

**Security Council**

Distr.: General
5 March 2021

Original: English

Letter dated 2 March 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General; Mr. Oren Gian, Israeli student; and Ms. Malak AbuSoud, Palestinian student, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, the Niger, Norway, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam in connection with the video-teleconference on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” convened on Friday, 26 February 2021.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter by the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council dated 7 May 2020 (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, these briefings and statements will be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Linda **Thomas-Greenfield**
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Briefing by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland**

I extend my greetings to the young guests with us today, Oren Gian and Malak AbuSoud. Your voices are important, and what I will say to the Security Council now will illustrate that point.

Significant developments in the coming weeks and months will influence the dynamics and the prospects for advancing peace going forward. Palestinians and Israelis are fully engaged in their respective electoral processes. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis remains a persistent health threat that has triggered a massive economic fallout. Meanwhile, unilateral steps on the ground are eroding the prospect for establishing a viable and contiguous Palestinian State and are moving the parties further from constructive dialogue and compromise.

The United Nations is continuing its engagement to meet these challenges. We are working actively with the parties and with our partners in the international community to address the pressing socioeconomic needs of the Palestinian people, including in the context of the pandemic. We are also advancing the goal of ending the occupation and realizing a negotiated two-State solution based on United Nations resolutions, international law and prior agreements.

Palestinian factions are making progress towards holding legislative, presidential and Palestinian National Council elections. Earlier this month they met in Cairo, reaching agreement on several outstanding issues and advancing the election process. The factions also emphasized that elections must be held throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, without exception. I welcome the positive steps to date and appreciate the leadership of Egypt in helping move this process forward.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian public is doing its part. On 17 February, the Central Elections Commission closed voter registration and announced 421,000 new registrants during the period, raising the total registered voters to over 2.6 million, 93 per cent of all eligible voters according to population estimates from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. An estimated 40 per cent of registered voters are under the age of 30 years old. It is encouraging to see such strong public participation in the democratic process. The United Nations will continue to work collectively to support the Palestinian people, including by facilitating and supporting preparatory processes towards these important elections.

In a number of recent meetings, the international community has demonstrated that it is focused on helping the parties return to the path of negotiations and signalled its continued support to the Palestinian people and institutions, including in COVID-19 response.

On 8 February, the League of Arab States issued a statement reiterating its support for the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State based on the 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

On 15 February, the Envoys of the Middle East Quartet — from Russia, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations — met virtually to discuss the latest political developments and the situation on the ground. All agreed to meet on a regular basis to continue their engagement.

On 23 February, members of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC) met virtually in a meeting chaired by the Foreign Minister of Norway and the European Union High

Representative. The Chair's summary highlighted that the parties expressed renewed commitment to enhancing cooperation. The donor community called on the parties to take specific steps to improve their relations on the economic front, to facilitate critical infrastructure and assistance projects on the ground. They were also called to avoid unilateral actions that could undermine the resumption of negotiations. The donor community also pledged increased assistance to the Palestinians in a variety of areas, including to support the Government's COVID-19 vaccination efforts.

In the United Nations report to the AHLC meeting, it was clearly underlined that the Palestinian economy had contracted, mostly due to the negative effects on the economy of the COVID-19 pandemic and to the Palestinian Authority's suspension of coordination with Israel. Let me be clear, it may take years for the economy of Palestine to recover.

The AHLC Chair also noted the critical importance of rolling out a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine programme as rapidly as possible, both in the West Bank and Gaza.

In this respect, the United Nations welcomes the announcement of the Palestinian vaccination strategy and the initial allocation to the Palestinian Ministry of Health of at least 37,440 doses of vaccines by the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Advance Market Commitment Facility. In addition, in February, 30,000 doses of vaccines were delivered to Palestinians, including in Gaza, by Russia and the United Arab Emirates. This is in addition to the Israeli's earlier transfer of 5,200 vaccines to the Palestinian Authority, the vaccination of 5,000 Palestinian education and health workers working in Israel and efforts to vaccinate the population in East Jerusalem, which is 50 per cent completed.

The Palestinian Government's efforts to prepare and plan these vaccination efforts are to be commended, as is the dedication of United Nations agencies, in particular the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and their partners. Israeli facilitation of vaccine deliveries has also been essential, and I appreciate efforts by the Israeli Government to support the Palestinian response to COVID-19. It is critically important that this cooperation continue and be enhanced to ensure that Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza receive a fair and timely share in the distribution of vaccines.

Turning to Gaza, I welcome Egypt's reopening of the Rafah crossing on 9 February in both directions until further notice. The Rafah crossing is the main gateway to the world for 2 million residents of Gaza.

I also commend the decision of the Government of Qatar to significantly increase its financial contribution for Gaza, including the agreement signed with the United Nations Office for Project Services to provide fuel to the Gaza power plant to the end of this year. This arrangement will generate over 12 hours of stable electricity per day. The United Nations stands ready to play its part and will continue to work closely with donors to ensure the continuity of existing commitments.

Unfortunately, concerning developments on the ground continued throughout the reporting period. Overall, Israeli authorities demolished or seized 170 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and 10 in East Jerusalem, displacing some 314 Palestinians, including 67 women and 177 children. The demolitions were carried out due to the lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain.

In a particularly concerning series of incidents, on 1, 3, 8, 16 and 22 February, Israeli security forces demolished or confiscated 80 structures in the Palestinian

Bedouin community of Humsa Al-Baqai'a, in an Israeli-declared firing zone in the Jordan Valley. The actions reportedly displaced 63 people multiple times, including 36 children, and followed a similar demolition in November 2020. On 23 February, my Deputy and the Humanitarian Coordinator visited the site and called on Israeli authorities to cease further demolitions, in accordance with international law, and to allow the humanitarian community to provide shelter, food and water to this extremely vulnerable community.

I reiterate the Humanitarian Coordinator's message and urge Israel to cease the demolition and seizure of Palestinian property throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and to allow Palestinians to develop their communities.

Daily violence also continued throughout the occupied Palestinian territory during the reporting period. In the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, clashes, attacks, search and arrest operations and other incidents resulted in the death of two Palestinians, including one child, reportedly while they were attempting to stab Israeli soldiers, as well as injuries to 34 Palestinians, including 6 children. In addition, 10 Israelis, including two women and three children, were injured by Palestinians during the reporting period.

On 26 January, a 17-year-old Palestinian boy tried to stab a female Israeli soldier near the settlement of Ariel and was subsequently shot and killed by Israeli security forces.

On 31 January, a 36-year-old Palestinian man was shot and killed by Israeli security forces as he ran towards officers stationed at the Gush Etzion junction, south of Bethlehem, reportedly while holding an improvised weapon.

Meanwhile, Israeli settlers and other civilians perpetrated some 25 attacks against Palestinians, resulting in five injuries and damage to property. Palestinians perpetrated 59 attacks against Israeli settlers and other civilians in the West Bank, resulting in eight injuries and damage to property.

On 5 February, a Palestinian man was shot and killed by Israeli settlers in the Sadeh Ephraim Farm outpost, near the village of Ras Karkar, after reportedly attempting to break into a house. Israeli security forces stated that the incident was a terrorist attack and that the man was unarmed — no weapons were found in his possession. I call on Israeli authorities to conduct a thorough investigation into the circumstances of the incident.

On 15 February, Israeli civilians vandalized nine vehicles belonging to Palestinian workers near the West Bank settlement of Shiloh. The Israeli police opened an investigation into the incident, noting that it occurred following the removal of an unauthorized structure from a nearby outpost by Israeli security forces.

On the same day, Israeli police announced that they had arrested several Israelis in the West Bank on suspicion of stone-throwing that injured Palestinians, illegal possession of weapons and membership in a terrorist organization.

On 23 February, Israeli authorities filed an indictment against a 17-year-old Israeli boy accused of throwing stun grenades into Palestinian homes in the West Bank village of Sarta and causing damage to property. Israeli police also arrested four additional individuals suspected of involvement in the incident.

I underscore that all perpetrators of violence must be held accountable and swiftly brought to justice. Particular care should be taken to protect children from all violence.

On 5 February, the International Criminal Court Pre-Trial Chamber decided that the Court's jurisdiction extends to the occupied Palestinian territory.

In the Golan, the ceasefire between Israel and Syria has generally held. However, the security situation continues to be volatile, with continued violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement by the parties, leading to heightened tensions between Israel and Syria. Late on 3 February, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force observed kinetic activity in its area of operation. The next day, the Israeli Defense Forces informed the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) that they had

“carried out a precision strike against infrastructure [in Damascus International Airport] that is utilized by proxies for transfers of weaponry and mobilization against the State of Israel”.

UNDOF continues to liaise with both parties to remind them of their obligations to respect the terms of the Disengagement Agreement and prevent escalation of the situation across the ceasefire line.

