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<i>President:</i>	Mrs. Baeriswyl	(Switzerland)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
	China	Mr. Fu Cong
	Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Japan	Mr. Yamazaki
	Malta	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sierra Leone	Mr. Kanu
	Slovenia	Mrs. Blokar Drobič
	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

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

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Mr. Samuel Žbogar, Representative of Slovenia, for his service as President of the Council for the month of September. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Žbogar and his team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

At the start of this month, I would like to recall that the Security Council is a forum for respect, both between the members of this body and towards its representatives. I request all participants to respect the appropriate norms in terms of tone, formulation and content in their remarks.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

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

I warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, to whom I now give the floor.

The Secretary-General: The raging fires in the Middle East are fast becoming an inferno. Exactly one week ago, I briefed the Security Council about the alarming situation in Lebanon (see S/PV.9733). Since then, things have gone from bad to much, much worse. As I told the Council last week, the Blue Line has seen tensions for years, but since October 2023, exchanges of fire have expanded in scope, depth and intensity. I stated that the almost-daily exchanges of fire by Hizbullah and other non-state armed groups in Lebanon and the Israel Defense Forces are in repeated violation of resolution 1701 (2006). I emphasized that the daily use of weapons by non-State armed groups is in violation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006).

And I stressed that Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected and the Lebanese State must have full control of weapons throughout Lebanon.

In the few short days since then, we have seen a dramatic escalation — so dramatic that I wonder what remains of the framework the Council established with resolution 1701 (2006). Israeli forces have conducted relentless air strikes across Lebanon, including on Beirut. The United States and France, with the support of several other countries, have proposed a temporary ceasefire to allow for the restart of negotiations. Israel refused that proposal and stepped up its strikes, which included the bombing of Hizbullah headquarters, in which its leader was killed. Hizbullah has continued rocket and missile attacks on Israel. And yesterday the Israel Defense Forces conducted what they stated were limited incursions into southern Lebanon.

United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) peacekeepers remain in position, and the United Nations flag continues to fly despite Israel's request that they relocate. I reiterate our deep appreciation to the military and civilian members of our United Nations peacekeeping force, UNIFIL, and to troop-contributing countries. The safety and security of all United Nations personnel must be ensured.

Civilians are paying a terrible price, which I utterly condemn. Since last October, more than 1,700 people have been killed in Lebanon, including more than 100 children and 194 women. More than 346,000 people have been confirmed as displaced from their homes, and Government estimates put that number as high as 1 million. Another 128,000 people — Syrian and Lebanese — have crossed into Syria. The United Nations has mobilized all its capacities to provide urgent humanitarian aid in Lebanon, and I ask the international community to fully fund our appeal. Since 8 October 2023, Hizbullah's attacks on Israel have killed 49 people, with more than 60,000 people displaced from their homes. It is absolutely essential to avoid an all-out war in Lebanon, which would have profound and devastating consequences.

Yesterday Iran launched approximately 200 ballistic missiles towards Israel. It stated that it was in response to the killings of Hassan Nasrallah, Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps commander Abbas Nilforoushan last week and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran in July. Millions of people across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory were forced to seek shelter. One

person was killed by the Iranian strikes, a Palestinian in the occupied West Bank. As I did in relation to the Iranian attack in April and, as should have been obvious yesterday in the context of the condemnation I expressed, I again strongly condemn yesterday's massive missile attack by Iran on Israel. Those attacks, paradoxically, do nothing to support the cause of the Palestinian people or reduce its suffering.

Almost one year has passed since Hamas's atrocious acts of terror on 7 October 2023 and the taking of hostages. Since last October, Israel has conducted in Gaza the most deadly and destructive military campaign in all my years as Secretary-General. The suffering endured by the Palestinian people in Gaza is beyond imagination.

At the same time, the situation in the occupied West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, continues to deteriorate, with Israeli military operations, construction of settlements, evictions, land grabs and the intensification of settler attacks, progressively undermining any possibility of a two-State solution. And, simultaneously, armed Palestinian groups are also using violence. Hamas has continued to launch rockets, and just yesterday seven Israelis were killed in a terror attack in Jaffa.

The events of the past week, the past month and, indeed, more or less the past year make it clear that it is high time for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, with the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, the effective delivery of humanitarian aid to Palestinians in Gaza and irreversible progress towards a two-State solution. It is high time for a cessation of hostilities in Lebanon, real action towards the full implementation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006), paving the way for diplomatic efforts for sustainable peace.

It is high time to stop the sickening cycle of escalation after escalation that is leading the people of the Middle East straight over the cliff. Every escalation has served as a pretext for the next. We must never lose sight of the tremendous toll that the growing conflict is taking on civilians. We cannot look away from systematic violations of international humanitarian law. The deadly cycle of tit-for-tat violence must stop. Time is running out.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

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

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and wish to reaffirm that he has France's utmost support and confidence.

France condemns the ballistic missile attacks that Iran carried out yesterday against Israel. France is committed to Israel's security and has mobilized its military resources in the Middle East to counter the Iranian threat. We call on Iran to desist from any action that could entail further destabilization and a regional conflagration. We also condemn the terrorist attack on civilians in Jaffa. France underscores the need to end the military escalation in the region, which only compounds the instability and intensifies insecurity, with civilians mainly bearing the brunt.

The situation in Lebanon is grave; military operations are being stepped up. The Israeli army has carried out ground incursions into Lebanese territory, in violation of Lebanese sovereignty; Hizbullah is continuing its attacks against Israel. As Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Noël Barrot pointed out during his visit to Beirut on 30 September, France is against any Israeli ground operations in Lebanon and calls for an end to indiscriminate attacks on civilians. France condemns Israeli air strikes, which have claimed a considerable number of civilian lives, and Hizbullah's attacks against Israel and its population. There must be a ceasefire in Lebanon as soon as possible.

France calls on the parties to promptly engage with the call and proposals made by the President of the French Republic and the President of the United States of America, with the support of our partners, with a view to achieving a ceasefire that paves the way to a diplomatic settlement of the conflict. Restoring Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity is critical. When it comes to southern Lebanon, the framework is clear: resolution 1701 (2006) must be implemented in full. That resolution is the framework that Lebanon and Israel have accepted for achieving lasting stability along the Blue Line and providing guarantees of security to both countries. The displaced must be able to return home in complete safety, in Israel and Lebanon alike.

France reaffirms its commitment to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and commends the efforts of the Blue Helmets. Through its contribution of

close to 700 troops, France is playing its full part. All parties to the conflict must guarantee the protection of the Blue Helmets. It is their duty to do so.

France also underscores the need for an immediate and lasting ceasefire in Gaza to allow full humanitarian access to the population, the immediate release of all hostages and the resumption of negotiations with a view to effectively implementing the two-State solution.

Civilians must be protected, always and everywhere. France reiterates the imperative of respecting international humanitarian law. It is time for the Security Council to show unity and to use one voice to call for de-escalation efforts in the region. Together with its partners, France is continuing its work in that regard.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): Let me start by thanking the Secretary-General for his briefing and by reiterating our full and unequivocal support to him and the United Nations as they seek to address this crisis.

The events this week are gravely concerning. Yesterday the Iranian regime launched more than 200 ballistic missiles at Israel. We categorically condemn that act of aggression, which escalates an already dangerous situation. As my Prime Minister said yesterday, Israel has our full support in exercising its right to defend itself against Iranian aggression.

We are deeply concerned about the prospect of further escalation in Lebanon and across the region. We have been clear: all our efforts must now be focused on stopping the cycle of violence. Iran and its allies across the region must exercise restraint and step back from the brink. We have been clear: my Foreign Secretary has consistently called for a ceasefire in Lebanon, by Lebanese Hizbullah and Israel, and the implementation of a political plan in line with resolution 1701 (2006). We have been clear: in Gaza, we need an immediate ceasefire and the release of the hostages. My Foreign Secretary has urged both Israel and Hamas to agree to the ceasefire deal on the table, to choose peace and bring the chaos to an end. Peace, not war, is the courageous option. It is also the best option to secure stability and security for Israelis, Palestinians, Lebanese and the wider region.

My Prime Minister has been working urgently to garner support for a political solution to this crisis. Only a ceasefire in Lebanon and Gaza would create the

space to agree a political plan consistent with resolution 1701 (2006) that allows for the sustainable return of displaced Israeli and Lebanese civilians to their homes. Innocent civilians in Israel and Lebanon have been displaced from their homes for too long already. The only way they will return is through a sustainable peace across the Blue Line. The conflict in Lebanon is causing devastating consequences for civilians, in particular women and children, and draws us closer to a wider regional conflict.

We cannot let Lebanon become another Gaza. With mounting civilian casualties and hundreds of thousands displaced people, all parties must do everything possible to protect civilians and fully respect international humanitarian law. A widening of the conflict is in no one's interests. The actions taken now will affect a generation. I call on all actors to step back from the brink and find a political resolution.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council and to thank the Slovenian delegation for its leadership in steering our work in September. I also thank the Secretary-General for his remarks. I reiterate our continued and unwavering support to him and thank him for his continued leadership and for being our moral compass while guiding the Organization through such difficult times.

Malta echoes the Secretary-General in condemning the continued and escalatory hostilities across the Middle East. The vicious cycle of violence in the Middle East, which will inevitably lead to a regional conflict, is extremely concerning. It must be brought to an end. Repeated strikes across Lebanon, an Israeli operation across the Blue Line, continued rocket fire into Israel by Hizbullah and the latest Iranian missile attacks on Israel, together with continued rhetoric and threats by the relevant parties to continue escalating hostilities, are only paving the way towards a bleak and desolate future for the entire region. Amid the worst displacement crisis in the country's history, we are witnessing yet another human-made humanitarian catastrophe. We cannot be silent in the light of that deterioration. Furthermore, we strongly condemn yesterday's missile attack by Iran on Israel. We call on Tehran to immediately halt such actions, which only contribute to expanding a complex web of tensions and push the entire region closer to the precipice. We also

condemn the terror attack in Jaffa yesterday, which killed six Israeli civilians and wounded nine others.

