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Provisional

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meeting

Monday, 28 October 2019, 10 a.m.

New York

President: Mrs. Pandor/Mr. Matjila (South Africa)

Members:

Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Moriko
Dominican Republic	Mr. Trullols Yabra
Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
France	Mr. De Rivière
Germany	Ms. Leendertse
Indonesia	Mr. Djani
Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
Peru	Mr. Duclos
Poland	Ms. Wronecka
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Allen
United States of America	Mrs. Craft

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

*Reissued for technical reasons 14 February 2022.

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Croatia, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Viet Nam to participate in this meeting.

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, to participate in this meeting.

Mr. Mladenov is joining the meeting via video-teleconference from Jerusalem.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite the following to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Neville Gertze, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; and His Excellency Mr. Maged Abdelfattah Abdelaziz, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations.

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Mladenov.

Mr. Mladenov: We meet today as rapidly shifting developments in the Middle East continue to underscore the growing threat to international peace and security. As new, dangerous flashpoints emerge in the region, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict also remains one of the drivers of extremism and instability. The occupation continues and no progress has been made in realizing a negotiated two-State solution. It is a multigenerational tragedy for the peoples of this land.

On 26 September at the General Assembly (see A/74/PV.7), President Abbas announced his intention to set a date for Palestinian elections. If that decision were to materialize, it would be the first Palestinian elections since 2006, giving renewed legitimacy to national institutions. The international community should support this process if it strengthens national unity and not division. That includes an agreement for elections that take place across the occupied Palestinian territory, in line with relevant legislation, international best practices and an agreed national political platform that is based on existing agreements.

The past month has also witnessed the continuing deterioration of the situation on the ground. With no prospect of final-status negotiations on the horizon, facts on the ground continue to deteriorate, pushing us ever further from a viable two-State solution. During the past month it has been reported that the Israeli authorities advanced plans for housing units in Area C settlements. The exact numbers are yet to be confirmed. Even without this latest advancement, the number of units advanced or approved in 2019 so far is already greater than that for all of 2018. Settlements are illegal under international law and remain a substantial obstacle to peace. They must cease immediately.

Meanwhile, demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures also continued across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Citing the absence of Israeli-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain, the authorities demolished or seized 51 structures, resulting in the displacement of 80 Palestinians, including 40 children. Four of the structures were demolished based on Military Order 1797.

Demolitions and confiscations of infrastructures and internationally funded humanitarian projects in Area C also continue at a concerning pace. The Israeli authorities must stop this practice, which is not in line

with international humanitarian law, and compensate the population affected commensurately with the damages incurred.

Violence continues to be a major part of the day-to-day reality of the conflict. In recent weeks we have seen a welcome reduction of violence in Gaza, including in the launching of rockets. The agreements for calm brokered by the United Nations and Egypt continue to hold. Despite the overall improvement, however, three Palestinians were killed by the Israel Defense Forces, and more than 500 have been injured during protests at the Gaza perimeter fence.

I take this opportunity to reiterate the concerns expressed on 10 October by Deputy Special Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator Jamie McGoldrick on the impact that the violence at these demonstrations has had on children. The Israeli security forces have the responsibility to exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when strictly necessary, as a last resort. I also reiterate the call on Hamas to uphold its responsibility to ensure the safety of children in Gaza, including by preventing them from being used and exposed to the risk of violence.

During the reporting period, six rockets were launched from Gaza towards Israel, causing no injuries. Additionally, for the first time in a month, no fires were caused by incendiary balloons. Meanwhile, in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, two Palestinians were killed, including one infant following tear-gas inhalation. In addition, 88 Palestinians, including 11 children, were injured in various incidents, including during clashes, military operations and settler-related violence. Six Palestinian security forces personnel were also injured by home-made explosive devices during clashes with Palestinians. Four Israelis, including two Israel security forces personnel, were also injured, including one by Israeli settlers.

Among the overall incidents, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, settler-related violence resulted in 11 Palestinians and one Israeli injured. In addition, there were 33 incidents resulting in damage to Palestinian property, including some 1,236 trees and 63 vehicles, and one incident resulting in damage to an Israeli vehicle.