In Lebanon, the population faces increasing hardship as a result of the steadily deteriorating economic situation and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. On 26 and 27 January, in Tripoli, two protesters died following clashes with security forces.

In the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) area of operations, incidents of weapons-pointing between the Israel Defense Forces and the Lebanese Armed Forces across the Blue Line contributed to heightened tensions. UNIFIL remains engaged with the parties to defuse tensions, including through its liaison and coordination efforts.

In conclusion, allow me to underline that it is critical to begin the process of restoring hope to Palestinians and Israelis that the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace can be realized. Given the reality of developments on the ground, the scale of the task is daunting, but not insurmountable. We must seize emerging opportunities.

The upcoming elections in Palestine may be one such opportunity. The extraordinarily high registration rate among Palestinians is a resoundingly positive response from the people of Palestine in support of President Abbas’ call for elections. The holding of free and fair elections across the occupied Palestinian territory is a crucial step towards re-establishing Palestinian national unity that can renew the legitimacy of national institutions, including a democratically elected Legislative Council and Government in Palestine.

The democratic right to vote, particularly for young people, is the right to decide one’s own political future and should be carefully guarded. The United Nations and the international community will continue to play an active part in supporting the election process.

Elections will also help to clear the path towards restoring a legitimate political horizon to realize a two-State solution. The United Nations, alongside its partners in the Middle East Quartet, will continue to support Palestinians and Israelis in their efforts to achieve that goal.

Annex II

Briefing by Israeli student Oren Gian

Shabbat Shalom from the British Embassy in Israel. My name is Oren Gian, and I am Jewish, Israeli and Persian.

I would like to thank the United Kingdom for the honour to speak to you today in the Security Council, and I also thank Ms. Malak AbuSoud for sharing her perspective.

I am only a teenager, but my story starts 40 years ago, in Iran. In 1979, during the Iranian revolution, my mother, her two brothers and my grandmother escaped Iran. But my grandfather decided to stay since he owned a big plastics company that he needed to take care of.

In 1980, one year later, something happened. One of my grandfather's closest friends visited his company. At that very moment, a machine fell from a crane and killed the man. My grandfather went to visit the grieving family and offer his condolences, but they accused him of being responsible for the death of his own friend. At first, my grandfather was sure that they were just angry because they were hurting, but a few days later, a good friend of my grandfather came to warn him that a death warrant was issued against him. My grandfather had been sentenced to death.

My grandfather had no choice; he had to leave everything behind — his house, his company and his friends. But at least he was alive. That Muslim friend who warned him also helped my grandfather to escape Iran and he saved his life.

My grandfather's story taught me that friendship is not about religion or ethnicity. Friendship is about trust and it can be given to anyone regardless of their background, but trust needs to be gradually built and earned.

Allow me to take you back with me to one of my first interactions with Arab students, at a Model United Nations conference in Sakhnin, an Arab city in northern Israel. The conference took place in an Arab school and, truth be told, I was not so thrilled by the idea of attending a conference in an Arab school. I remember that I started to get stressed during the ride to the conference — and it was not just because of the speech that I had to deliver to the committee as the representative of Hungary. It was mostly because I did not know what to expect from the experience of meeting Arab students. I remember thinking that as our bus reached Sakhnin and I slowly entered the school to participate in my first Model United Nations conference. I felt overwhelmed because I was a 15-year-old Israeli Jew entering an Arab school in Sakhnin. I remember asking myself: What are the students going to be like? Will I even be able to communicate with them? What is the food going to be like? Is it even safe? I thought that maybe it was not worth it, maybe I should not have gone, maybe I should have stayed home and spent time with my friends in Netanya, where I felt comfortable.

But I knew that leaving was not an option, so I stayed to participate in the conference. I talked to a few students from that school and I noticed that interacting with them was not so bad after all. I did not feel completely comfortable in their presence and I was unable to fully communicate with them, but I certainly felt more comfortable at the end of the conference than I did at the beginning.

That year, I attended five more Model United Nations conferences. All of them included Arab students. I noticed that with each successive conference and interaction, I felt more and more comfortable being around people from the Arab or Palestinian community and even talking to them. At the end of that year, in the

summer of 2019, I attended a programme at an institute in Houston, Texas. The programme mainly consisted of Arab and Palestinian students, with a few Jewish students. It dealt with the topics of interfaith and citizenship and sought to have participants learn about the other side. In order for us to truly get to know one another, we handed over our cell phones for two weeks and disconnected from the world.

On the flight to Texas, I remember experiencing the same feelings as before my first interaction with Arab students in Sakhnin. I thought to myself: how am I going to spend two weeks with total strangers in a foreign country without being able to use my cell phone if I do not get along with these people from completely different backgrounds? I remember feeling stressed and uncomfortable. I just wanted to be done with it so I could go back home.

When I got to Texas, it took me some time to open up to the other students, especially those from different backgrounds than me, and I noticed that I disagreed with most of the political views of the Palestinian students. But, as time went by, I started to feel more comfortable because I realized that — obvious as it may sound — we were all humans. I still disagreed with them on a political level about most subjects, but that did not stop us from discussing those and other subjects in a respectful way. I befriended one of the Palestinians in the programme and we stayed in touch even after returning to Israel. Sometimes we send each other text messages and discuss politics. Although we still disagree about most things, we stay in contact and enrich each other with our two different perspectives.

Unfortunately, most Israeli and Palestinian students do not have such experiences. We live in different towns and go to different schools. Israeli and Palestinian students need opportunities to meet so they can get to know the people on the other side. We are tomorrow's school principals, doctors, teachers and leaders. Instead of growing up hating each other, we must learn how we can share our different perspectives as friends, and the only way that can happen is if we meet and interact.

In addition to Model United Nations, I had the opportunity to join a unique project called Empathy Storytelling, in which eight students — four Jewish and four Arab — were paired up. We learned each other's family story and then presented our partner's story. I met Ameer and learned that, even though he lives in a town near my city, his father was from Gaza. And Ameer learned my grandfather's story of fleeing Iran and returning to Israel.

Hearing Ameer tell my family's story and telling his story showed me that we all have our stories, we all have our problems and achievements, and we all have families and a history. I learned that only after empathizing and understanding people, the individual human beings on the other side of the conflict, can we begin to negotiate properly.

I believe that it is much more effective to start to negotiate peace with people who you have learned to respect and gotten to know; people who are no longer the enemy, but human beings who you now see as neighbours; and people who you actually care about and with whom you can properly negotiate.

A few years ago, I was afraid to go to an Arab school, but today I have Palestinian friends with whom I can debate politics over lunch and stay friends. I believe that if more students are given the opportunity to meet with the other side from a young age, we will be able to build a brighter, better future for us all.

Annex III**Briefing by Palestinian student Malak AbuSoud**

I would like to thank the members of the Security Council for providing me this platform today and empowering youth in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to speak about their experiences. My name is Malak AbuSoud. I am a third-year student in the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., where I am majoring in international economics. I was born and raised in Jerusalem, and I am proud to call myself a Palestinian.

To begin, I would like to acknowledge my privilege in speaking here today. I am a white, middle-class female from Jerusalem who speaks English, which is why I have the privilege to brief the Council today. I also need to acknowledge that I do not, by any means, represent all Palestinian youth. The various restrictions imposed by the Israeli Government not only separate Palestinians from one another, but also define our experiences within the conflict. While I cannot speak for all experiences of the youth in Gaza, the West Bank or the diaspora, I hope that I can use my experiences to bring to Council members a clearer vision of what it is like on the ground in Palestine.

I have called Jerusalem my home for the past 20 years. I grew up two kilometres away from the Al-Aqsa mosque, in one of the largest streets in Jerusalem. However, I have never fully felt comfortable there. I lived in constant fear of being hurt both physically and emotionally as a result of living under military occupation. Worried about being verbally assaulted for being Palestinian, I was always on edge whenever I walked anywhere, especially on the Israeli side. Israeli sales clerks would be nice to me until they heard which side of Jerusalem I lived in, and then they would frown at me. Soon enough, I stopped speaking in Arabic to hide that I am a Palestinian. When Israeli soldiers at the checkpoint would point their guns at me, I would speak in English trying to force an American accent to protect my life. I lived in constant fear of being who I am because I knew my life was not worth much to them.

I acknowledge, however, that I have received a lesser degree of the hate and violence that a young person can experience in Palestine. When I think of how violent and ruthless the occupation can be, I think of my cousin Mohammad, who lived in the Al-Azzeh refugee camp where the houses piled on top of each other looked like they were on the verge of collapse, just like the people who lived in them. Mohammad was quiet, shy and soft-spoken. I always felt for him. Even though Mohammad was a child, he seemed like a young man to me. It is common that when violence and scarcity are prevalent, children have to grow up too soon.