The Israel-Hamas war, the resulting humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the situations elsewhere in the West Bank and East Jerusalem are the core of the explosive situation in which we now find ourselves. Those are the devastating consequences of unchecked conflict. That human suffering is the high price that the people across the Middle East are paying on a daily basis. We stress that indiscriminate bombings, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and mass displacement are violations of international law. All parties must abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and prioritize the protection of civilians. Furthermore, we emphasize once again that Security Council resolutions are legally binding. They must be respected and implemented. Along the Blue Line, it is only through the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) that the displaced residents of Israel and Lebanon can be able to return to their homes in peace and security.

Furthermore, Lebanon must be free of weapons held by militant groups outside the authority of the Lebanese State. We stress the need to establish an area free of weapons, other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), between the Blue Line and the Litani River. Violations of Lebanon's territorial integrity and sovereignty, including through Israeli air strikes and overflights across Lebanon, must cease. A dramatic escalation in Lebanon will only move us further from that goal.

In the current crisis, UNIFIL also assumes a fundamental stabilization role. The safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers is paramount. Also, as a troop-contributing country, we call on all parties to protect and support the important mission of UNIFIL. In Gaza, we reiterate our call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, the safe return of hostages to Israel and the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. We continue to support all diplomatic initiatives aimed at de-escalation across the region, including the efforts of members of the Council.

In conclusion, the region is witnessing a descent into all-out war, despite months of warnings. The narrative for war must end, and the narrative for peace must begin. Most important, the Council must act in a united and decisive manner. Now is the time to speak with one voice and unequivocally call for an end to all

hostilities. The people of the Middle East are waiting for us. The world is waiting for us.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): We look forward to working closely with you, Madam President, during your presidency of the Council this month. I also want to thank the Slovenian delegation for the successful conclusion of its presidency during the month of September. I wish to thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing today.

Yesterday Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched nearly 200 ballistic missiles at Israel. Tragically, there has been one confirmed death, of a Palestinian civilian in the West Bank. Iran's stated intention was to avenge the deaths of two IRGC-supported terrorist leaders and an IRGC commander by inflicting significant damage and death in Israel. Thankfully, and through close coordination between the United States and Israel, Iran failed to achieve its objectives. That outcome does not diminish the fact that this attack, intended to cause significant death and destruction, marked a significant escalation by Iran. It does not negate the need for immediate Council action. This is a moment for the Council to speak out — with one voice — and condemn Iran for its unprovoked attack against another Member State and, equally important, to impose serious consequences on the IRGC for its actions.

In a broad sense, Iran was complicit in the 7 October 2023 attacks on Israel — through its funding, training, capabilities and support for the military wing of Hamas. And after Hamas's horrific attack, carried out nearly a year ago today, the United States sent a clear message to Iran: do not exploit the situation in ways that would risk propelling the region into a broader war. The IRGC flagrantly and repeatedly ignored that warning by encouraging and enabling the Houthis in Yemen to disrupt global shipping and launch attacks against Israel; by supporting militant groups in Syria and Iraq, which repeatedly attacked American forces engaged in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham; and by arming and encouraging Hizbullah after its former leader, Nasrallah, made the decision on 7 October to open a northern front against Israel.

There can be no doubt: Iranian support for regional proxies has directly contributed to the crisis in Gaza and Lebanon. At the centre of Iran's efforts since 7 October to sow chaos and threaten regional stability is the IRGC, which has repeatedly flouted and violated

the Council's resolutions. I cannot believe that I have to say this, but I will, because the IRGC and its allies are out and are peddling propaganda: the decision to launch nearly 200 ballistic missiles at Israel was not in any way defensive. The IRGC was not protecting Iran from threats from another Member State. Instead, the IRGC was acting in solidarity with Hizbullah after the killing of Nasrallah, who led a terrorist group that has the blood of thousands of Americans, Lebanese and Israelis on its hands.

I can think of no starker example of State support of terrorism than launching ballistic missiles to avenge the death of a terrorist leader. It is indefensible, and it is unacceptable. And we have a collective responsibility, as members of the Security Council, to impose additional sanctions on the IRGC for supporting terrorism and for flouting so many of the Council's resolutions. If the Council sits on its hands, what message will that send? I fear that silence and inaction will only invite the IRGC to repeat attacks like what we saw yesterday and on 13 April of this year, again and again and again.

We meet at a moment when there is a heightened risk of countries in the region being dragged into a broader conflict. That includes Lebanon. The intensified fighting over the past week has displaced nearly 1 million people, and we mourn the many civilians who have been killed. We also recognize that, for nearly a year, Israel has repeatedly called for the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), even as Hizbullah's attacks along the Israeli-Lebanese border have displaced Lebanese people and even as Hizbullah has blocked Lebanon's Government from exercising full sovereignty on its side of the Blue Line.

It is significant that, even in the aftermath of recent events, Israel is still calling for the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). Achieving that outcome through the hard work of diplomacy remains the urgent priority of the United States. We strongly believe that a diplomatic solution along the Blue Line, consistent with resolution 1701 (2006), offers the only path to durably de-escalate tensions and allow Israeli and Lebanese citizens to return to their homes with safety and security. As we pursue that diplomatic solution, we reiterate our call on all parties to protect civilians. We also underscore our support for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and emphasize that all parties must ensure that UNIFIL personnel remain secure.

We are also committed to doing everything possible to end the war in Gaza, where Palestinian civilians have been caught in the crosshairs of war and where a dire humanitarian crisis persists. That is why we are working to bring about a ceasefire deal with the release of hostages, consistent with resolution 2735 (2024). The events of the past week should send an unambiguous message to Hamas's leadership, which continues to cower in tunnels beneath Gaza: Hizbullah and Iran will not rescue them.

The only path forward is a ceasefire agreement. We must double down on diplomatic solutions that would ensure the safety of people across the region. As we do so, there should be no doubt — the United States will continue to support Israel's right to defend itself against Hizbullah, Hamas, the Houthis and any other Iranian-supported terrorists. Of course, how Israel defends itself matters. We continue to make clear that measures must be taken to minimize civilian harm.

As President Biden emphasized following yesterday's attack, the United States is fully supportive of Israel. Our actions have been defensive in nature. Let me be clear: the Iranian regime will be held responsible for its actions. And we strongly warn against Iran — or its proxies — taking actions against the United States or further actions against Israel.

This moment of great risk is a test of the Council. It is imperative that we unequivocally condemn Iran's attack and demand that it cease its support for terrorism in the region. People in Israel, in Gaza and the West Bank, in Lebanon and across the region deserve a durable peace. And it is far past time for the Council to hold Iran accountable for fanning the flames of war.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank Slovenia for its able leadership as President of the Council during the month of September. Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate you, Madam President, on assuming the presidency for October. I express my deep gratitude to the Secretary-General for his briefing today and his tireless efforts for peace in the Middle East.

This is a moment of reckoning for the Security Council. Resolution 1701 (2006) has been violated by all parties on the ground. A broader regional war that has the potential to bring devastation not just to Lebanon and the region, but also far beyond, is dangerously knocking on our door. Our repeated calls for urgent

restraint have been ignored. Both regional stability and the Council's credibility are now in jeopardy.

Let there be no misunderstanding: it was Hamas's brutal attacks in broad daylight that set this escalation in motion. However, neither 7 October nor the ensuing response give any actor the right to violate the international norms and institutions that the United Nations and the global community have built over decades, including international humanitarian law, Security Council resolutions and the sovereignty and territorial integrity stipulated by the Charter of the United Nations. The Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, must unite and act.

This is not like any other situation. The conflict has the potential to broaden and deepen, involving many countries, without clear limitations in geography, and with far-reaching implications for international politics, economics and even humankind as a whole. That demands more than passive condemnation. The Security Council must do something significant now to prevent the situation from plunging deeper into the abyss. The very *raison d'être* of the Security Council is at stake here. Indeed, now is the time for the Security Council to draw a firm line in the sand. No actor should be given a green light of impunity, or a blank check to operate far beyond the rule of law. We cannot afford to be paralysed by frustration or helplessness.

Let me conclude by fully echoing the statement made by the Secretary-General yesterday:

"I condemn the broadening of the Middle East conflict, with escalation after escalation. This must stop. We absolutely need a ceasefire."

Mrs. Blokar Drobič (Slovenia): First, Madam President, allow me, on behalf of Ambassador Žbogar and our entire team, to sincerely thank you, and other members, for your kind words, and also to congratulate you and your team for assuming the presidency of the Council for October. We wish you all the best.

We thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

In the past two weeks, we have met several times to discuss the situation in the Middle East. It has become increasingly clear that the current escalation is gaining its own, even more dangerous, momentum. The actions and reactions of actors involved are dragging the region further away from peace and closer to an all-out war. No single party can absolve itself of blame for the chaos

that is unfolding. This has become a crisis of retaliation and vengeance, where each strike fuels the next. Let me be clear — the region needs full and immediate de-escalation. For that to happen, a ceasefire on all fronts is urgent.

We condemn the recent escalation in the Middle East. That includes Iranian attacks on Israel. It includes Israeli attacks in Lebanon and escalation between Hizbullah and Israel. We call on Israel to revoke their ground operation in southern Lebanon. It also includes the continuous Israeli military operation in Gaza, and it includes yesterday's terror attack in Jaffa. We see deeply troublesome parallels — escalation from any side leads only to further violence, not security or peace. We want to underline — more violence cannot bring more stability and security in the region or beyond. War is not a solution to the problems in the Middle East. There is no military solution to the crisis. We call on all countries and actors to show restraint. Everyone with influence must exert it.

To Israel, Iran, Hizbullah, Hamas, the Houthis and others we say: the circle of violence must stop; retaliations must stop and escalations must stop.

We call on all parties to respect international law, particularly international humanitarian and human rights law. Respect for, and compliance with, international law are a must. The protection of civilians must be ensured at all times. We are dismayed by the impact of the escalation in Lebanon on civilians and condemn the high number of civilian casualties. Massive displacement in Lebanon will add an additional strain on a country that is already facing numerous challenges. Equally, this intensification of the conflict will not bring thousands of displaced Israelis back to their homes. And we must not forget about the entire population of Gaza being displaced repeatedly.

There is a dire need to recommit and fully implement resolution 1701 (2006). The Council must stand united in its call for de-escalation and a ceasefire. We repeat our call for the safety and security of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon to be ensured at all times. We also take this opportunity to express our full support to the work of the United Nations and its Secretary-General in this crisis. We appeal to Israel to reconsider today's announcement.

