China supports further action on the part of the Council to put out the flames of war, mitigate the humanitarian disaster and bring peace to the region as soon as possible.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Senior Coordinator Kaag and Executive Director Moreira da Silva for their briefings and renew my country's support for their efforts.

Ecuador supports the efforts that the Office of the Coordinator is making with all parties to advance in the opening and reopening of additional crossings into Gaza in order to ensure the urgent increase in aid, and we value the efforts made to gain entry to Gaza of critical humanitarian items for health, waste management, education, water supply, sanitation and hygiene.

As of 28 August, the work of the Office of the Coordinator has facilitated the entry of more than 27,000 tons of aid. The mechanism established by resolution 2720 (2023) is operational. What is lacking, without a doubt, is the political will to make possible the entry of aid in the quantities necessary to alleviate the terrible situation of the civilian population in Gaza.

More than 11 months have passed since the beginning of the war following the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas, which Ecuador once again condemns, and it is now more than 8 months since the adoption — during the Ecuadorian presidency — of resolution 2720 (2023), in which the Council demanded the parties to allow, facilitate and enable the immediate, safe and unimpeded delivery of large-scale humanitarian assistance to the civilian population in Gaza.

Despite the efforts made by the Coordinator, her task force and other actors, it has not yet been possible to ensure the unimpeded provision and distribution of humanitarian aid at scale so as to ensure access to food, water, sanitation, electricity, telecommunications and medical services for the people of Gaza.

Resolution 2720 (2023) also requires the parties to take the necessary measures to ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel and to protect and respect them. Unfortunately, there are regular reports that this requirement, reiterated in resolution 2730 (2024), is not being met.

My country therefore calls once again for the full and immediate implementation of resolution 2735 (2024), which will make possible an immediate ceasefire, the release of hostages, the entry of sufficient aid into Gaza and the safety of humanitarian personnel. Ecuador appreciates the efforts that continue to be made to that end.

Until that moment arrives, however, it is necessary to continue preparations for the ceasefire in order to ensure the pre-positioning of supplies, the use of all aid routes to Gaza and the creation of an environment conducive to humanitarian work. My country appreciates and supports the activities that the Office of the Coordinator is carrying out to that end.

I conclude this statement by calling on all actors in a position to do so to contribute to the mechanism established by resolution 2720 (2023) and by thanking the countries that have already done so. The humanitarian work continues despite all the difficulties and is a beacon of hope in the midst of war. It is our collective duty to support it.

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

First, I want to thank Ms. Kaag and Mr. Moreira da Silva for their work and for their briefings today.

Today I will focus on political will, or the lack thereof. Both briefers spoke about it and so did several members of the Council.

Ms. Kaag concluded her July briefing (see S/PV.9678) by underlining that there is no substitute for political will and that there is no substitute for the full respect of international humanitarian law. In fact, today she and Mr. Moreira da Silva repeated that a mechanism cannot replace a lack of political will. Indeed, today's

briefing and the humanitarian catastrophe on the ground, unfortunately, continue to confirm that both have been in very short supply throughout the duration of this sad conflict. It confirms that nothing can replace the absence of Israel's political will to ease or help ease the suffering of civilians in Gaza.

In December 2023, the Council showed strong political will to alleviate humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. It adopted resolution 2720 (2023), which mandated a mechanism and a senior coordinator, with a focus on humanitarian aid and the reconstruction of Gaza. Nine months later, the mechanism is operational, the Coordinator has been committed, yet the main purpose of the resolution — the delivery of humanitarian aid at scale — has not been achieved for lack of political will and non-compliance with international humanitarian law.

Corridors have been established and additional crossings opened, yet some are largely or completely non-operational, including Rafah. Obstacles, uncertainty and unpredictability keep dictating aid delivery. In Gaza, challenges continue to mount — from attacks on deconflicted shelters and convoys, evacuation orders, food insecurity, diseases, breakdown of law and order to the destruction of basic infrastructure. We condemn recent incidents, including the attack on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) school-turned shelter.

We have to end the sense of impunity for non-compliance with international humanitarian law — as if civilians could be killed, maimed, bombed, tortured, displaced and starved under the eyes of the international community and the Security Council. That is unacceptable.

There have been a few glimmers of hope. We welcome the medical evacuations that took place last week and the first round of the polio vaccination campaign, which was carried out by the World Health Organization, UNICEF and UNRWA, with Israel's support. When there is political will, the civilian population can be protected and can be taken care of.

This war has passed the limits of the conceivable, of human suffering and of the international order we trust. Yet even now, more than three months since the adoption of resolution 2735 (2024), we see an absence of political will to implement it and to finalize the ceasefire deal. What is growing, I sense, is the political

will in the Council to do more to ensure that a ceasefire is implemented.

We are approaching 7 October, which will mark a year of this tragic conflict. This is not an opportunity but a duty for the Security Council to show political will and determination in order to help end it.

It is time for the Security Council to ensure compliance with its resolutions. The way forward for us is a cascading approach — to exert pressure to ensure a ceasefire that holds; to rebuild life in Gaza — from security, education, health and psychosocial services to garbage collection; to immediately start the time-bound political process and implementation of the two-State solution; and to reconstruct Gaza, which, unfortunately, represents a long-term project. The Palestinian Government should be at the centre of these efforts and plans.