At the age of 11, Mohammad was detained by the Israeli Government. Israeli soldiers had entered the camp for the sole reason of wreaking havoc. Apparently, Mohammad had thrown a rock at a soldier, so what the Israeli Government thought was most appropriate was to imprison an 11-year-old. At the time, I was very naive to think that he would be out the next day. But days turned into months and into years. The minute he got out of prison he was quickly detained again and ever since he has been going in and out of prison. And he will likely continue to do so for the rest of his life, all because of one rock. With Mohammad and countless others, Palestine's potential is wasting away in prison.

Palestinian youth face constant insecurity owing to the atrocities committed against them by the Israeli police and military. Israeli police are trained to see every Palestinian as a possible terrorist. Without any repercussions to the hundreds of lives they end, Israeli police continue to kneel on our necks. Earlier this year, Israeli police shot seven bullets at Eyad Al-Hallaq, a young man on the autism spectrum, on

his way to school. What was his crime? Eyad was shot because, fearing the soldiers, he ran away from them.

A few months ago, Ahmad Erekat crashed into a checkpoint on the day of his sister's wedding. Israel claimed that Erekat was like all Palestinians, a terrorist committing an attack. Earlier this week, Forensic Architecture, a British research body, confirmed that there is mounting evidence indicating that Ahmad Erekat crashed into the checkpoint by accident. Of course, that does not matter anymore. On the day of his sister's wedding, Ahmad, an innocent man, walked away from the soldiers with his hands up, whereupon he was executed with six bullets fired in two seconds and denied medical aid as he slowly died on the ground.

How does the international community expect Palestinian youth to look forward to peace when Israel antagonizes us every day? How do you expect us to invest, grow and prosper when our future is full of uncertainty?

Another issue that Palestinian youth face is the lack of investment in their lives and livelihoods. At the age of 14, I had great ambition and wanted to fill my college applications with extracurricular activities. However, owing to the lack of funding and programming for Palestinian youth organizations, the only activity I could do was joining peace programmes. In peace programmes, Palestinians and Israelis are brought together to talk — directly or indirectly — about the conflict.

Peace programmes glamorize the idea that Palestinians and Israelis are coming together to make peace, when in many cases the only reason Palestinians join is to get a diploma, practice their English or learn a skill or two. However, Palestinian youth realize soon enough that they get more than they bargained for. In my experience, these peace camps caused me emotional and mental distress.

What people-to-people peace organizations do not understand is that success or justice looks very different from different sides. Many of my Israeli friends champion these organizations for the “life-changing experiences” they offer. Many Israelis come to these camps steeped in years of their Government's propaganda on how Israel is a peaceful actor and not an occupier in a land of indigenous people. They are fed the idea that all Palestinians wear hijabs, are uneducated and are terrorists looking for a conflict. What these programmes offer them is a chance to realize that maybe Palestinians are not that bad. Maybe they are normal people. After all, how can the conflict exist if we shared a plate of hummus together?

However, what we need to acknowledge is that Palestinians do not experience the Israeli-Palestinian conflict the same way Israelis do, and so a Palestinian's idea of justice differs significantly from an Israeli's. Palestinian youth have grown up in violent conditions caused by Israel where they live in scarcity in an open-air prison or, in my case, as a second-class citizen constantly being profiled and discriminated against. My problem is not that I do not know that Israelis are humans; I know that they are humans. My problem is that they choose to live in my house on my land and tell me I do not get to protest. Therefore, when I arrive at these programmes, my goal is different than that of my Israeli peers. I have the exhausting responsibility that no 14-year-old should have: to prove that I am a human — a human who deserves human rights. All these Israelis can offer me in return is a pat on the back and a few apologies for what their Government does. This is why I believe that peace programmes, by themselves, cannot fundamentally achieve peace. The problem is not the lack of conversation, as the media and perhaps even the Security Council broadcast; the problem is the lack of justice for Palestinians.

Indeed, these programmes have the opposite effect of what they are looking to achieve. In my experience, I was shocked to find that the lives of Israelis on the other side were nothing like mine. Quite the opposite — while I had barely any access to

water or electricity at my grandma's house in the refugee camp, my Israeli peers were enjoying their "normal life" on the beach with their friends. I started comparing my Israeli friends' lives to mine and truly realized the extent of the humiliation and oppression I have experienced because of the occupation.

What made matters even worse was that after graduating from peace programmes, my Israeli friends started enlisting in mandatory military service, thereby eroding any progress we may have made. The same people I called my friends are now participating in my oppression. The same people I called my friends are currently the ones of whom I have always been scared. The same people I called my friends are currently pointing a gun at me and my family.

In 1974, President Yasser Arafat addressed the General Assembly saying,

"Today I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom-fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand. I repeat: do not let the olive branch fall from my hand" (*A/PV.2282, para. 82*).

Some 46 years later, that olive branch has withered into the slow but painful crippling of the Palestinian cause. Once active actors in their destiny, Palestinians are now passive observers as their land and rights are usurped every single day. The international community has the responsibility to empower Palestinian youth to become decision makers in their lives by investing in their security, education, opportunities and employment.

If peace programmes are to succeed, oversight is essential to ensure that the youth participating in them are kept safe in the presence of those who are licensed to work with minors. More importantly, peace programmes should be preoccupied not only with bringing Israelis and Palestinians together but also with fixing the structural differences between Israeli and Palestinian life experiences. Programmes should provide such resources as access to mental-health care and grants. They should also advocate policies that improve the living conditions of Palestinian youth participating in these programmes. Bringing Palestinians and Israelis together will not achieve anything unless they are equal parties in the conversation.

When I consider whether peace is possible, I think of my home, Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the biggest experiment in seeing whether Palestinians and Israelis can live together. While in most instances the violence and injustice make it seem like the experiment has failed, at times the experiment appears successful. My proof for that is that when I go down the international aisle in American supermarkets and I see an Israeli snack from my childhood, as much as I resist it, I am flooded with the feeling of home.

Annex IV**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Geng Shuang**

[Original: Chinese and English]

I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland and the youth representatives of Palestine and Israel for their briefings.

The question of Palestine has remained unresolved for over 70 years. In the occupied Palestinian territories, one generation after another of young people have suffered deeply from conflict, violence, historical grievances and poverty. The international community is obligated to show courage in honouring commitments, demonstrate conscience in upholding justice and find a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to this question at an early date, thus giving young people a peaceful home and a bright future. In this context, I would like to stress three points on this question.

First, we must continue moving in the right direction, namely, towards a two-State solution. Independent statehood is a national right of the Palestinian people that cannot be denied. The two-State solution is a bottom line of international justice that cannot be compromised. The relevant United Nations resolutions and the principle of land for peace, *inter alia*, are the basic tenets that cannot be deviated from in resolving Palestinian-Israeli conflict. On that basis, the international community must join hands to seek an early solution.

For some time now, the issue of settlement activities has been fermenting, severely weakening the prospects for a two-State solution. All actions that undermine mutual trust must cease immediately, and resolution 2334 (2016) must be implemented in earnest. China calls upon Israel to end its settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, stop the demolition of Palestinian homes and the destruction of Palestinian property, and take measures to prevent violence against civilians. That having been said, Israel's right to survival and its legitimate security concerns must also be fully respected and guaranteed.

Secondly, international synergy in promoting peace talks must be forged. Currently, new changes are on the horizon for the Middle East. The international community must seize this opportunity, act with a greater sense of urgency and conduct a new round of diplomatic efforts in order to vigorously make progress in the Middle East peace process. An effort that is conducive to the political settlement of this question will have China's active participation and support.

The international community must explore and establish a multilateral mechanism with broad participation so as to generate robust synergy in promoting peace talks. Parties that have major influence on Palestine and Israel must uphold an objective and impartial standard and sincerely strive to help the two parties narrow their differences and build mutual trust. The Security Council should play its due role by working actively towards relaunching Palestinian-Israeli dialogue on an equal footing. China supports the early holding of an international conference on peace in the Middle East, which is an initiative promoted by President Abbas.

At the ministerial meeting of the League of Arab States on 8 February, Foreign Ministers of members of the League emphasized the core nature of Palestinian statehood and reaffirmed their common position on the two-State solution and the Arab Peace Initiative. This reflects the spirit of unity and justice of Arab States, for which China expresses its appreciation.