It is high time to strengthen the role of diplomacy and to prioritize peace. We support all initiatives that could bring stability for peace. Ceasefire negotiations

related to Lebanon and to Gaza are absolutely necessary. We underline that the Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The region is standing at a precipice. We are a step away from an all-out war that threatens not only the region but global peace and stability. In the complex history of the Middle East, the Council has made various attempts to shoulder its responsibility. It is now on us, the 15 countries seating at this table, to unite and call out for an all-out ceasefire.

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria): I would like to commend Slovenia for its remarkable presidency of the Council during past month. I also congratulate Switzerland for assuming the presidency for this month and assure it of Algeria's full support.

I extend my sincere gratitude to Mr. António Guterres for his comprehensive briefing, and I express Algeria's full solidarity, admiration and support for the Secretary-General following the incredible decision of the Israeli occupying authorities to declare him persona non grata. That decision reflects clear disdain for the United Nations system and the entire international community. For the Israeli authorities, no narrative and no truth exists except their own.

This meeting marks the third time in a single week that we have heard from the Secretary-General regarding the Middle East. It is testimony to the gravity of the situation. We stand perilously close to a regional conflagration, with tensions escalating daily.

The situation has further deteriorated owing to the Israeli aggression against Lebanon, beginning with the targeting of civilian electronic devices and progressing to indiscriminate bombardment and a ground invasion. That shows a blatant disregard for human life and a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law.

Following the attacks detonating civilian electronic devices, the Security Council convened at Algeria's request (see S/PV.9730). We endeavoured to have the Council send a clear a simple message — a call for immediate de-escalation. Regrettably, the Council failed in that attempt.

The Security Council's inability to act has exacted a devastating toll. Between 17 and 25 September, the Israeli military claimed more than 1,000 lives in Lebanon, including those of 87 children and 156 women, while displacing 1 million Lebanese people in the largest exodus from that country. Our inaction

has effectively granted Israel, under the principle of the right to self-defence, carte blanche to continue its rampage in Gaza and the West Bank and to escalate against Lebanon and pursue the bloody agenda of death and destruction. Now we are hearing a strange new rhetoric of "de-escalation through escalation". That represents a dangerous fallacy: escalation inevitably breeds further escalation for years to come. The upsurge in violence has derailed efforts to implement resolution 2735 (2024) and has severely compromised any prospect for calm in Lebanon and the wider region.

The Security Council must act with greater resolve if it is to be relevant, or simply be credible. As the highest authority responsible for maintaining international peace and security, it is unacceptable for its decisions, including resolution 2735 (2024), to be blatantly disregarded. Israel is not above the law, and we must hold it accountable. We need solutions — tangible, enforceable solutions — and no more rhetoric, which serves no one.

While we must not allow the escalation in Lebanon to overshadow the ongoing tragedy in Gaza, it seems that some have grown indifferent to the plight of the people of Gaza. Any effort to address the broader escalation in the region must begin with halting the brutal assault on Gaza. We need an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. Everyone, save for the Israeli occupier, is seeking to end the cycle of violence and is working towards that end. How long will the international community remain impotent in the face of Israel's defiance? How long will we fail to enforce the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), especially Israel's withdrawal from Lebanese territory, which is a key condition for Lebanon's stability?

The Middle East urgently requires the concerted action of us all in finding a lasting, sustainable solution to its crisis. The solutions demand an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab land in Lebanon and in Syria and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): Allow me first to congratulate Switzerland on assuming the presidency of the Security Council in this very challenging month of October. We pledge it our full support. We also thank Slovenia for its successful presidency in the month of September.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, for his insights on this deeply concerning matter.

The Middle East remains a region of intense and complex geopolitical dynamics, which have been shaped by historical legacies, power struggles and intricate relationships among various States and non-State actors and are significantly defining the region's landscape. The Palestine question — a central issue and one of profound impactful — continues to influence diplomatic relations and strategic interests, not only within the region but also globally. The ongoing conflict and the quest for a two-State solution continue to be pivotal in discussions about peace and stability in the Middle East.

Amid the ongoing Israeli strikes in Gaza, Beirut and beyond, Iran recently launched ballistic missiles into Israel, marking a sharp escalation in regional tensions. That action was reportedly in retaliation for the recent killings of Hizbullah and Hamas leaders by Israeli air strikes. Those military acts further exacerbate the prevailing regional tensions and may indeed trigger more conflicts involving other countries, with potentially unthinkable implications.

In that context, we recall that, during the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session, world leaders expressed deep concern about the escalating conflict in Gaza and its potential spillover into Lebanon. Both the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly urged Israel to cease hostilities and pursue a diplomatic resolution to prevent Lebanon from becoming another conflict zone like Gaza.

Precisely six months ago in this Chamber, we raised serious concerns that ongoing retaliatory attacks between Israel and Iran could significantly escalate regional tensions and potentially lead to a full-blown conflict between Israel and Iran. Regrettably, that is now fast becoming a sad reality. Those retaliatory attacks are shaping the foreign policies and security strategies of States of the region and their allies outside the region. While recognizing the right of States to self-defence, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, we express our deep concern about the recent Iranian strikes. In the light of the prevailing situation, it is imperative that all the parties involved, including Israel and Iran, strictly adhere to international legal norms to prevent further military confrontation and

maintain regional stability. All the parties involved must exercise restraint and approach the situation with wisdom and prudence. The Council must continue to closely monitor the situation and take appropriate action to deter additional threats, while safeguarding international peace and security. Furthermore, the Council must actively engage all the parties concerned to prevent any miscalculations that could lead to broader conflict in an already volatile region. Such an escalation would have devastating consequences for civilians who are already suffering in the occupied Palestinian territory, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the broader Middle East. Indeed, we should not forget the human costs of the deepening conflict.

The prevailing situation is a matter of great concern and demands our profound reflection and immediate action, as it represents one of the most severe humanitarian crises of our time. With each escalation, the conflict generates more casualties, displacement and destruction of infrastructure, exacerbating the unimaginable human tragedy throughout the conflict zones. Seeking a sustainable solution in the Middle East region is of paramount importance. Stability in the Middle East is vital for the security and development of all States in the region, including Iran and Israel. We therefore reiterate our consistent appeal to Council members to redouble their efforts and influence towards that noble goal, in full compliance with all relevant international norms, including resolutions, decisions and other instruments of the United Nations. Let us strive for peace, understanding and cooperation in the Middle East, mindful of the fact that acknowledging the legitimate concerns of all the parties involved is a crucial step towards fostering stability and harmony in diversity.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): Allow me to congratulate Switzerland on its assumption of the presidency and to thank Slovenia for its successful presidency. I also thank the Secretary-General for his sobering briefing on the urgent and rapidly deteriorating situation in the Middle East, including Lebanon, and express Guyana's full support to him, including for his untiring efforts.

The situation in the Middle East is barrelling towards a greater catastrophe. Israel continues to expand its military operations to Lebanon, while continuing its intense offensive in Gaza, and we are now witnessing a dangerous escalation of attacks between Israel and Iran. Amid the deadly tit-for-tat, tensions continue to

ratchet up on multiple fronts, and the entire region ticks like a virtual time bomb before our very eyes. Guyana urges all parties to step back and to immediately end all hostilities. The Security Council must act as one on the side of peace and respect for international law and the Charter of the United Nations. We must work to de-escalate the situation, and civilians must be protected on all fronts, at all times.

When we met last week to discuss Lebanon (see S/PV.9733), it was clear to every member of the Council that disastrous consequences could ensue from a wider armed conflict in that country. Today we are meeting amid reports of ground incursions by Israel into the sovereign territory of Lebanon, in violation of the Charter and resolution 1701 (2006) and following aerial bombardments from southern Lebanon on the heart of Beirut, resulting in more than 1,000 deaths in the past two weeks alone, not to mention the thousands injured and displaced. Guyana calls on Israel to uphold its obligations under the Charter and the wider body of international law, including international humanitarian law.

The people of Lebanon should be spared from the throes of a war of neither their making nor choosing, even as the country continues to grapple with difficult economic and political circumstances. The Council must act in the interest of international peace and security to prevent further tragedy in Lebanon, Gaza and throughout the Middle East.

Allow me to conclude with three urgent appeals.

First, Guyana reiterates its call on all parties to immediately cease the hostilities and to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law, in particular the protection of civilians. We must intensify our efforts for a ceasefire in Gaza, Lebanon and on every other front of operations. The Council must use all its available tools to contribute to a diplomatic solution and the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), which provides a clear path for resolving this conflict in a manner that ensures that peace and security can be enjoyed by the people of both Lebanon and Israel.

Secondly, we appeal to all parties to guarantee the safety and security of all United Nations and humanitarian personnel, including those attached to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). As is the case with all United Nations personnel, UNIFIL has operated under extremely difficult circumstances over the past year and is undoubtedly being placed in

a position of much greater risk as hostilities heighten in its area of operations. We must work to ensure that conditions remain conducive to the exercise by UNIFIL of its important mandate.

Thirdly, Guyana appeals for a renewed investment in peace over aggression. Let us enable the former at the expense of the latter as we strive to save the present generation from the continuing scourge of war. As Council members, let us act together in favour of the millions of civilians who are paying the heaviest price in these senseless wars. Justice and peace demand that we do no less.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): First of all, allow me to express our gratitude to Slovenia for its successful presidency in September and to congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency for October. We express our full support for your presidency. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his sobering and important briefing today.

Since October 2023, the world has witnessed an unconscionable spiral of violence in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria and beyond. The recent developments in Lebanon are particularly worrisome. We are seriously concerned about the ground operation conducted by the Israel Defense Forces in Lebanon. We cannot tolerate any further escalation. In that vein, Japan once again calls for an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hizbullah. All parties must demonstrate their renewed commitment to the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1701 (2006).

Japan pays tribute to the United Nations staff and personnel on the ground devoting themselves to a higher cause in severe circumstances. Their security must be ensured. We are now seeing the growing needs of the civilians in Lebanon, who are facing the onset of a displacement crisis. Japan therefore reiterates its call on all parties to immediately take all measures to prevent any further civilian casualties and to adhere to international law, including international humanitarian law, to prioritize the protection of civilians and to ensure humanitarian access.

The escalation in Lebanon will drag the Middle East into a wider conflict, as was seen yesterday. Japan is deeply concerned about the attacks conducted by Iran against Israel using ballistic missiles. Those attacks have caused the current situation in the Middle East to deteriorate further. We strongly condemn

such an escalation. The Secretary-General issued a statement that condemned the broadening of the Middle East conflict, and we reiterate his call for an immediate ceasefire.

