

**New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations
Te Aka Aorere**

**New Zealand National Statement –
High-Level International Conference for
the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of
Palestine and the Implementation of the
Two-State Solution**

**New Zealand Statement delivered by Head of Delegation,
Nicole Robertson**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY



Thank you to France and Saudi Arabia for their leadership on this issue.

This is an important meeting. It reflects our grave concerns on the war in Gaza, deterioration in the West Bank and the critical need to preserve the two-state solution.

The impetus for today's conference lies in Hamas' horrific attacks of 7 October 2023. While we continue to condemn these attacks, Israel's military response long ago ceased to be proportionate, reasonable, or moral. And Hamas continues to act with complete disregard for human life.

New Zealand joins others in again calling for an urgent ceasefire. Hamas must release the remaining hostages. Israel must cease its military action. Humanitarian aid must be surged in immediately without restriction, delivered by principled and experienced humanitarian actors.

Chair, the only way out of the immediate Gaza crisis and the broader conflict is political.

I would like to offer five short points on the way forward, guided by New Zealand's long-standing approach to the Middle East Peace Process:

One: There must be a comprehensive and sustainable two-state solution, with secure and recognised borders for both Israel and Palestine. This means the international community must categorically oppose any attempt to annex the Occupied Palestinian Territories and oppose forced displacement. We do not and cannot accept any actions to render a Palestinian state unviable.

Two: Direct negotiations between the parties are the only way to achieve a sustainable agreement. We must continue to be clear with all parties that military solutions will not bring peace to the region. We need to deliberately build the conditions that will allow the key parties to genuinely engage. This means building the political and economic viability of any future Palestinian state and supporting active engagement from the region.

Three: We must support Israel's right to exist in peace and security. Security guarantees for Israel are essential. These must include a reassertion of the Palestinian Authority's principles of non-violence, and confirmation that Hamas has no future role in the governance of any future Palestinian state. Regional commitments to engagement, integration, and normalisation of relationships with Israel will be key to creating the conditions under which Israel will feel secure.

Four: We must support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. We strongly support efforts to ensure representative, robust, and responsive Palestinian political leadership across the Occupied Palestinian Territories. These need to manifest in undertaking the elections committed to by the Palestinian Authority, and binding commitments to renew political leadership and continue reform. We agree also that it is critical to advance concrete steps to build the economic capacity of a Palestinian state. We welcome the direct commitments from the region (and others) to support Palestine economically. We also reiterate our call for Israel to fulfil its obligations to ensure the unimpeded flow of Palestinian tax revenue – we cannot expect the governance institutions to function if they are being deliberately strangled.

Five: International law must be respected. Israel must uphold its legal, humanitarian, and human rights obligations to the civilian population of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including as an occupying power. Israel's actions, including its withholding and politicisation of humanitarian assistance, are unacceptable. Failure to do this not only undermines human rights but also the long term prospects for security and stability and the international rules on which we all rely.

Chair, as noted at the outset, our collective goal is a sustainable and enduring two-state solution. New Zealand steadfastly supports the establishment of a Palestinian state and has done so for decades. It remains for us a matter of 'when, not if' that Palestinian statehood is realised. For New Zealand, a Palestinian state does not necessarily need to emerge as part of a comprehensive political settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. For us, the most important question when it comes to recognition of a Palestinian state is whether the fundamental pre-requisites for a state's viability and legitimacy – in political, diplomatic, economic and security terms – are present. In this context, we are pleased to have joined the New York Call.

In support of this New Zealand will lend its support to tangible, concrete progress on the reforms and commitments aimed to strengthen a future Palestinian state.

At the same time, we will also continue our focus on humanitarian support. New Zealand has contributed \$37.25 million dollars to date. New Zealand's humanitarian and stabilisation support has supported the principled responses of the United Nations and the Red Cross & Red Crescent Movement. Our funding has directly targeted emergency food services and support for vulnerable children.

In closing, we firmly believe that regional security can only be guaranteed by a negotiated political process. We need to enable Palestinians to build institutions that would make them a credible partner for Israel. And we need to be clear with Israel that it cannot veto the right of the Palestinian people

to self-determination. We do not accept actions designed to prevent a political solution and the viability of a Palestinian state. The alternative is perpetual war.

I thank you