Thirdly, stronger support must be given to boost unity and development in Palestine. The general elections this year represent an important political agenda there. Two weeks ago, Palestinian political parties successfully held a dialogue in Cairo at which they agreed on election arrangements, thus making a major stride in intra-Palestinian reconciliation. China welcomes such results and commends Egypt for the positive role it is playing. The international community must work together to support and ensure the smooth holding of the elections, with a view to strengthening intra-Palestinian unity and safeguarding and promoting the interests of the Palestinian people.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has severely affected socioeconomic development in Palestine. The international community must continue its assistance to Palestine in combating the pandemic, growing the economy and improving livelihoods. Concrete actions must be taken to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

As a sincere friend of the Palestinian people, China firmly endorses the legitimate demands of Palestine and supports the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with full sovereignty, on the basis of the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. This month, through UNRWA, anti-pandemic supplies donated by China have been officially distributed to the 141 health-care centres located in Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. China has also decided to donate COVID-19 vaccines to Palestine; these vaccines will be delivered very soon. We will continue to do our best to help Palestine fight the pandemic, and we will actively contribute to seeking a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine at an early date.

Annex V**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson**

I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing. Let me also express my appreciation to Mr. Oren Gian and Ms. Malak AbuSoud for sharing their experiences on connecting Israeli and Palestinian youth.

We are encouraged by some positive developments, which will hopefully contribute to reviving the Middle East peace process. In addition to the normalization of relations between Israel and certain Arab States, we have also seen thrust in the work of the Middle East Quartet, which held a virtual meeting last week.

We welcomed the decree by President Abbas on holding legislative, presidential and National Council elections. The recent agreement reached in Cairo between the Palestinian factions on the arrangements of the elections is another positive step towards holding free, fair and inclusive elections, which should take place throughout the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.

Estonia also welcomed the resumption of civilian and security coordination between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. We encourage the parties to build upon these developments and take further practical steps, which will hopefully lead to more favourable conditions for resuming direct negotiations to achieve a two-State solution.

Those steps should include further coordinated efforts to combat the coronavirus disease pandemic, as well as increased economic cooperation. In this context, we welcome the participation of the representatives of the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority at the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians held on 23 February.

We call on all parties to refrain from any unilateral steps that increase tensions and undermine the viability of the two-State solution.

We reiterate our call to Israel to halt the continued settlement expansion and demolitions in the occupied Palestinian territories. The recent demolitions and confiscation of items and structures at Humsa Al-Baqai'a, in the Jordan Valley, are worrisome and contrary to international law.

It is also essential to prevent any acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror and acts of provocation, incitement and destruction.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Estonia's continued support to all efforts to resume meaningful negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians on all final-status issues, based on international law, relevant Security Council resolutions and agreed parameters.

Annex VI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: English and French]

I would like to thank the Special Coordinator as well as Oren Gian and Malak AbuSoud for their briefings.

France is consistent in its support for a two-State solution in accordance with agreed parameters, international law and Security Council resolutions. This framework is the only basis to date that has made it possible to bring about a just and lasting peace and thus contribute to the stability of the region. This is what Israeli and Palestinian youth aspire to, as our two briefers reminded us. This solution is the only one likely to ensure Israel's security, on which France will never compromise, and to respect the Palestinians' right to self-determination, to which we are deeply committed. That is why France will continue to give its full support to the creation of two States, living in peace and security, within secure and recognized borders based on the 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as their capital.

In this context, we regret the growing number of faits accomplis, which threaten the viability of the two-State solution. We are very concerned about the record level of demolitions of Palestinian structures, and the figures for 2021 already exceed those of 2020. In this regard, we condemn the new demolitions and confiscations by the Israeli authorities, including those of humanitarian structures financed by the international community, including by the European Union and France, in the Palestinian village of Khirbet Humsa. France calls on the Israeli authorities to put an end to this as soon as possible, to facilitate humanitarian access and to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which Israel is a party.

We condemn the continued colonization of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, in particular its progress in sensitive areas, such as Givat Hamatos, Har Homa and Area E-1. We call again on Israel to reverse these decisions.

It is important to make progress on the Palestinian electoral process. France welcomed the publication by President Abbas of the decree on elections. Those elections must be an opportunity to give a new voice to Palestinian civil society and to renew the democratic legitimacy of institutions. France and its European partners are ready to support the organization of transparent, free and impartial elections. France calls on all stakeholders to act constructively to enable the Palestinian people to choose their representatives. The elections must also be organized throughout the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.

France will remain mobilized to help gradually rebuild trust between the parties with a view to resuming negotiations. We will continue to work on that with our German, Egyptian and Jordanian partners.

The meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians once again stressed the importance of increased cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians in order to strengthen the resilience of the Palestinian economy and the effectiveness of their economic relations. This cooperation is all the more necessary in the face of the coronavirus disease pandemic. We welcome the efforts made, including by Israel, to enable the Palestinian Ministry of Health to provide several thousand doses of vaccine. We hope that positive momentum will continue and benefit all Palestinians, including in Gaza.

In this difficult context, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is providing vital assistance to millions of Palestinians. France calls on all States to provide it with support that is commensurate with their financial means.

It is around this pragmatic results-oriented agenda that France calls on the Security Council to unite in order to relaunch the peace process.

Annex VII**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, Nagaraj Naidu Kakanur**

I thank the United Kingdom presidency for its initiative of inviting youth representatives Malak and Oren to this meeting to share their perspectives. We also thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing.

Let me begin by reaffirming India's support to the Palestinian cause and the establishment of a sovereign, viable and independent State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security with Israel. We firmly believe that only a two-State solution will deliver enduring peace, which the people of Israel and Palestine desire and deserve. This should be achieved through direct negotiations between both sides on final-status issues. Both sides must avoid any unilateral action that could prejudice those final-status issues.

Recent diplomatic efforts to revive the stalled peace talks are encouraging. The meeting of the Quartet's Special Envoys is timely. We urge the Quartet to initiate engagement with the Israeli and the Palestinian leadership. In this regard, we also appreciate the Munich Group's recent outreach. India welcomes all efforts that are aimed at strengthening the collective commitment of the international community to resume direct negotiations and facilitate the peace process.

We are pleased to note that preparations for the Palestinian elections are moving forward. The Cairo agreement between the Palestinian parties on the conduct of parliamentary and presidential elections — to abide by the electoral timetable, accept the results of the election and on other election-related arrangements — is a positive step in the right direction. The commitment undertaken by all parties to release political detainees will also help build trust between them. We acknowledge Egypt's efforts in facilitating this agreement.

The high percentage of Palestinians who have registered to vote in the elections reflects their desire to take part in the democratic process.

The opening of the Rafah border crossing is a significant development, which will ease the humanitarian and health situation in Gaza.

The recent announcements pertaining to the gas pipeline to Gaza are also encouraging.

The pandemic's impact on the people of Gaza has been particularly severe owing to the fragile health-care infrastructure. We note that coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccines are being made available to the people of Palestine, including in Gaza. India strongly believes that equity in access to vaccines across the world is important for mitigating the impact of the pandemic. India earlier provided critical medicines and medical equipment to Palestine as COVID-19 assistance. We are now in the process of sending a second batch of medicines as a grant to the Palestinian people in the coming weeks. We will also facilitate an early supply of vaccines to Palestine.

India has been consistently supporting Palestinian nation-building efforts under the India-Palestine developmental partnership. In addition to our ongoing projects in health, education and technology sectors, we recently signed agreements for funding quick-impact projects to be implemented through partnerships with grass-roots Palestinian institutions.

Before I conclude, let me also reiterate our continued support for the humanitarian and development work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for the Palestinian refugee

community. UNRWA faced a dual crisis of unprecedented magnitude in 2020 — a drastic financial shortfall compounded by the unparalleled public health crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognizing the gravity of the Agency's situation, India has pledged an annual financial contribution of \$5 million to support UNRWA for the next two years.

Annex VIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason**

First, I thank you, Oren Gian and Malak AbuSoud. Seeing you here in the Security Council today, listening to you both, reminds me in a powerful way of why we are here, what our purpose should be: to alleviate the human impact of conflict, and really frankly to wake up to the toll it takes on young people. You have a critical role in building peace and in resolving the conflict that you live with. I have high hopes that in future you will be real agents for preventing conflict too.

As an Irish woman I grew up on an island that was troubled. We learned the hard way that actually achieving and sustaining peace is indeed an intergenerational process. Including young people, as we recognized in several Security Council resolutions here on youth, peace and security, builds better peace. It builds more sustainable peace. And that is true whether it be in Ireland or in the Middle East. So I want to thank you for what you said to us this morning.

We see youth engagement in political processes, including in the upcoming elections in Israel and Palestine, as really crucial. We know that Palestinian youth are especially affected by occupation. Over half of the Palestinian population, we know also, is under the age of 29. Palestinian youth sadly remain disempowered and disenfranchised, with high unemployment rates and low political representation.

Ireland is a strong supporter of education for Palestinian youth, which we believe is crucial for Palestine's own long-term economic viability. Ireland is proud of its long-standing support for the delivery of services, including quality education, to Palestine refugees by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). We call on other donors, and on Council members here today, to support UNRWA's vital work.