In April, when the Council was convened (see S/PV.9602) following Iran's large-scale attack against Israel, many of us stated that it constituted an unprecedented development. However, we have seen what was previously unprecedented occurring twice within the past six months. That clearly shows that the Middle East is on a dangerous path that could lead to a catastrophe. We must not let that happen. In that regard, Japan amplifies our call to all parties to exercise maximum restraint, work towards de-escalation, protect civilians and work towards peace through dialogue and diplomacy. Neither the region nor the world can afford any more conflicts.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to congratulate Slovenia on completing its presidency of the Council in September, which is not an easy month for any presidency; we also congratulate Switzerland on assuming the presidency of the Council in October.

We thank the Secretary-General for his assessment of the situation in the Middle East, which has been severely exacerbated by an unprecedented spiral of violence in Lebanon and the broadening of confrontation to neighbouring countries in the region. We have also taken account of the positions of Israel and Iran as set out in the letters circulated yesterday (S/2024/712 and S/2024/713).

Unfortunately, the Middle East region is practically plunging into a new large-scale war before our very eyes, while the Security Council looks on helplessly. Israel's brutal military operation in Gaza continues, despite the demand from the overwhelming majority of the international community to put an end to it. Predictably, the spiral of violence has exacerbated the situation along the border between Lebanon and Israel and in Yemen and the Red Sea. However, instead of relying on diplomacy, the authorities in West Jerusalem unambiguously staked everything on the use of force to address their concerns. Their American accomplices are playing completely into their hands, paralysing the deliberations of the Security Council.

As a result, Lebanon has become the new victim of Israel's military machine. After heavy shelling of Lebanese cities, its southern neighbour launched

a ground operation in Lebanon. Furthermore, after a series of political killings, including the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, Chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau, Hizbullah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah and a number of other leaders of anti-Israeli movements, Iran, which for two months had been showing exceptional restraint, entered the confrontation.

The statements made by our Western colleagues gave us the impression that the only problem before the Council today is how to respond to Iran's missile strike. It is difficult to imagine what role the diplomatic process can be expected to play when the situation is viewed in that way. It is presented as though everything happened in a vacuum and as though nothing was happening, or did happen, in Lebanon, Gaza, Syria and Yemen. But something did happen, and it led to a new and extremely dangerous spiral in a widening Middle East conflict.

Russia resolutely condemns the attack on Lebanon and calls on the Israeli authorities to immediately stop using force and withdraw their troops from Lebanese territory. There is no justification for further civilian casualties, which already number in the thousands. We express our solidarity with the leadership and the people of the friendly country of Lebanon, who are being subjected to an armed aggression. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of those who have been killed.

We demand the full and comprehensive implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), which stipulates both Israel's obligations to cease all offensive military operations, withdraw its armed forces from southern Lebanon and end its occupation of Lebanese territories, and Hizbullah's obligations to withdraw the units north of the Litani River. The Israeli side must rigorously ensure the safety of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, which faces unforeseen hazards owing to the Israeli incursion. We would like to recall that endangering the life and health of Blue Helmets may amount to a war crime.

We also decisively condemn the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah. We deplore the fact that, in order to eliminate him, a residential neighbourhood in the Lebanese capital had 80 bombs dropped on it, each weighing one ton. As a result, six high-rise buildings were destroyed. Under those consequences, how can that be considered a targeted action? That political liquidation is fraught with disastrous consequences for

Lebanon and the Middle East as a whole. I am sure that West Jerusalem understood that, but it decided to go ahead and intentionally escalated the situation. That means that the Israeli side bears full responsibility for the subsequent escalation and its consequences, including the consequences for the population of Israel.

In accordance with its mandate to maintain international peace and security, the Security Council must compel Israel to immediately end the hostilities. It is also our duty to make every effort to create the conditions for a political and diplomatic settlement. In that context, we take note of the signal sent by Tehran that it does not wish to see a further spiral of confrontation.

In recent days, the Security Council has been frequently — and, it would seem, rightly — criticized for failing to put an end to violence in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict zone. At the same time, those who follow our work are well aware of the fact that 14 out of the 15 members of the Security Council would long ago have taken the necessary measures to force the parties to peace, thereby saving the lives of thousands of innocent women, children and the elderly. And Israel would not be able to act so brazenly and with such disregard for international law were it not for the unconditional and all-around protection of the United States. For the good of its Middle East ally, Washington has already cast its veto in the Security Council five times, and since the beginning of July, it has been intentionally trying to pull the wool over our eyes, touting its notorious “Biden plan” and its “quiet diplomacy” to broker a deal between Hamas and Israel. Frankly speaking, all that gives the impression that Washington is conducting those mediated negotiations with itself.

It is therefore quite symbolic that it was from New York that the Israeli Prime Minister gave the order to eliminate the Hizbullah leader, thereby starting a very dangerous round of regional escalation, and that command came right after he delivered an emphatically militaristic speech from the rostrum of the General Assembly. That is the kind of “well-tuned duet” that we are actually dealing with. And the problem, of course, is not only with moral and political support, but with multibillion-dollar supplies of weapons, which Washington continues to deliver as if nothing had happened and as if 42,000 Palestinians had not been annihilated. Needless to say, Israel does not need any mediation and is likely to proceed with its inhumane campaign.

As a result, the flame of this all-consuming conflict is spreading ever wider, engulfing more and more neighbours of Israel in the region. The great and most dangerous illusion here is that that fire will leave Israel unscathed. That fire is engulfing the lives of the Israeli hostages. And West Jerusalem is pretending that that is all part of their plan, while showing complete disregard for public opinion in Israel itself.

Another dangerous illusion is that Israel, possessing considerable military supremacy, plans to deal on its own with the crisis that it has provoked. It is becoming increasingly clear that the Israeli leadership is looking to trigger a direct conflict between its main regional adversary, Iran, and the United States and that it will spare no effort to do that. It is hard to say whether Washington understands that, but thus far, this show has gone on following the “Israeli script”. And if it reaches its finale, the conflict would escalate to an unimaginable level, threatening not only the Middle East, but the entire world. We are convinced that it is in our common interests to prevent such a scenario. I hope that our American colleagues will finally have an epiphany and fully realize the responsibility they shoulder as a permanent member of the Security Council.

The only way out of the current situation in the Middle East, in our view, lies in the use of the extensive toolkit that the Council has at its disposal. That toolkit allows us to effectively end conflicts and ensure the implementation of existing Security Council resolutions. Any other initiatives would serve only as a mitigating stopgap and would not be effective. We see no alternative to compelling the parties to the conflict to establish an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, to be accompanied by the exchange of hostages and prisoners and ensuring full and unimpeded humanitarian access to the Strip. That will help lay the foundation for relaunching a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question on an internationally recognized basis, founded on the two-State solution, which we all have consistently advocated. The second thrust of our efforts is also clear — an immediate ceasefire in southern Lebanon and a general rejection by all direct or indirect parties to the conflict to resort to force, provocation and hate speech.

Today’s news that the Secretary-General has been declared persona non grata in Israel is unheard of and utterly thuggish. It is a slap in the face not only of the United Nations, but all of us. We call on Council

members and the States Members of the United Nations to respond to that outrageous act.

Once again, the Council has the necessary toolkit to address the challenges. The only question is whether we have the political will. We have the will. Do other Council members? We urge everyone to answer that question as soon as possible.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): The Security Council has been convened in the most difficult of circumstances concerning the Middle East. Allow me, however, to congratulate you and Switzerland, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the Council and to assure you of Sierra Leone's fullest support and cooperation. Similarly, we congratulate and commend Slovenia on its efficient and excellent stewardship of the Council in the critical month of September. I also thank His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres for his important briefing on a tragically escalating situation. He can be assured of Sierra Leone's fullest support, always.

Sierra Leone is gravely concerned about the dangerous cycle of escalation in the Middle East, characterized by spiralling, tit-for-tat, ping-pong retaliatory attacks not in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations, including the application of its Article 51, which can lead only to mutually assured destruction if there is no immediate de-escalation.

Despite the resonant and resolute call for ceasefire by our leaders in the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session and the repeated calls by members of the Council for a ceasefire and restraint, it must be clear to all that we now have a regional conflict with multiple fronts — in Gaza; violence in the West Bank; in Lebanon, where its sovereignty and territorial integrity are being violated; retaliatory attacks between Israel and Iran; as well as with the Houthis in Yemen. Since the 7 October 2023 heinous attacks led by Hamas on Israeli civilians, which we have condemned as acts of terror, we are gravely concerned about the escalation of violence that has ensued.

In Gaza, the response by Israel has been characterized by collective punishment, widespread bombardments and alarming disregard for international humanitarian law, leading to immense civilian suffering and the destruction of critical civilian infrastructure. Only a few hours ago, it has been reported that 50 people were killed in southern Gaza. Gaza cannot

be forgotten, as the rate and pace of killings has not subsided, with over 41,000 people killed, and with resolution 2735 (2024) all but forgotten.

The protection of civilians must remain our top priority. Sierra Leone is deeply disturbed by reports of disproportionate military responses, the targeting of civilian infrastructure and the collective punishment of the population in Gaza. We urge all parties to respect the principles of distinction, proportionality and necessity, as enshrined in international humanitarian law. There can be no justification for the deliberate targeting of civilians or the destruction of civilian infrastructure that people rely on for survival. We continue to call for unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza. The blockade and siege have left civilians in desperate need of food, water, medical supplies and basic services. Humanitarian access, safety and aid must be allowed to flow to those who are suffering.

Recent events, including strikes in Lebanon, the killing of a Hizbullah leader and the reported land incursion by Israel, are deeply concerning. Those developments have heightened the risk of regional destabilization, and we call on all actors to show restraint, avoid further escalation and recommit to dialogue and compliance with resolution 1701 (2006). We urge the parties to comply with their obligations regarding the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the protection of United Nations peacekeepers and premises.

It is clear that today Israel and Hizbullah are at war. Sierra Leone has been concerned about the repeated exchanges of fire across the Blue Line since Hizbullah launched rockets into Israel on 8 October 2023, unprovoked. While the exchanges of fire were largely confined to the immediate vicinity of the Blue Line for a short period, we observed the gradual intensification along and, increasingly well beyond, the Blue Line, causing civilian casualties and infrastructure damage, the destruction of farmland and the displacement of tens of thousands of civilians.