The political will of the international community to rebuild Gaza can only be effective in parallel with the political will of Israel to engage in a political process leading to its security and mutual recognition. No other solution to the situation in Palestine is acceptable for the international community.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Danon (Israel): First, I would like to thank Ms. Kaag and Mr. Moreira da Silva for their briefings.

As we gather here once more to discuss the humanitarian situation in Gaza, I cannot help but reflect on the narrowness of these discussions. We speak, as if by habit, about aid deliveries, food and medicine. And yet, there is hardly a mention of the hostages — of our people still held captive in the most brutal conditions imaginable. The six hostages executed in cold blood, whose faces the members of the Security Council all saw last time we gathered here (S/PV.9717), were kept in a tunnel whose entrance was hidden beneath a child's bedroom.

We all must ask ourselves how much of the aid ends up fuelling the very tunnels that imprison the innocent. How much — if any — of the aid reaches the hostages? How much is stolen by the Hamas terror machine, never reaching the Palestinians?

Let me be clear: Israel's humanitarian efforts during the war are unparalleled for a country that

underwent its most tragic day and has since been forced to go to war. We have gone above and beyond our obligations, aiming to improve the well-being of a civilian population embedded within the enemy.

The statistics are there for all to see. While they differ from the terrorist-supplied statistics, we urge the Council and the United Nations to stick to the facts. Over 1 million tons of aid have been delivered via more than 50,000 trucks. There have been nearly 1 million land crossings, providing vital supplies and assistance to the people of Gaza. Hardly a fraction of the crossings has ever been stopped, and 800,000 tons of food and aid have crossed into Gaza under Israeli coordination.

We have also acted dynamically in response to the changing circumstances. The polio vaccination campaign, run in collaboration with UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO), is well under way. As of 10 September, over half a million Gazan children had been vaccinated. We appreciate our partners at UNICEF and the WHO for their efforts. Despite the slander, the noise and the panic, we have clearly demonstrated our willingness to work with cooperative agencies, with those who truly care about the welfare of civilians and wish to work meaningfully with us. Our cooperation with UNICEF and the WHO has been productive. Together we have responded to the needs of Gazans as they arise, adapting to the humanitarian situation in real time. We also value the ongoing cooperation with Senior Humanitarian Coordinator Kaag and her team.

But we must draw a line — we cannot work with everyone, and we will not work with those who do not care for civilians, but only care to harm Israel. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Gaza has become nothing more than a cartel, fostering hatred and prolonging misery in Gaza. UNRWA in Gaza does not assist, it enables. It enables the very forces that keep Gaza in a state of despair. We have documented proof of UNRWA staff involved in the Hamas-led atrocities of 7 October. Earlier this year, we provided more than 100 names and military identity documents of terrorist operatives currently employed by UNRWA in Gaza to Commissioner-General Lazzarini.

That list is part of an ongoing process and does not yet reveal the full extent of the infiltration of UNRWA in Gaza. Yet some here continue to fund the Agency as if it were neutral, as if it were part of the solution

and not part of the problem. As many mentioned today, just last week, on Wednesday, 11 September, our forces conducted a strike on terrorists operating inside a building that was once a school. After we were accused by a few dignitaries of killing local UNRWA workers in the strike, the Israel Defense Forces requested that the Agency provide the details and names of the workers so that we could review the claim, as any liberal democracy would do. No answers have been provided by UNRWA thus far, despite repeated requests. We, however, have confirmed several terrorists who were eliminated in the strike, including Muhammad Adnan Abu Zayd, Yasser Ibrahim Abu Sharar and Ayad Matar. Each of those terrorists were Hamas military operatives, and each of them was also employed by UNRWA. They had a day job with UNRWA and a night job with Hamas.

The most effective way to improve the humanitarian situation is clear: the removal and dismantlement of the Hamas terror organization — the cause of the suffering, the monsters who bear sole responsibility. Defeating Hamas will allow the people of Gaza to shape their own future and rebuild their lives, working alongside the most successful and prosperous nations in the region. Let me be clear — with Hamas left in control, no meaningful discussion can take place about Gaza's future, not about its governance, its reconstruction or its prospects. The root of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is not a shortage of food or medicine. It is that Hamas continues to hold its people hostage in service

of their evil ideology. Our goal is very clear — to defeat Hamas, to secure the return of all our hostages and to allow Gazans to take control of their own future, free from the grip of terror of Hamas and free from the incitement and hatred that has poisoned their society for too long.

Once Hamas is gone, we want the people of Gaza to administer their own affairs, to rebuild their lives with dignity and in peace, alongside their Israeli neighbours. As long as Hamas rules Gaza with its hateful ideology, the people there will never have a chance at a decent life. As long as Hamas holds our citizens hostage, as our families wonder if their loved ones are dead or alive, the real humanitarian work cannot begin.

It is time for the Council to acknowledge the truth — the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is not due to a lack of food or medicine. It is the result of a lack of genuine leadership, poor management and the grip of a terror organization that values death over life. The defeat of Hamas is not just an Israeli interest, it is a humanitarian imperative.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.