We also recognize the disproportionate impact of occupation on Palestinian women and girls, who face greater constraints in all areas of economic, social and political life. Ireland actively supports a range of initiatives focused on building Palestinian women's political participation and the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda more broadly. I have welcomed Palestinian women and girls to our deliberations here at the United Nations, and I can tell you they are powerful advocates for the role of women anywhere in the political process.

I want to thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing today.

Together with the European Union, Ireland strongly opposes illegal Israeli settlements. Settlements are a major obstacle to peace and undermine the viability of the two-State solution — a two-State solution that Ireland fully supports and is affirmed in resolution 2334 (2016).

Ireland is gravely concerned by the repeated demolition of Palestinian homes and other structures in Humsa Al-Baqai'a and elsewhere. The rules of international humanitarian law prohibit the unnecessary destruction of private property, and Israel must immediately cease such practices.

Israel, as the occupying Power, also has obligations under international humanitarian law to allow and facilitate full and unhindered humanitarian assistance to those in need. The destruction and confiscation of humanitarian aid is unacceptable and causes harm and suffering to ordinary Palestinians.

Fifty-three Palestinian schools across the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, are at risk of demolition. The rights of children to protection, safety and well-being must be upheld at all times.

We recall that the Oslo Accords provided for gradual transfer of Area C to Palestinian jurisdiction. Current Israeli actions and trends make this transfer increasingly difficult to envisage and have a real impact on the prospects and lives of Palestinians, especially young Palestinians.

Persistent acts of violence, as well as movement and access restrictions and violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, damage trust between Israelis and Palestinians and within their own communities, making a peaceful settlement more difficult to achieve. Where accountability is absent, a climate for further human rights abuses is fostered. Breaking this cycle is integral to achieving a peaceful settlement.

Ireland congratulates the Government and the people of Israel on its commendable achievements on the vaccination of its citizens. We urge Israel, as the occupying Power, to ensure free and equitable access and distribution of the coronavirus disease vaccine to Palestinians, in line with international law.

Ireland renews its call on Israel to end its illegal blockade on Gaza. For many young people in Gaza, their life has been defined and limited by the blockade. They live in a protracted humanitarian crisis. Ireland is also very concerned by the provisions announced earlier this month by the Gaza authorities allowing male guardians to restrict travel by unmarried women relatives. We oppose the curtailing of the rights of women and girls to move independently.

Ireland reiterates its support for the holding of elections in Palestine. We encourage the Palestinian factions in their efforts to ensure a free, fair and inclusive electoral process, and we call on Israel to facilitate voting, particularly in East Jerusalem. We encourage all efforts to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and young people in those elections.

Finally, Ireland reiterates its willingness to assist Palestinians and Israelis in their efforts to re-engage on the path to peace. We welcome the recent meeting of Quartet Envoys and the efforts of the Munich Group. We echo Tor Wennesland's call for reinvigorated efforts by the Quartet and other international actors, including the League of Arab States and by members of the Security Council. Ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict requires ongoing sincere, coherent engagement by the international community as a whole, and by the Council in particular. We stand ready to play our part.

Annex IX**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Martin Kimani**

I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for the briefing.

I would also like to thank Mr. Oren Gian and Ms. Malak AbuSoud for giving us insightful perspectives on the value added when local young women and men participate in the prevention and resolution of conflict within their communities.

I reaffirm Kenya's condemnation of all violations, by all parties, that endanger the peace and prosperity of the people in the Middle East.

We look forward to a time when reports of rockets and mortars aimed at civilian population centres and of settler-related violence will be the exception in these monthly briefings.

Kenya urges the Israelis and Palestinians to do their utmost to build bridges of understanding and respect using multiple forums. Often, politics follow where the people lead. The work of our young briefers today should be strongly supported and scaled up. They may be the ones who inspire their elders to build real political and security bridges.

As the civil component of cooperation is strengthened, Kenya welcomes all existing efforts to strengthen security and civilian cooperation between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority. We also acknowledge the steps to reverse the negative trends on the ground, including increased intra-Palestinian reconciliation in preparation for the upcoming legislative and presidential elections. The 12 February meeting in Cairo was an important step towards stronger Palestinian unity.

Over recent months, there have been a number of initiatives to re-engage Israelis and Palestinians in peace talks, including the call to reinvigorate the spirit of the Madrid Conference, the proposal to hold an international conference on the final-status issues, and the revitalization of the Middle East Quartet. Kenya welcomes these efforts by the international community to advance the peace process with the aim of resuming meaningful negotiations to achieve a comprehensive peace based on the two-State solution in line with the pre-1967 borders.

Kenya also welcomes the normalization of relations between Israel and multiple majority-Arab countries as an important step towards lasting peace in the region. We hope that these welcome developments make it easier — rather than harder — to undertake the normalization of relations between the Israelis and Palestinians as two viable States, living side by side, within secure and recognized borders.

Kenya calls for the removal of impediments to the equitable distribution of coronavirus-disease vaccine. We therefore welcome the recent increase in cooperation between the Israeli and Palestinian authorities on the delivery of critical supplies, including food and medicine, and the movement of health and other essential workers in and out of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. In particular, we applaud the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, held yesterday under the chairmanship of Norway, to have both parties agree on ensuring equitable vaccine access.

Kenya joins other delegations in recognizing the important role played by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and reiterates the call for its funding to be reinforced.

Annex X**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Alicia Guadalupe Buenrostro Massieu**

First, as this is the last meeting under the presidency of the United Kingdom, I would like to congratulate you, Madam, on the successful conduct of our work during this month. I also extend my gratitude to Special Coordinator Wennesland for his informative briefing, and to Oren Gian and Malak AbuSoud for their inspiring contributions. Believe me, your presentations help us to understand the situation more directly and to be sensitive to your visions. Thank you very much for your participation.

Mexico reiterates its conviction that the establishment of two independent States, living side by side in peace and within secure and internationally recognized borders, based on the resolutions of the Council and the General Assembly, is the only alternative that ensures peace and prosperity for Israelis and Palestinians. This must address Israel's legitimate security concerns and its right to exist, while enabling the consolidation of a politically and economically viable Palestinian State.

On this occasion, I will focus my participation on three points: first, the Palestinian elections; secondly, demolitions; and, finally, equitable access to vaccines.

On the issue of the Palestinian elections, we welcome the rapprochement among the various Palestinian factions. We acknowledge the mediation by Arab countries, in particular Egypt. The establishment of a united and democratic Palestinian Government committed to peace would represent an important step towards negotiating a solution to the conflict. Likewise, international assistance will be critical to strengthening integration between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and thereby advancing in the construction of a democratic State.

My country, Mexico, welcomes the large number of Palestinian citizens who have already registered to participate in these elections, reflecting the will of the electorate to be part of this process. We urge Palestinian leaders and civil society to encourage the participation of women, youth and minority representatives as candidates.

While recognizing the continued civil and security cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in recent months, we also urge the Israeli Government to facilitate the development of Palestinian elections, especially in East Jerusalem. This could represent a genuine confidence-building measure to demonstrate Israel's interest in consolidating a united Palestinian partner in the peace negotiations.

In terms of demolitions, Mexico notes that, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, at least 199 Palestinian-owned structures were seized or forced to be demolished this year, including 77 funded by international donors. Such actions have resulted in the displacement of 285 people, including 150 minors.

Mexico once again condemns any action seeking to alter the demography, character or status of the occupied Palestinian territories, such as the confiscation of land, the demolition of homes, the displacement of civilians and the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements. Not only are these measures a violation of international law and United Nations resolutions, but they also represent an obstacle to the two-State solution. Mexico urges an immediate halt to the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

As for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, it has had devastating social and economic effects throughout the world. As has been mentioned in this

forum, the distribution of vaccines has been inequitable. We recognize the results of Israel's strategy to vaccinate a high proportion of its population in a record time as an example to the rest of the world, and we applaud the donations of vaccines, medicines and medical equipment made to other countries. We also call on Israel to increase cooperation with the Palestinian Authority to support the fight against COVID-19 in the West Bank and in Gaza, including by increasing donations of vaccines as well as facilitating the entry and distribution of immunizations from overseas.

We deeply regret the continued acts of violence and condemn the attacks against civilians by both sides. Attacks launched from the Gaza Strip on Israeli cities must be stopped and we call on Palestinian authorities and political leaders to prevent armed groups from perpetrating acts of violence that could be detrimental to the peace process.

Recognizing the right to security of both, Israel and Palestine, Mexico strongly calls on both to exercise maximum restraint. We also call on the parties to stop incitement and inflammatory rhetoric.

Finally, the establishment of diplomatic relations between a number of Arab countries and Israel, as well as some signs of easing tensions in the Middle East, seem to be clear signs that this is a favourable moment for renewed dialogue, and this opportunity should not be missed.