Members of the Council including Sierra Leone have been expressing the risk of the danger of miscalculation, and a wider and devastating regional conflagration as a consequence of the conflict between Israel and Hamas. Today the Middle East is at war.

We note the declaration of Israel to return displaced residents, and a further declaration of Hizbullah on a ceasefire in Gaza. We express deep concerns over

the dangerous rhetoric relating to the achievement of respective military objectives by the conflicting parties. In that regard, Sierra Leone reiterates that military action is not the best course of action to achieve the stated objectives of the parties. Sierra Leone therefore calls on the parties to use diplomatic channels, including the United Nations good offices, to avoid further escalation and risking a war that will include actors outside of the region. The Council must now stand united in calling for the full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1559 (2004). All sides must agree to a ceasefire as a precursor to the resettlement of displaced residents in the south of Lebanon and the north of Israel, peacefully.

A letter dated 1 October 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council confirms what we all witnessed as reported by global news media, to the effect that

“the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran carried out a series of missile attacks against the military and security targets of the Israeli regime” (S/2024/713).

The leadership of Israel has vowed to further retaliate. Sierra Leone condemns all attacks that violate international law and the Charter of the United Nations, including, as I mentioned already, the blatant misapplication of Article 51.

We join the Secretary-General in condemning

“the broadening of the Middle East conflict, with escalation after escalation. This must stop. We absolutely need a ceasefire.”

The path to peace cannot be paved with violence. A sustainable solution can be achieved only through genuine dialogue and diplomacy, while addressing the legitimate rights and concerns of the conflicting parties, most particularly the aspirations of both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. That includes the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the right of Israel to security within its recognized borders.

In conclusion, Sierra Leone continues to call for the parties to consider the global implications of their actions and to recommit to a cessation of hostilities. We urge the Security Council to act decisively to halt the violence; enforce a ceasefire, the release of hostages and prisoners and the facilitation of access to humanitarian

aid; ensure accountability; and work towards a just and lasting solution that respects the rights of all peoples. Let us end the occupation of Palestine, as the International Court of Justice has called for, implement the two-State solution and choose a future of peace, stability and dignity for both Palestine and Israel. Sierra Leone stands firm in its commitment to peace, justice and international law.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I congratulate Switzerland on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month and thank Slovenia for its work in the presidency last month. I thank France for requesting this emergency meeting. I also thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing. I take this opportunity to reiterate China's resolute support for the Secretary-General's work. China rejects Israel's groundless accusations against him.

Over the past two weeks, the situation in the Middle East, and in Lebanon in particular, has taken a sharp turn for the worse. Following the remotely operated and simultaneous detonation of thousands of communications devices in Lebanon, Israel carried out several rounds of large-scale air strikes in southern and eastern Lebanon and launched a ground offensive and military incursion into Lebanon yesterday. Israel also launched intense air strikes against Syria. Iran has also concluded a series of missile attacks on Israeli military and security targets and sent a letter to the President of the Security Council explaining its position.

China is deeply concerned and extremely worried about the current grave situation and the possibility of further developments. We call for full respect for the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of all States, reiterate our opposition to all acts that violate the basic norms of international relations and condemn all violence and attacks against civilians. We share the position of the United Nations that any Israeli incursion into Lebanon violates its sovereignty and territorial integrity and contravenes the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006).

Since last October, the cycle of violent conflict has been repeating itself in the Middle East. Israel, in total disregard for the call of the international community for an immediate ceasefire, has been stubbornly advancing its military operations, resulting in the protraction and expansion of the conflict. At present, an all-out war is on the verge of breaking out. At this critical juncture, any inflammatory statements and provocative

actions are extremely dangerous and could easily lead to miscalculations and chain reactions, escalate the situation and even render it completely out of control. We urge all parties, in particular Israel, to exercise restraint and refrain from any action that could lead to further escalation of the situation.

The conflict has caused an unprecedented humanitarian disaster. As we have seen, Gaza has become a hell on Earth. In the meantime, in Lebanon, there has been massive destruction of civilian facilities, thousands of casualties and more than 1 million people displaced from their homes, including a large number of Palestinian refugees. We call on all parties to the conflict to respect the red lines of international humanitarian law and to effectively protect civilians. We support the efforts of the United Nations humanitarian system to take urgent action to ease the humanitarian situation in Palestine and Lebanon. China reiterates the importance of respecting the neutrality of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the importance of effectively ensuring the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers. United Nations assets and personnel should not be the target of armed attacks.

The Security Council bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Under the current circumstances, the Council must take urgent action and remain united in clearly and unequivocally demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. The Lebanese-Israeli situation must be de-escalated to stop the cycle of violence, and every effort must be made to prevent the spread of the fighting. We must urge the parties concerned to return to the track of political and diplomatic solutions.

With the current situation hanging by a thread, any procrastination would be irresponsible, and any rhetoric condoning further military adventurism would send the wrong message and could cause serious consequences. We hope major countries with influence will adopt a sincere and responsible attitude and earnestly play a constructive role to avoid further escalation of the situation.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, Madam President, allow me to congratulate your delegation on assuming the presidency of the Council this month and to reiterate our country's full support. I would also like to thank Slovenia for the excellent leadership of the Council during September. I would like to emphasize and reiterate my country's support for

the work of the Secretary-General on behalf of peace, as well as the efforts of all United Nations agencies in that regard.

I would like to thank France for requesting this emergency session so that the Council can consider the deteriorating situation in Lebanon and Israel — recent developments that make the Middle East extremely vulnerable. I thank the Secretary-General for his sombre briefing, for his appeal to the international community to mobilize the more than \$400 million in humanitarian assistance that Lebanon needs at this time and, above all, for his continued commitment to the de-escalation of the conflict and a ceasefire.

We must start by remembering that we are only five days away from the first anniversary of the unjustifiable and heinous Hamas terrorist attacks that led to the current spiral of violence in the region. The Palestinian cause cannot be used by Hizbullah and other extremist groups to vainly try to explain their acts of terrorism, such as the murder of children playing football in Majdal Shams last July.

Ecuador recognizes the inherent right to legitimate self-defence of the States Members of the United Nations in the event of armed attack, as enshrined in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

The escalation of violence that has been described for us, and which includes aerial bombardments and incursions, rocket launches, ballistic missile launches and acts of terrorism — which continue to endanger the lives and integrity of innocent civilians — must stop. Tens of thousands of people have been killed in Gaza, including women and children. Humanitarian law must be respected. Humanitarian workers must have every facility to carry out their work. Their lives must be respected.

The States involved, regional bodies and the international community as a whole must deploy every diplomatic and political strategy to bring about a cessation of hostilities. That responsibility falls most heavily on those with the greatest degree of influence over the parties to the conflict. Now is the time to take concrete decisions aimed at reaching agreements leading to a lasting and sustainable peace. Resolutions 1701 (2006), 1559 (2004), 2722 (2024) and 2735 (2024) must be complied with, without delay, as non-compliance constitutes a breach of international law. We must avoid another humanitarian disaster, leaving no pretext for those who wish further violence.

Ortega y Gasset said,

“It is false to say that we are defined by circumstances. On the contrary, circumstances are the dilemma in the presence of which we must decide. Our character is what decides us.”

Neither the collective responsibility of the Security Council nor the peace that is humankind’s highest value can be subordinate to the tensions and interests of geopolitics.

To conclude, I reiterate that Ecuador supports any initiative in pursuit of the restoration of peace and its sustainability.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Switzerland.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

Switzerland is extremely concerned by the latest developments in the Middle East. The risk of a regional war, about which we have been warning for almost a year now, is about to materialize. In view of the countless civilian lives at risk, it is imperative that all actors in the region immediately cease hostilities to allow for de-escalation, and that the Council fully assume its role.

The intensification of hostilities between Israel and Hizbullah, including reports of Israeli ground incursions, and the firing of some 200 ballistic missiles by Iran into Israeli territory are unacceptable. The same applies to the offensives carried out by the Houthis and other armed groups in the region. All those attacks must stop immediately.

Switzerland condemns the spiral of violence in recent weeks. It is endangering the lives of civilians throughout the region. Tens of thousands of civilians have been killed, including countless children. Several million have been forcibly displaced because of the hostilities. The civilian population is paying a heavy price for the military escalation in Lebanon, throughout the occupied Palestinian territory and in Israel.

Dialogue is the only way to avoid a regional war. Switzerland supports all efforts to find diplomatic solutions leading to an immediate end to the violence throughout the region. All parties, and those who have influence over them, must now show maximum restraint.

Switzerland calls on all parties to act within the limits set by international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries in the region must be respected.

Furthermore, the will of the Council is clear — all its resolutions must be implemented. That applies to the resolutions demanding a ceasefire in Gaza and calling for the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages. It also applies to the resolutions on maritime security in the Red Sea.

Similarly, we once again urge a return to a cessation of hostilities on both sides of the Blue Line, as well as an immediate recommitment to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). That resolution is recognized by all. It sets out a path for resolving the underlying causes of the conflict and enabling the populations of Lebanon and Israel to live in peace and security.

International humanitarian law must be respected by all parties, in all circumstances and irrespective of the legality of the use of force. That includes strict compliance with the principles relating to the conduct of hostilities, such as the distinction between civilians and combatants, proportionality and precaution in attack. Switzerland condemns all violations of international law that have taken place in recent days, including yesterday’s ballistic attacks by Iran on Israel. Switzerland also condemns all violations of international humanitarian law and all violence against civilians, such as yesterday’s terrorist acts in Jaffa and the increasing attacks by settlers in the West Bank.

Switzerland reiterates to the Secretary-General its support for the United Nations work and good offices in the region. That applies in particular to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon. UNIFIL, to which Switzerland contributes through the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, is currently working in an extremely dangerous environment to reduce tensions and ensure liaison between the parties. Switzerland also reiterates its full support for the work of the Secretary-General.

In addition, the United Nations, in collaboration with other organizations, is currently providing humanitarian aid to all civilians in need. We reiterate our call for the protection of United Nations personnel, in particular humanitarian and peacekeeping personnel.

There is an urgent need to put an end to the suffering of the civilian population and to re-establish dialogue in order to bring peace to the region. The responsibility of a Security Council united in its action for peace is clear.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Mr. Hachem (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I congratulate you, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month, and I thank Slovenia for its presidency of the Council during September. I would also like to thank France for requesting the holding of this emergency meeting, as well as to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his briefing and call. We express our solidarity with him and support his efforts.

We meet today in the Security Council as the entire Middle East is in flames. Lebanon is not well, and Gaza also is not well. Israeli military forces and rows of Israeli battle tanks and armoured vehicles are all along Lebanon's southern borders. The Israeli Government and its Cabinet have authorized the ground invasion of Lebanon, which started last night. That comes after 11 months of barbaric aggression that has spared no civilians, no civilian objects, no relief workers, no journalists, no children, no women and no older persons. Since 8 October 2023, Israel has killed or injured thousands of people in blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, international humanitarian law and all international norms and humanitarian principles. Therefore, what Israel is claiming about undertaking limited surgical military operations is untrue.

The damage to civilians and civilian infrastructure are immense. What took place in the village of Ain El-Delb demonstrates that. On 29 September, an Israeli air strike targeted a residential building, causing a massacre and claiming 71 victims, including dozens of women and children, all buried in a mass grave. That tragedy harkens back to previous Israeli massacres during its previous invasions and attacks on Lebanon, particularly the two Qana massacres of 1996 and 2006. Israel has reaffirmed time and again its utter disregard for international law despite many calls on Israel from all members of the Security Council in general, and Switzerland in particular, to abide by its obligations under international humanitarian law.

Words and complaints have lost their meaning and effect. How many times have we come before the Council and warned of the catastrophic situation along the southern borders? How many times have we sounded the alarm that this war could expand and become a regional one that includes many fronts? However, what is happening today — the killing, displacement and destruction — is unprecedented. It can no longer be tolerated or ignored. The policy of putting heads in the sand, fearing confrontation with Israel and deterring it is no longer useful. Children of southern Lebanon and the southern suburb of Beirut are sleeping on the streets. Mothers carry their children and flee the horrors of the air strikes and the extremely destructive missiles used against civilians. Israel has intensified its aggression and crimes against Lebanon and its capital, Beirut. On 23 September alone, Israel launched air strikes that claimed the lives of 569 people, including 50 children and 94 women. On 27 September, Israel assassinated the Secretary-General of Hizbullah, His Eminence Mr. Hassan Nasrallah. Throughout history, there was never consensus on a unified description of any military, political or revolutionary person. History is full of examples about such persons. The Council today is divided over the correct description. However, there is consensus among everyone that confronting the occupier is resistance.

As we have said time and again, and as His Excellency the Prime Minister said in his statement before the Council last week (see S/PV.9733), and as the Foreign Minister of Lebanon has said many times, the Lebanese people and its Government reject the war; they want the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), with all its provisions; and they want to deploy the Lebanese army along our southern borders, supported by troops from the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). That is the only solution for that senseless war and barbaric aggression.

We have expressed our willingness to strengthen the presence of the army in the south, and the Government has announced that it has opened the door for enlisting 1,500 new soldiers in compliance with resolution 1701 (2006). In that regard, I recall that Lebanon has agreed to the French-United States initiative, which Israel also agreed to but then rejected and instead annihilated it with a wave of killing and destruction that has been unprecedented in scale and violence. We also reaffirm the official position, as stated by the Prime Minister yesterday, namely, that we remain committed to the

call by the Presidents of the United States and France, supported by a number of friendly and sisterly countries, that we pledge to implement all the points contained in their statement, including an immediate ceasefire, in order to start looking into the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006); that we welcome the call and we pledge to implement it immediately; that upon a ceasefire, we are prepared to deploy the Lebanese army to the area south of the Litani River so that it can carry out its functions fully, in coordination with UNIFIL.

Today we are moving further and further towards an open, unrestricted regional war. The issue will be resolved by implementing political solutions based on the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy. The current situation might continue as long as resolution 1701 (2006) is not fully implemented and as long as the focus is on imposing military solutions instead of diplomatic solutions. Furthermore, the situation in Palestine might continue to become exacerbated and deteriorate, with more killing and destruction, unless resolutions of the United Nations are implemented, in particular resolutions 2735 (2024), 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), on the two-State solution and the establishment of the Palestinian State. The entire Security Council must shoulder its responsibility to prevent an implosion in the Middle East and help to exit from this dark tunnel.

Today Lebanon is facing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis that needs urgent humanitarian assistance. It is the only State that hosts 2 million Syrian displaced persons and 500,000 Palestinian refugees, and at the same time we have nearly 1 million Lebanese internally displaced persons. That is a precedent could barely happen again. Today we witness a humanitarian crisis, with 1 million internally displaced persons, of whom thousands are left on the streets without food, water or medication. Therefore, there is a need for assistance to face that catastrophe.

Yesterday, in cooperation with the United Nations, we launched an urgent appeal for \$426 million as a response to the humanitarian crisis. We would like to thank all those that contributed to assisting us from friendly and sisterly countries, as well as United Nations agencies, and we call on all stakeholders and all countries to contribute as well.

Our history with Israel has witnessed many invasions — in 1978, 1982 and 2006. All those invasions and occupations resulted in great devastation and the killing of thousands of civilians ended with the defeat

and withdrawal of Israel. Today's invasion will be the same, another defeat to be added to Israel's record of with Lebanon. The land of the south recognizes its citizens, and our citizens in the south are rooted in their land. The olive tree that was burned by Israel with white phosphorus will grow, will blossom and will bear fruit once again. That consecrated land will reject any occupier for however long it takes.

Lebanon today is stuck between the Israeli destruction machine and the ambitions of some in the region. The Lebanese people reject that fatal formula. Lebanon and the Lebanese people indeed deserve life.

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

Mr. Danon (Israel): Last night the Iranian regime launched a cold-blooded attack against 10 million civilians — Jewish, Muslim, Christian — men, women and children of every faith. In an unprecedented act of aggression, Iran fired almost 200 ballistic missiles, forcing millions of people into bomb shelters. Those scenes have not been witnessed since the blitz in London. That was a deliberate attempt to strike at the very heart of our society, targeting the most sacred places in Israel — holy sites, mosques, synagogues and churches. For Iran, there is no holy ground, no purity of life worth protecting. But even before the missiles rained down, the bloodshed had already begun. Just minutes before the assault, Palestinian terrorists opened fire on civilians, murdering seven innocent people — young women, mothers protecting their babies and tourists. That is the reality we face every single day — terror at our borders, missiles overhead and bullets in our streets.

The Council must understand the situation Israel is forced to live in. We are under attack. That was not just an escalation, it was a direct assault on our very existence. The world watched silently as Iran funded and directed attacks against us for the past year, arming and training their proxies for decades, and the international community sat quiet. The silence and the routine calls for de-escalation only emboldened Iran, and the result was last night's onslaught. Now the world must step up. Iran must pay a heavy price for that attack. Anything less is complicity.

Members must not be fooled by the fact that Israeli air defences performed near miracles last night, saving countless lives beyond imagination. We also appreciate our partners for their assistance in defending against

Iran's attack. Iran's failure does not diminish the evil behind their actions and intentions. What we witnessed was nothing short of pure, unrestrained evil. That was the largest missile assault in Israel's history. They have openly launched hundreds of missiles into civilian areas. Today the mask is off and their evil is now laid bare for all the world to see. The ayatollah regime has revealed its true nature, not just as the world's greatest sponsor of terror, but as an active direct aggressor.

For years, Iran has armed terrorist and tyrannical regimes. We all know their weapons are responsible for the deaths of countless innocent civilians all across the globe. From Europe's war zones to terror attacks in the Middle East, from embassies in Latin America to assaults on United States personnel, there is no corner of the world where Iran's bloodstained fingerprints cannot be found. It is not just Israel's enemy, but also an enemy of all civilized nations, an enemy of its own people whom it brutally oppresses and an enemy of all nations it works to destabilize.

Until now, it had largely operated in the shadows, using all its proxies — Hezbollah, Hamas, the Houthis — to carry out its dirty work. But last night that mask — the mask that its leaders wear in these very halls — was ripped away. Iran no longer hides behind others. It has proudly stepped into the open as the architect of chaos and destruction, and now the world can see its true face. Iran launched the largest ballistic missile attack in history, justifying it as a vengeance for the elimination of Hassan Nasrallah. That was the reason. In doing so, it relinquished any deniability, and it claimed full ownership over Hezbollah's actions. Iran said that was the reason for the attack. It was because of what happened to Hassan Nasrallah. Basically, Iran owns the deeds of Hezbollah today.

I would like to remind all Council members of some of Hezbollah's crimes against the world. In 1983, it bombed the United States barracks in Beirut, murdering 241 United States servicemen. That same year, it bombed the United States embassy in Beirut, murdering 63 people. In 1992, it bombed the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, killing 29 people and wounding 242. Two years later, in the same place — Buenos Aires, it bombed a Jewish community centre, murdering 85 people and injuring more than 300. Before 11 September 2001, Hezbollah was responsible for more American deaths than any other terrorist organization, not to mention the thousands of Lebanese people and Syrians that it brutally murdered at the altar of its tyrannical masters.

In the past year alone, since 8 October 2023, Hezbollah has launched over 9,000 missiles and rockets, over 1,000 anti-tank missiles and hundreds of attack drones which have made more than 70,000 Israeli civilians refugees in their own country. All the while, it has been attempting to infiltrate our communities to commit a 7 October 2023-style massacre. Behind every murder, every rocket launch and every plot stands the Iranian regime.

Let me be clear: Israel will defend itself. We will act. And let me assure the Security Council, the consequences Iran will face for its actions will be far greater than it could have ever imagined. I would like to ask the Council and the entire world: how would any of them react if faced with such an attack? What would any nation do if hundreds of ballistic missiles were raining down on its civilians, its cities and its places of worship? The scale of the attack is unimaginable, and yet Iran is determined to escalate the situation further. That is not just a threat to Israel, but also a threat to the entire world.