I should not like to conclude my remarks without stating that Mexico welcomes the announcement by the United States in support of the Palestinian refugee population.

Annex XI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Abdou Abarry**

[Original: French]

At the outset, I should like to thank Mr. Tor Wennesland for his detailed briefing on the situation in the Middle East.

I also thank the students, Mr. Oren Gian and Ms. Malak AbuSoud, whose particularly moving testimony calls on us to act and demonstrates how urgent it is to do so.

The Niger has followed with great concern the recent developments in the region, especially the operations by Israeli forces at Hamsa Al-Foqa, in the northern Jordan Valley, during which 46 structures belonging to Palestinian families were confiscated and demolished.

This new wave of demolitions, which follows on the heels of those conducted only three months ago in the West Bank village of Huma Al-Baqai'i, left around 60 Palestinians, including 35 children, homeless amid a pandemic and cold temperatures.

The Niger condemns the continuation of this alarming practice, which, in the course of the year 2020, led to the destruction or seizure of approximately 849 Palestinian properties, including 175 in East Jerusalem.

The Niger recalls, once again, that the demolition and destruction of private property in the occupied territory are prohibited under the Fourth Geneva Convention; they violate United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016); and they undermine the efforts devoted, over more than 70 years, by the international community to bring a peaceful resolution to the dispute between Israel and Palestine.

This practice, which characterizes the policy of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories, remains counterproductive to prospects for the two-States solution, which is the only solution that would allow both peoples, Palestinians and Israelis, to peacefully coexist within secure and recognized borders. It is also the only formula that would allow Israel to guarantee its people the security they need.

At this point in my remarks, I should like to raise, in order to strongly condemn it, another, particularly distressing aspect of the demolition of homes in the occupied territories — that of the trauma inflicted on the Palestinian population. Indeed, the nocturnal intrusion into and invasion of Palestinian homes, often perpetrated at very late hours, by Israeli soldiers expose Palestinian families, including women and children, to unbearable and unacceptable acts of violence and intimidation. This was indeed recently documented and denounced by an Israeli civil society organization in a report establishing the link between these traumatizing practices and the resulting psychological prejudice they instil among Palestinian populations.

These serious violations of the rights of the Palestinian populations, including thousands of women and children, under illegal occupation by Israel must call us to act with greater commitment and determination to bring an end to the distress and tragedy these populations have now endured for several decades.

While the positive developments achieved over recent months, with the normalization of relations between Israel and some Arab countries, fuelled hopes for a turning point in Israeli policy in the occupied Palestinian territories, we must recognize that this has not been the case. It is no longer possible to keep turning a

blind eye to the ongoing abuses perpetrated by the occupying Power in terms of the demolition of Palestinian structures and arbitrary expropriations, which must cease completely — just as must cease the forced displacement, eviction and movement of Palestinian civilians and the expansion of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, which likewise represent flagrant violations of relevant Security Council resolutions on this matter.

At a time when the Palestinian people are working towards the holding of elections — which we hope will help, by bringing Palestinian factions together, to strengthen the foundations for peace, we call on Israel to capitalize on this positive momentum by refraining from any acts that could stoke tensions or deter the resumption of peace talks, including in the context of the Quartet, with a view towards a negotiated two-State solution, as supported by the international community.

With regard to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis in the region, my delegation welcomes Israel's decision to deliver nearly 5,000 vaccine doses to the Palestinian Authority. This commendable gesture will allow for 2,500 people to be vaccinated but, while symbolic, it does not go far enough, given the size of the Palestinian population living under Israel's control.

The vulnerability of this population to the COVID-19 pandemic remains heightened due to the combination of factors resulting from the occupation, such as overcrowding, poverty, food insecurity and lack of medical equipment and personnel, as well as various restrictions.

That is why we call on Israel, as the occupying Power, to uphold its obligations under international law by supporting the Palestinian populations, including those in the occupied West Bank and under blockade in Gaza, by guaranteeing their access to vaccines on an equal footing with Israeli citizens. Indeed, Israel, which currently has the highest rate of vaccination in the world, should take into account the risk of further spread of the virus in its own territory if vaccination is not extended among Palestinians, since it has been well demonstrated that this virus respects no borders.

We call on the international community to support the efforts of the Palestinian Authority to immunize its population against the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, it is also essential to continue providing financial support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East so that it can continue to provide vital services to thousands of Palestinian families in need.

In conclusion, the Niger welcomes the tireless efforts of Tor Wennesland and reaffirms its full commitment to supporting the efforts and initiatives of the international community aimed at swiftly resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which undoubtedly has an impact on the peace, stability and security of the entire Middle East.

Annex XII

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Mona Juul

I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing. We also welcome the briefings from Oren Gian and Malak AbuSoud. The voices of civil society and youth provide us with new perspectives and continue to offer vital input into the work and considerations of this Council. Their contributions today underscore exactly why Norway encourages the inclusion, at an early stage, of young women and men in peace negotiations and conflict resolution.

Three days ago, our Minister for Foreign Affairs, together with European Union High Representative Borrell, hosted a virtual meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians. The purpose of that Committee is to build viable institutional and economic foundations for the realization of the two-State solution. The Committee welcomed the resumption of the cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority last November, which has contributed to a more positive dynamic between the parties.

Several delegations commended the normalization agreements, welcomed the United States' voice in the meeting and strongly recommended to the parties — and their international partners — that a meaningful political process be relaunched without delay. The immediate priority is, of course, to combat the coronavirus disease pandemic.

While the concerted, and largely successful, efforts of both parties to contain the spread of the pandemic give ground for hope, 2020 saw the Palestinian economy face one of the largest contractions since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. The donor community must continue to strengthen the Palestinian public health system, including by helping to provide sufficient vaccines. It must help alleviate the burden on the affected population and stimulate the recovery of the Palestinian economy.

Taking a longer-term perspective, the donors emphasized that the Palestinian Authority needs higher, stable and predictable revenues.

Norway called on donors to step up and to frontload their contributions to the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The parties were also asked to resume their work on a series of fiscal issues related mainly to the Paris Protocol and to improving access and movement for people and goods, as well as facilitating trade. As Chair, we plan to hold a ministerial meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee in September to review progress on the recommendations made this week.

Turning to the developments on the ground, Norway is deeply concerned by the continued Israeli settlement activities on occupied Palestinian territory. The settlements are illegal under international law and undermine the prospects for the two-State solution.

We call on both sides to fully implement resolution 2334 (2016), with all its provisions. We are particularly worried by Israel's decision to advance plans for thousands of housing units in sensitive areas such as Givat Hamatos and Har Homa. Those activities acutely erode the prospects of establishing a contiguous Palestinian State. We urge Israel to reverse those decisions.

Norway is equally concerned by the house demolitions and confiscations carried out by Israel in the West Bank, especially in Humsa Al-Baqai'a, as the Special Coordinator has elaborated on.

Many children are particularly affected by those actions. Indeed, children should always be protected. We are heartened by the scheduled Palestinian elections and encourage all actors on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides to contribute constructively to the election process.

Norway will continue its support for the Palestinian Central Election Commission and encourages the mobilization and better inclusion of women and youth in the elections as both candidates and voters. We also welcome the recent meeting of the Quartet, which is mandated by the Council to facilitate Middle East peace process negotiations. A revitalization of that format is a positive step.

While the two-State solution seems increasingly elusive, that does not make it any less urgent. Norway is a strong and consistent supporter of the two-State solution, based on international law, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the internationally agreed parameters. That is the only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The changed dynamics in the region, including the normalization agreements between Israel and several Arab countries, can and should be used to revitalize the peace process, and the United Nations should play a key role.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

[Original: Russian]

We thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for the briefing. We also listened with great interest to the representatives of the Palestinian and Israeli student communities.

The task of ensuring lasting peace and security in the Middle East and North Africa ranks among the priorities on the international agenda. One of the basic components of sustainable stability in the region is clearly the promotion of a Middle East settlement with a focus on finding a just solution to the Palestinian problem.

We note that Palestine and Israel have resumed contacts to address issues of security and tax payments. At the current stage, fighting the common enemy — the coronavirus disease pandemic — has become an important track for interaction. The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, which coordinates the delivery of international aid to the Palestinians, held a video-teleconference meeting on 23 February at which we informed our colleagues about the efforts we are making jointly with the Palestinians to counter the spread of the coronavirus disease.

At the same time, the unilateral steps that Israel is taking in order to create irreversible trends on the ground raise serious concerns. Those include illegal construction activities, the demolition of houses and plans to annex the occupied territories, all of which undermine the prospects for a lasting settlement.