We will defend our people, and our response will be swift and decisive. Those who attack us will face serious consequences. For every missile fired, we will respond with strength. For weeks, I have sat in the Security Council warning of the growing threat Iran poses and urging Council members to take decisive action against that regime. I warned that Iran's desire for dominance would not stop at Israel's border. But the inaction of the Council has emboldened them, and now the missiles falling on Israel are the direct result of that failure to act. The time for complacency is over. The Iranian regime has shed all deniability. It is no longer a silent puppet master. It is a bloodthirsty aggressor, revelling in its violence and destruction. The world cannot afford to ignore that reality any longer. We demand immediate, crippling sanctions on Iran. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps must be designated as the terrorist organization it is.

Council members must not be fooled by the moderate Iranian President. I saw the way he was received here last week in meetings with clapping. Iran's policy is dictated by its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, and under his rule, the regime has grown more aggressive and murderous than ever. Iran's true face is one of terror, death and chaos. It does not care about life. It does not respect its own religion, and it has targeted its fellow Muslims without hesitation.

The time for empty calls for de-escalation is over. How can Council members do that? To equate Israel, a nation simply wishing to live in peace and acting in defence of its people with an aggressor bent on its destruction is not just wrong, it is a grotesque and immoral distortion of reality. This is not a conflict between two equal sides. This is a battle between a sovereign country defending its right to exist and a regime that seeks nothing less than Israel's extinction. And I repeat what I said last time, we have no border with Iran. We have no dispute with it. Council members should ask themselves why it spends so much money and energy to build those rockets and to attack us. What is the reason for that? Calls for de-escalation are a false symmetry, an absurd equivalence between the protector and the destroyer.

Tonight, the Jewish people will welcome the New Year. The past year has been the most challenging in our country's history, but we will prevail. In this coming year, we will not stop until all 101 hostages are back at their families' tables. Let the world understand: Israel will defend itself, and it will do so with justice and strength.

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

Mr. Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): We congratulate you, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month and thank you, Madam, for convening this emergency meeting to address the ongoing Israeli aggression against Lebanon and the critical situation in the region. We acknowledge Slovenia for its successful conclusion of the presidency in September.

For a year now, the apartheid and occupying regime of Israel has continued its brutality in occupied Palestine with full impunity. And now, the regime is extending its brutal, aggressive war to Lebanon and targeting innocent people day and night across the border and deep inside its territory. The regime is pushing the region to the edge of an all-out unprecedented catastrophe. Israel has no intention of pursuing peace or a ceasefire.

Regrettably, the Security Council has remained paralysed owing to the United States obstruction of any effective decision by this organ. The unwavering support provided by the United States, the United Kingdom and certain Western States to Israel has given

a carte blanche to that aggressive terrorist regime for all sorts of sinister behaviour.

Now more than ever, the regime has become a serious threat to international peace and security. The only way to prevent further escalation is clear: Israel must immediately cease its war on Gaza, and its attacks on Lebanon must stop.

As we informed the members of the Council in our letter yesterday, the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran launched a series of missile strikes targeting the military and security positions of the Israeli regime. Iran's action was in full accordance with its inherent right to self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and was a direct response to the regime's repeated acts of aggression against Iran, including the violation of Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity during the past months. Our invocation of the right to self-defence, followed by an extended period of restraint, reflects Iran's responsible approach to regional and international peace and security at a time when the illegal actions and genocide carried out by the occupying apartheid regime against the Palestinian people and its repeated military aggressions against Lebanon and Syria continue. Iran's missile strikes were a necessary and proportionate response to Israel's continued terrorist, aggressive acts over the past two months, which have included the violation of Iran's sovereignty, the assassinations of the political leader of Hamas in Tehran and Iranian citizens, the targeting and wounding of Iran's Ambassador to Lebanon and the recent assassinations of Mr. Hassan Nasrallah — the leader of the resistance and the Secretary-General of Hizbullah — and General Abbas Nilforoushan, an Iranian military adviser in Beirut.

I wish to mention the key facts that clearly demonstrate that Iran's action, taken in self-defence, is fully justified, lawful and firmly grounded in international legal principles.

On 1 April, Israel brazenly attacked Iran's diplomatic mission in Damascus, in blatant violation of international law, specifically the principle of the inviolability of diplomatic and consular premises. Iran immediately sought the Council's condemnation of those acts. What was this body's response? Nothing. Rather than condemning Israel's act of aggression, the Council merely called for Iran to exercise restraint and even refused to issue the press statement proposed by Russia. After 10 days of silence from the Security

Council, Iran had no choice but to use its inherent right under international law to respond to the severe violations.

On 31 July, Israel committed yet another act of aggression by assassinating Mr. Ismail Haniyeh, the political leader of Hamas and the former Prime Minister of Palestine, while he was an official guest of the Iranian Government in Tehran. That was a flagrant breach of Iran's national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Despite Iran's calls for action, the Council again failed to act. Meanwhile, several States, including the United States, urged Iran to maintain restraint, citing ongoing ceasefire negotiations. We heeded those calls for diplomacy, yet no ceasefire materialized and Israel only grew bolder.

Subsequently, we witnessed another heinous crime by Israel, that time through the detonation of communications devices, targeting the innocent people of Lebanon. A large number of innocent civilians were killed or injured, including Iran's Ambassador to Lebanon. That was yet another manifestation of State terrorism. Following that, Israel carried out a blatant act of terrorist aggression, using United States-supplied 1,000-pound bunker busters to assassinate Mr. Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hizbullah and a symbol of resistance against Israeli occupation and aggression in Lebanon. That brutal attack resulted in the martyrdom of numerous innocent people, including Hizbullah's leader and the Iranian General Abbas Nilforoushan, and also left many civilians wounded. The egregious act underscores once more the regime's continued reliance on violence and terror.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has consistently pursued peace and stability for the region and called for an immediate ceasefire and an end to civilian casualties — a position we have maintained for over a year. Yet experience has proven that Israel understands only the language of force. Diplomacy has repeatedly failed, as Israel views restraint not as a gesture of goodwill but as a weakness to exploit. Every instance of restraint exercised by Iran has only emboldened Israel to commit even greater crimes and more acts of aggression. Consequently, Iran's response was necessary to restore balance and deterrence. Israel must understand that every act of aggression that it commits will not go unpunished and will be met with consequences. That is the price that the regime must pay. Unlike that regime, which consistently considers innocent civilians and civilian infrastructure as

legitimate targets for aggression and massacre, Iran's response has targeted only the regime's military and security installations with its defensive missile strikes, because the Islamic Republic of Iran is grounded in ethical principles and the noble teachings of Islam and acts in full compliance with the principle of distinction under international humanitarian law.

The international community cannot afford to remain silent. We reiterate our call to the Council to respond with urgency and determination. The Council must intervene to stop Israel's continued aggression and war crimes against Lebanon, Gaza and Syria and to prevent the situation from escalating into a full-scale regional war. Furthermore, the Council must force Israel to comply with its obligations under the resolutions that the Council has adopted. Israel must fully implement resolution 1701 (2006).

We issue a strong warning against any further acts of aggression by the Israeli terrorist regime against our national security and vital interests. Iran is fully prepared to take further defensive measures, if necessary, to protect its legitimate interests and defend its territorial integrity and sovereignty against any acts of military aggression and the illegal use of force. In that regard, Iran will show no hesitation.

In conclusion, the regimes of the United States and the United Kingdom, notorious enablers of the Israeli regime, along with France, have once again cynically attempted to justify Israel's heinous crimes under the guise of self-defence, shifting the blame onto Iran. While the Israeli regime must be held accountable for the atrocity crimes, one cannot disregard the United States complicity in Israel's crimes. Israel's warmongering relies on the military support and political backing of the United States regime. American weapons constitute the greater part of the weaponry and ammunition that Israel uses in Gaza, and therefore the United States is implicated in every aspect of Israel's atrocities. The vast majority of bombs that Israel drops on Gaza and Lebanon are United States-made. The United States regime even provides Israel with jet fuel and has sent so many arms to Israel since 7 October 2023 that the Pentagon has struggled to find sufficient cargo aircraft to deliver the material. If there were even a shred of honesty in its concern for the loss of innocent people's lives in Gaza or Lebanon or for the spread of war across the region, it would readily strip Israel of the tools it uses to commit those atrocities. Yet its actions reveal its true intent: to embolden Israel's criminal actions.

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

Mr. Al-Fatlawi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Switzerland on assuming the presidency of the Council for this month and to wish you, Madam President, every success. I would also like to thank Slovenia for its efforts in presiding over the Council in the month of September. I thank the delegation of France as well for requesting this meeting.

I would also like to sincerely thank the Secretary-General, Mr António Guterres, for his briefing. We value his efforts and his position calling for calm and a ceasefire.

Holding meeting after meeting at the Security Council over the past year without achieving any tangible results to stop the continued Israeli attacks against the Palestinian people reflects the painful reality that the Council has been unable to take effective and resolute decisions to stop those violations, which have led to the continued practices by the occupation and the escalation of violence in the region. It is time for the Council to play its effective role in maintaining international peace and security, especially as Israeli attacks against Palestinian and Lebanese territories persist. According to the Charter of the United Nations, the Council must bear the primary responsibility for maintaining world peace. The Council must adopt binding resolutions to ensure an immediate ceasefire, as it has done in other conflicts around the world. If the Council fails to play its role and fulfil its basic tasks to maintain international peace and security, Israel will continue its violations without any real deterrent, leading to more instability and jeopardizing regional and international peace and security.

The international community, and the Security Council in particular, must reassess its policies regarding this conflict and take tangible steps to end the occupation and ensure the protection of civilians. The continued undeterred violations, acts of aggression and military expansion by the Israeli occupying forces push the region towards a wide-ranging regional confrontation that will lead to regional insecurity, significant human suffering and the spread of extremism and terrorism and will further complicate the situation. Failing to put an end to those crimes emboldens Israel to persist in its violations and military attacks. That situation not only aggravates the suffering of the Palestinian

and Lebanese people, but it also threatens peace and stability in the region as a whole. In the absence of any effective deterrence, the conflict worsens, and the risk of the region being dragged into a dangerous and widespread conflict increases. Furthermore, in the absence of decisive international intervention, the conflict has expanded to Lebanon, threatening an all-out war in the region.

The continuation of the Israeli occupation over the past 75 years, the flagrant violations that it has committed against the Palestinian people, its occupation of Arab territories in Syria and Lebanon and its repeated attacks all constitute blatant violations of international law and international humanitarian law. Those crimes and massacres increase the level of violence, including the blatant attack on the city of Beirut, which claimed the lives of thousands of Lebanese people, deepening wounds and aggravating the conflict in the region. The war has entered a new and very dangerous phase with more destruction, killing and displacement than what we have seen in the past few days, as occupation forces continue their acts of extermination and killing, which amount to war crimes and genocide, ignoring the provisions of international humanitarian law and humanitarian norms and acting without any deterrence or accountability. Israel puts forward false pretexts in the Council to defend its crimes. The deliberate mass killings of civilians by the Israeli occupation forces in Gaza, Lebanon and other occupied Arab territories constitute deplorable crimes that show the extent of the brutality and aggressive behaviour of the occupation authorities.

The international community now has legal, humanitarian and moral responsibilities that test our common humanity. The war launched by the Israeli occupation forces on the Gaza Strip is not an act of self-defence, as Israel claims. That claim is legally invalid. Israel took the path of vengeance and genocide, as confirmed by the horrifying numbers of Palestinian and Lebanese civilian casualties, including women, children, the elderly and even United Nations staff and their families — a dangerous and never-before-seen precedent.

The war on Gaza has expanded to include Lebanon. Most recently, we witnessed a new vicious attack that led to the assassination of the Hizbullah Secretary-General, Mr. Hassan Nasrallah, and other resistance individuals. The war could expand further to other countries of the region, which poses a serious threat to the stability of the

Middle East as a whole. That scenario could have grave repercussions that go beyond local conflicts. We could see a wider escalation that includes mutual attacks, which would be a serious threat to international and regional stability, especially if other regional Powers enter the equation and cause international interventions that would further complicate the situation. That would jeopardize political and social stability, aggravate humanitarian crises and lead to mass displacement and an increase in the number of refugees and internally displaced persons. That would also increase the pressure on neighbouring countries, even European countries. Such developments would have negative economic consequences, as economic activities would be disrupted. Poverty and unemployment rates would surge. Such tensions would lead to an increase in oil prices if maritime navigation routes and energy sources were affected.

Iraq condemns the statements and threats made by the Prime Minister of the Israeli occupying Power against countries of the region, because such escalatory statements fuel conflicts and push the region towards more tension and war. Such public threats are not only provocative, but they also constitute a clear violation of the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, which prohibit the threat of use of force against sovereign States.

In conclusion, Iraq expresses its full solidarity with the just cause of the Palestinian people. We strongly support their legitimate aspirations towards implementing their right to establish an independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Iraq also expresses its support for, and solidarity with, the Government and the people of Lebanon against the blatant and barbaric attacks that violate the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Aldahhak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Madam President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month. I thank your predecessor for his presidency and for conducting the work of the Council last month. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his presence and participation today in this meeting. We stand in solidarity with him in the face of Israel's hostile campaigns against him.

For the past few days, the Council has held successive meetings to discuss the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Palestinian people and the countries of our region. We would not have reached this point, and we would not be holding this emergency meeting, and perhaps other meetings in the upcoming days, had the Council shouldered its primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security since the beginning of the barbaric Israeli aggression against Gaza. During the high-level general debate, most of the leaders and representatives of Member States who took to the rostrum of the General Assembly called upon the Security Council to act immediately in order to stop Israel's barbaric aggression against the Palestinian people, cease the repeated Israeli attacks on the States of the region, implement its relevant resolutions, end the Israeli occupation of Arab occupied territories and bring to an end Israel's criminal practices, which have been going on for decades. Their statements reflected a genuine international will to put an end to the impunity of the Israeli occupation entity and its obsession with igniting wars and causing bloodshed. All those calls were met by the continuing criminal aggression in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon of the Israeli war criminals, who boasted about their disdain for international law and the Charter of the United Nations. They have been levelling accusations against our Organization and attempting to terrorize its representatives and agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

We are meeting today at a time in which our region is on the brink of an all-out destructive war that would spare no one. It is no longer acceptable for the Security Council's response to be limited to holding one meeting after another, without adopting any measure that could lead to a serious and tangible action. To be more specific, the reluctance of the United States to stop the Israeli madness and its willingness to support and encourage it and to prevent the Council from undertaking its role in maintaining international peace and security is what got us into this dangerous situation. The United States Administration cannot deny its responsibility by making statements of concern, warning of the danger of escalation and calling for restraint, while at the same time it is providing unlimited and multifaceted support to the Israeli occupation entity and vowing to protect it from accountability and ensure its impunity.

For the Israeli occupation authorities, the tens of thousands of lives they have taken, the bloodshed

they have caused and the infrastructure they have destroyed in occupied Palestine were not enough. They have continued to escalate the situation in the region and push it towards an all-out war by continuing their attacks on the countries of the region, including my country, Syria, where the Israeli occupation forces have launched repeated attacks targeting peaceful civilians, civilian infrastructure and residential buildings and even targeting diplomatic premises. The most recent attack, which took place early Monday morning, targeted with warplanes and drones a number of safe residential areas and neighbourhoods in the city of Damascus, leading to the martyrdom of three civilians, including one journalist, and injuring seven others and causing enormous property damage. A while ago, another Israeli aggression targeted a residential building in Damascus, which, based on a preliminary assessment, led to the martyrdom of three people and injured others.

In brotherly Lebanon, after the criminal occupation authorities used civilian communications devices to conduct mass murder, they mobilized their forces in preparation for a land invasion of southern Lebanon and carried out a treacherous and cowardly aggression in which dozens of bombs loaded with tons of explosives targeted a number of residential buildings in the southern suburb of Beirut with the aim of assassinating the Secretary-General of Hizbullah, Mr. Hassan Nasrallah, who had led an honourable Lebanese national resistance against the Israeli occupation.

All those different forms of the barbaric and brutal Israeli aggression against our region were also committed during the convening of the general debate of the high-level week of the General Assembly, thereby reflecting Israel's contempt for the Organization and the demands of its Member States. The so-called Israeli Prime Minister even boasted of taking the decision to attack the southern suburb of Beirut here in New York, after launching a propaganda campaign full of lies and misinformation in his statement, which the majority of delegations refused to listen to.

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns all the ongoing Israeli acts of aggression against the States of the region and reiterates its call on the Security Council to take immediate action to put an end to the Israeli impunity, which is inflaming the entire region and threatening regional and international peace and security. My country reaffirms its legitimate right to defend its people and territory by all means guaranteed

under international law. My country also reaffirms its full support for and solidarity with the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples. Despite the enormous challenges and burdens that Syria is facing as a result of the hostile policies pursued by Western countries in the service of Israel and despite the illegal coercive measures and inhumane blockade imposed on it, Syria will spare no effort to provide humanitarian assistance to its Lebanese brothers. The Syrian Government and civil society institutions have mobilized all their energy to assist all those coming from Lebanon — be they Syrians, Lebanese or third-country nationals.

Article 51 of the Charter stipulates the legitimate right of States to self-defence. That is an established right of peoples and States, which the Israeli occupation entity does not possess in any way, as confirmed by the International Court of Justice, because occupation and the aggression it represents is the basic crime that deprives its perpetrators of any rights.

The inaction of the Security Council enabled the Israeli occupation entity to cross all red lines, leading the Islamic Republic of Iran to exercise its right to legitimate self-defence, pursuant to Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and in response to the crimes perpetrated by the Israeli aggression. Iran's response followed a long period of restraint and attempts to prevent further escalation and was limited to military and security facilities. That demonstrates Iran's responsible approach to regional and international peace and security.

We were not surprised to hear the representative of the United States Administration and a number of its allies criticizing the Iranian response, as those States view the Charter of the United Nations as a tool that they use at will to target their opponents and protect their partners. We have repeatedly heard the representatives of successive United States Administrations presenting distorted and erroneous interpretations of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations to justify their acts of aggression against countries thousands of miles away, occupying their territories and looting their wealth under the pretext of protecting United States national security or combating terrorism, while denying other States their legitimate right to self-defence, to defend their immediate borders and to defend themselves against real aggression.

In conclusion, the representatives of the Member States who took the floor in the general debate of the

General Assembly in the past few days have spoken. It is now time for the Security Council to listen and take serious and urgent action to put an end to the human suffering in Gaza, stop the bloodshed in the region, put an immediate and unconditional end to the Israeli aggression against Palestine, Syria and Lebanon and end the Israeli occupation of Arab territories by implementing the relevant Council resolutions.

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

Mr. Massari (Italy): Let me first congratulate you, Madam President, for assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. I also thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and his work.

Italy firmly condemns yesterday's Iranian missile attack on Israel. We express deep concern about the ongoing developments and call on all regional actors to demonstrate restraint and responsibility. Avoiding any further spiral of escalation must be our shared and top priority, as must the prevention of another dramatic humanitarian crisis. Italy will continue to work towards a diplomatic solution for the stabilization of the Israeli-Lebanese border, including in its capacity as holder of the Group of Seven (G7) rotating presidency. In that regard, Italy underscores the G7 leaders' declaration of 25 September, calling for a 21-day ceasefire in Lebanon. And while we are gathering now, the Prime Minister of Italy is about to chair a G7 leaders' conference call to discuss the situation in the region.

Italy calls on all parties involved to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006) and invites the Security Council to consider making the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) more effective with a view to ensuring security along the Blue Line and allowing the displaced populations of northern Israel and Lebanon to safely return home. The

security of all UNIFIL personnel must be respected and fully guaranteed. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon must also be respected.

Italy calls for an immediate ceasefire in Lebanon. We will continue to work for a diplomatic solution, and we stand ready to assist the Lebanese Armed Forces in assuming their responsibilities along the border with Israel. To that end, Italy also deems it of the utmost importance to fully support and revitalize negotiations between Lebanon and Israel aimed at peacefully establishing their borders. We will continue to engage with our partners and allies and to keep the channels of dialogue with all actors in the region open. At the same time, it is equally urgent to reach an agreement on a ceasefire in Gaza and to release the hostages, in line with resolution 2735 (2024). At this specific time, it is our collective responsibility to call for calm and restraint, while being aware of the fact that, with every minute that goes by, the lives of innocent men, women and children in the entire region hang in the balance.

Italy is a firm supporter of the principle of "two peoples, two States" and shares the goal of a comprehensive and lasting regional peace that can ultimately be achieved on the basis of a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side-by-side in peace and security within agreed and recognized borders and with the full recognition of Israel's existence and respect for its security by all regional actors.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I express my warm appreciation to the Secretary-General.

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

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.