The international community should play a constructive role in both the Palestinian-Israeli settlement and in alleviating the acute humanitarian and socioeconomic problems in the occupied territories, most of all in Gaza. We believe that it is very important that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East continue its effective work in lending support to the Palestinian people, both in the occupied territories and in neighbouring Arab States. The mobilization of comprehensive humanitarian assistance is especially needed amid the pandemic in order to overcome the socioeconomic challenges and contain the virus, including in the context of vaccination.

We believe that the process of Arab-Israeli normalization, which gained momentum in 2020, will contribute to pan-regional stabilization, promote a Middle East settlement and ensure that the Palestinian problem is not forgotten.

Russia unswervingly supports the two-State solution, which provides for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the universally recognized international legal framework, including the relevant decisions of the United Nations and the Arab Peace Initiative. There is no alternative to Palestinians and Israelis engaging in direct negotiations to determine parameters of the final settlement, including the problem of refugees, borders, water resources and the status of Jerusalem. We also expect that the upcoming elections in both Palestine and Israel will contribute to domestic consolidation and to the strengthening of the State institutions of both sides. Israel's security concerns also need to be taken into account.

We intend, together with our Egyptian friends, to continue to help the Palestinians achieve national unity on the Palestine Liberation Organization platform. The pending elections in Palestine also provide an opportunity to overcome existing controversies and strengthen institutional power.

For our part, we are taking steps to support the collective efforts aimed at achieving equitable peace in the region. We believe that one of the necessary tasks is to give impetus to the activities of the Quartet of international mediators and ensure that its meetings are convened on a regular basis. That would allow for the Quartet — Russia, the United States, the United Nations and the European Union — to keep an ear to the ground and coordinate their actions at all times. The Quartet met via video-teleconference on 15 February, and we can say that our partners in this inclusive and Security Council-endorsed mechanism demonstrated their readiness to cooperate constructively.

We deem it reasonable to engage regional stakeholders in promoting a Middle East settlement. It would therefore be useful to hold a ministerial meeting in the spring or summer of 2021 in 4+4+2 format — the Quartet plus Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, plus the Palestinian and Israeli sides — with the possible inclusion of Saudi Arabia. Such a meeting would be in line with the initiative of the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, to convene an international conference on a Middle East settlement. Such a Quartet-plus meeting could provide a review of the current state of affairs and outline key tracks for joint work aimed at overcoming the impasse in the settlement process. We hope that this idea will enjoy broad support and encourage all interested sides to share their comments and proposals in order to ensure that comprehensive preparatory work for the meeting is carried out.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Inga Rhonda King**

I thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing, and Mr. Oren Gian and Ms. Malak AbuSoud for their excellent and deeply profound presentations.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines takes note of the ruling of the International Criminal Court (ICC) that it has jurisdiction over war crimes committed in the Palestinian territories. It is critical for the international community to actively participate in the global fight against impunity and to render our unwavering support to the ICC. Moreover, we reaffirm that all States must comply with their obligations under the Rome Statute and the relevant Security Council resolutions to cooperate with the ICC.

We welcome the recent announcement that Israel will vaccinate 100,000 Palestinians who regularly cross into Israel for work. That notwithstanding, the rollout of the coronavirus vaccine, with more than half of the occupied West Bank and Gaza yet to receive supplies, needs the urgent attention and support of the international community. We urge Israel to provide more coronavirus vaccines to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. We also commend the efforts of those countries that have supplied vaccines to the Palestinians and call on the international community to help fill the large funding gap for the Palestinian coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine plan. We must all work together tirelessly to confront the coronavirus crisis, in line with the United Nations principle of leaving no one behind.

In East Jerusalem, as in the rest of the West Bank, settlements, the demolition of homes and the displacement of Palestinians are of deep concern. We condemn the ongoing demolition of Palestinian homes and the forced displacement of Palestinian families, and we call upon the Israeli authorities to halt such unlawful evictions and end the illegal demolitions of Palestinian property. Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory must immediately and completely cease. We reiterate that settlements have no legal validity, constitute a flagrant violation under international law and must be dismantled. Continued settlement activity violates the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and dangerously imperils the viability of a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders.

The social and economic impacts of the occupation on the Palestinians in the occupied territory, particularly the Gaza Strip, are increasingly dire. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza remains of deep concern for my delegation, especially now, during the COVID-19 pandemic. In that connection, we call on the Israeli Government to take additional steps to lift the blockade on Gaza, particularly to allow medical treatment and humanitarian aid to those in need. Similarly, we call on the international community to address the financial situation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which remains a serious concern for millions of Palestinian refugees.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates its support for President Abbas's decree issued on 15 January setting legislative, presidential and Palestinian National Council elections for later this year and welcomes the steps taken so far towards Palestinian unity. All Palestinians should be granted the opportunity to exercise their constitutional right to vote and contribute to Palestinian unity. Moreover, we welcome the presidential decree guaranteeing a minimum of seven parliamentary seats for Palestinians of Christian faith.

It is our firm belief that a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be achieved only by peaceful means in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions and through credible and direct negotiations. Consequently, we reiterate the call made by President Abbas for the United Nations to convene an international peace conference and encourage the Middle East Quartet to assist in that regard, in an effort to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the pre-1967 borders. Finally, we call on the Council to explicitly uphold international law in promoting peace and security for the Middle East.

From our outstanding youth briefers today, we heard that we need to build trust, and we need a just solution for the Palestinians; those are two aims that are inextricably linked.

Annex XV**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Tunisia to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, I should like to thank Tor Wennesland sincerely for his important briefing and his promising start in promoting the Middle East peace process. We also appreciate the Secretary-General's efforts to achieve the two-State solution and support security and stability in the region.

Tunisia commends the international consensus that materialized at the high-level Security Council meeting (see S/2021/91) on this agenda item held on 26 January 2021, under the Tunisian presidency, on the need for the international community to work together to overcome the current stalemate in the Middle East peace process and take practical steps to bring about real change in international engagement with the Palestinian issue by launching serious, credible negotiations to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, on the basis of international law, internationally recognized resolutions and the agreed-upon terms of reference.

Tunisia reiterates its support for the initiative launched by the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, to convene a plenipotentiary conference in which all stakeholders will participate, with a view to embarking upon a genuine peace process on the basis of established principles. In accordance with that vision, we support the proposal that a ministerial-level meeting of the Middle East Quartet be held in an expanded format in the coming months. We wish to emphasize that the Palestinians must be involved in any efforts or initiatives to resolve the conflict and achieve peace in the region.

Tunisia appreciates the constructive views expressed recently by components of the Quartet and their stated willingness to interact with the international drive to revive the peace process. We hope that, without further delay, those views will be translated into practical, inclusive action, particularly in the light of the seriousness of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, given the occupying authorities' continuing repressive policies and settlement activities, which run counter to international law, and their gross violations of the Palestinian people's most fundamental rights.

Tunisia also reaffirms the Security Council's responsibility for maintaining international peace and security; ensuring that its resolutions related to the Palestinian question, the most recent of which is resolution 2334 (2016), are implemented; and pushing towards the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in accordance with internationally recognized resolutions, particularly by prevailing on Israel, the occupying Power, to withdraw from all the occupied Arab territories.

We listened with grave concern to the statements in the briefing by the United Nations Special Coordinator about the intensification by the occupying Power of settlement activity, home demolitions, displacement of the Palestinian population and efforts to cut the geographical connection between East Jerusalem and the West Bank. That intensification represents a direct challenge to the two-State solution and a serious obstacle to a peaceful settlement of the conflict. In view of those grave violations, we urge the Council and the international community as a whole to assume their responsibilities by enforcing respect for internationally recognized resolutions and obliging the occupying authorities to cease their settlement activities immediately and completely, abandon their plans to annex the territories definitively and end their occupation of the Palestinian territories.

We also reiterate the international community's call for the Palestinian civilian population to be protected and for Israel, as the occupying Power, to be held accountable for the crimes that it has committed. Israel must be compelled to end the unjust blockade of the Gaza Strip and all other forms of collective punishment.

Tunisia urges regional and international actors to step up the humanitarian response in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in the light of the threat posed by the coronavirus disease pandemic and the effects of the economic restrictions imposed by the occupiers. Tunisia also emphasizes the importance of responding to the appeal of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for its financial needs for 2021 to be met. In that regard, my country welcomes the international commitment reflected at the most recent meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, held on 23 February 2021, and the return of the United States of America to its position at the heart of the Committee.

In conclusion, Tunisia reaffirms its steadfast support for the legitimate demands of the Palestinian people, particularly the right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent, sovereign State based on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the agreed-upon terms of reference, internationally recognized resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the principle of a two-State solution.

From our position at the heart of this United Nations organ, which is capable of bringing about real change for justice, freedom, dignity and long-awaited peace, we would emphasize the fact that millions of Palestinians and the peoples of the region, especially young people, have pinned their hopes on our common efforts.

Our shared responsibility and the credibility of our Council hang in the balance, and we have no choice but to act in accordance with the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, to reaffirm our faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity of the human person and in the equal rights of nations large and small.

Annex XVI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Barbara Woodward**

Let me start by thanking the Special Coordinator for his briefing. I also thank Malak and Oren for sharing their personal reflections with us today, including on how to help foster peace and understanding among new and older generations alike.

In order to build trust between the parties and populations, unilateral acts must also cease. The United Kingdom has called on the Government of Israel to end the demolition of Palestinian homes and structures in the occupied Palestinian territories. The latest demolitions in Humsa Al-Baqai'a have again made that vulnerable Palestinian community, including children, homeless. We urge the Government of Israel to allow the unimpeded delivery of vital humanitarian aid. We also call on the Government of Israel to refrain from the destruction or confiscation of such aid once it is delivered.

The United Kingdom will continue to champion the rights and freedoms of women, young people and marginalized groups. We join Palestinian women, and all Palestinians, in rejecting the recent changes made by Hamas, the de facto authorities in Gaza, to travel arrangements from Gaza, which will limit Gazan women's independence and liberty. We call for that decision to be fully reversed and for all parties to ensure greater freedoms and protections for women in the occupied Palestinian territories.

We are clear that the parties must work together to deliver meaningful improvements for Palestinians and Israelis. In that context, I would also like to welcome, as others have done, the constructive discussions held this week at the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians. We must now drive progress on measures that can alleviate the health and economic challenges in the occupied Palestinian territories. We welcome the cooperation on vaccine access, and we encourage the Government of Israel to facilitate the transfer of vaccines to the Palestinian Authority when required. We also need to see tangible and time-bound commitments from the parties to address long-standing barriers to the development of the Palestinian economy. Progress on those issues will help to foster an environment conducive to future peace negotiations.

Finally, I would like to welcome the continued progress towards legislative and presidential elections in the occupied Palestinian territories. As we have heard today, Palestinians need free and fair elections as a pathway to accountable institutions, based on respect for the rule of law and human rights.

The United Kingdom remains committed to a two-State solution. We will continue to work with the parties to the conflict to build the conditions for a permanent agreement. As our briefers today made clear, we must work towards a better future for Israelis and Palestinians alike. A just and lasting resolution that ends the occupation and delivers peace is the best way to achieve such a future.

Annex XVII**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Richard Mills**

I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing. We heard two challenging and powerful reports from our civil society briefers on the impact of this conflict on young people and how young people can work towards its resolution. As the Special Coordinator said, there will not be a resolution without the involvement of young people like Malak and Oren, so it was important to hear from them today. I am grateful, Madam President, that you have given us the chance to do that.

As I said the last time that we met on the Palestinian question in the Middle East (see S/2021/91), the United States remains committed to working towards a more peaceful, secure and prosperous future for the people of the Middle East. For both Israelis and Palestinians, that means focusing our efforts on advancing their freedom, security and prosperity in tangible ways in the immediate term. That is the best way of advancing towards a negotiated two-State solution, in which Israel lives in peace and security alongside a viable Palestinian State.

Our diplomatic engagement is based on active consultation with both Israelis and Palestinians. Since the Biden Administration took office last month, United States engagement with senior Palestinian Authority officials has resumed, opening up some important channels of communication. At the same time, we continue our very close consultations with the Israeli Government, including through last week's telephone call between President Biden and Prime Minister Netanyahu.

As we work to address the critical needs of both Israelis and Palestinians, we note that the humanitarian crisis in the region is complicated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), and I listened closely to the Special Coordinator's words about how vaccinations are being handled. We encourage Israel and the Palestinian Authority to work together on the facilitation of COVID-19 vaccines. COVID-19 is a health and security threat to us all, and we must all work together so that people are vaccinated no matter where they live.

We must also recognize the unsustainable disparity in economic development between two groups of people inextricably bound together and living in close proximity. Israel ranks as one of the top economies in the world, with a gross domestic product per capita on a par with France and Japan, while the West Bank and Gaza continue to experience severe economic instability and poverty, with the people of Gaza facing one of the highest unemployment rates on Earth. That is not a talent gap; it is a structural issue that should be diagnosed and addressed. We have no choice but to do that if we are to preserve and advance the two-State solution.

As such, and as we noted last month, the United States intends to resume United States assistance programmes that support economic development and humanitarian aid for the Palestinian people. That is to assist Palestinians in real need and to bring stability and security to both Israelis and Palestinians.

There has been a long history of bipartisan consensus in the United States on the value of United States assistance to the Palestinians, and we intend to provide assistance that will benefit all Palestinians, including refugees. We intend to do that not as a favour, but because it is in the interests of the United States. The funding ultimately supports Israel's security as well.

We look forward to resuming those important programmes, consistent with requirements under United States law. Related to that, we must see an end to Palestinian payments that are linked to those who have committed acts of terrorism.

At the same time, repeated terrorist attacks on Israel from Gaza must cease, and violence and incitement to violence by all parties must end.

I want to be clear. Our efforts to re-engage the Palestinian people and leadership do not detract in any way from our commitment to Israel. We continue to be dismayed by the sheer number of one-sided United Nations resolutions that single out Israel, while the United Nations and other international organizations ignore a full range of destabilizing actions by other countries in the region and across the globe. The United States remains committed to Israel's standing and participation in United Nations bodies and other international organizations, free from unfair bias and attacks.

The Human Rights Council is an example of an international body that places a disproportionate focus on Israel. The United States continues to strongly oppose the one-sided and biased approach of the Human Rights Council against Israel under its agenda item 7, the only standing country-specific agenda item of the Council. Defending Israel from being unfairly singled out in the Human Rights Council will be a key element of our re-engagement with that body.

Earlier this month, the International Criminal Court (ICC) also issued a decision claiming territorial jurisdiction in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, while expressly recognizing the serious legal and factual questions that surround its ability to do so. Such actions against Israel at the ICC increase tensions and undermine efforts to advance a negotiated two-State solution. The only realistic path to end the conflict is through negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, and we will continue to urge other countries to join our efforts to support meaningful engagement between the two sides.

Annex XVIII**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Tra Phuong Nguyen**

I thank Mr. Tor Wennesland for his valuable briefing. I welcome and thank the two student briefers from Israel and Palestine for their touching and informative presentations.

At the outset, I would like to welcome the recent developments towards holding the first elections in Palestine in more than a decade. The agreement between Palestinian factions in Cairo earlier this month was a crucial step for national unity and reconciliation. We encourage all political actors in Palestine to continue their talks in a constructive manner to tackle all outstanding issues in preparation for the elections. We once again emphasize that the elections must be free, fair and inclusive. We echo the Secretary-General's call on the Palestinian authorities to support women's participation throughout the electoral process. We urge the Israeli authorities to facilitate the holding of elections across the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. We also call upon all international and regional stakeholders to join hands to assist the Palestinians in electing their representatives and forming a unified Government.

Regarding the peace process, Viet Nam welcomes all efforts and initiatives by international and regional actors towards a comprehensive, just and long-lasting peace between Israel and Palestine in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. We were delighted to see the new momentum created by the stronger engagement of the relevant parties in the peace process. We look forward to working with the members of the Security Council on the proposal of President Abbas for an international conference, as well as other proposals that may bring new hope for the two-State solution. We hope to see the Quartet play a stronger and more active role in that process. We also encourage all regional actors, including the League of Arab States, to take concrete steps so as to build momentum for the current promising trends.

At this critical juncture, trust-building measures are particularly needed. Viet Nam repeats its call on all parties to refrain from any unilateral acts that could erode trust and undermine the prospects for a peaceful and negotiated solution. In that connection, we urge the Israeli authorities to halt all settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and to stop the demolition and confiscation of Palestinian-owned structures and properties. We are encouraged by the reports of the two sides having worked closely with the United Nations and its partners to ensure that equipment and supplies, and more recently vaccines, are delivered throughout the occupied Palestinian territories. We welcome the recent step by the Egyptian Government to lift the blockade on the Gaza Strip, and we urge the Israeli authorities to take the same measure in that direction.

With regard to the humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories, Viet Nam once again emphasizes the dire conditions of the Palestinian people. We welcome the continued and resumed humanitarian assistance from international donors. We reiterate our support for United Nations agencies, notably the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, in their efforts to alleviate the plight of the Palestinian people in the face of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

Before I conclude, I would like to reiterate our unwavering support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people and their inalienable rights. We strongly support the two-State solution, including the establishment of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, peacefully co-existing alongside the

State of Israel, within secure and internationally recognized borders on the basis of the pre-1967 lines and a negotiated settlement and in accordance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016).