I am particularly concerned by the worrying attacks by settlers in the occupied West Bank, in the context of the annual olive harvest. As the olive harvest begins, I call on the authorities to ensure smooth access of

Palestinian farmers to their land and to protect farmers and their property from attacks.

On 16 October, in an alarming incident, Palestinian farmers and Israeli and foreign volunteers harvesting olive trees near Burin village were attacked with stones and metal rods by people from the Yitzhar settlement. On 22 October the Yitzhar area was declared a closed military zone, and forces were deployed in it. An 80-year-old rabbi and four foreign volunteers were also injured. One of the alleged perpetrators of those attacks was arrested. In Qaryut, south of Nablus, Palestinians were also prevented from accessing their lands for the olive harvest.

During the reporting period, despite attempts to reach an agreement between the Israeli authorities and residents of the Al-Issawiya district, tensions remain high in East Jerusalem.

On 26 September, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC) held its biannual meeting in New York. The United Nations highlighted the critical need to support the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority (PA) and to advance the two-State solution as the only viable option for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Moreover, at the meeting members noted that every effort must be made to avoid further deterioration in the security situations in both Gaza and the West Bank.

The United Nations also reported on progress in the implementation of the package of urgent humanitarian and economic interventions for Gaza, endorsed by the AHLC in September 2018. The interventions have had an important impact across many sectors. The average daily availability of electricity in Gaza has doubled from 5.5 hours in the first half of 2018 to nearly 12 to 15 hours in the first half of 2019. This has increased water and wastewater treatment, reduced the need for expensive fuel to run hospitals and lowered costs for private businesses and families.

Almost 450,000 people in Gaza have benefited from emergency health care, and nearly 400,000 have benefited from the delivery of drugs and medical supplies. As of October, United Nations temporary job-creation programmes have produced more than 16,000 jobs, with another 1,000 jobs expected in the coming weeks. I thank those Member States that have supported the implementation of the AHLC projects so far and urge others to contribute to these critical initiatives.

Despite these vital efforts, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains dire. As of the end of September, almost half of essential medications and about a third of essential medical disposables are still missing. Health providers continue to struggle to treat those injured during the weekly demonstrations. Severe movement and access restrictions continue, including for those requiring treatment outside Gaza and national staff from United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations working in Gaza.

While addressing the humanitarian crisis must remain our priority, I reiterate once again that the core of the crisis in Gaza is political. It is not possible to genuinely and sustainably improve the socioeconomic situation in Gaza without significantly easing restrictions on the movement and access of goods and people, with the goal of ultimately lifting them, in line with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), and reuniting Gaza and the West Bank under a single, legitimate Palestinian national authority.

In this regard, I once again call on all Palestinian factions to engage with Egypt on reconciliation efforts.

I am encouraged by the agreement reached on 3 October between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, which resulted in the transfer of some \$425 million of clearance revenues to the PA. Despite the relative normalization of the fiscal situation of the Palestinian Authority, both sides must engage in a constructive manner with the goal of restoring the revenue transfers in full, in line with the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations.

On another positive note, I welcome the Palestinian Cabinet's decision on 21 October to advance amendments to the Palestinian civil-status law in favour of women. These include increasing the minimum age of marriage and granting women the right to manage their children's bank accounts. In recent months, Palestinian women have been actively voicing their demands for recognition of their political, social and economic rights and protection against gender-based violence.

I am concerned, however, about the 17 October decision by the Ramallah Magistrate Court that ordered the blocking of some 50 Palestinian and Arabic websites and Facebook pages deemed critical of the Palestinian Authority and its officials. The fundamental right of freedom of opinion and expression and its associated freedom to receive information are important and must be protected. Following criticism from the Journalist

Syndicate and a petition from the National Human Rights Institution, the interpretation of the cybercrime presidential decree, which was used as the legal basis for the decision, was referred to the Constitutional Court on 24 October.

Turning to developments in the region, popular protests continue to take place in several countries, from Jordan to Iraq to Lebanon, with people demanding improvements to their daily lives and an end to corruption. In Lebanon, an estimated 1.5 million Lebanese have engaged in largely peaceful demonstrations against the deteriorating economic situation and corruption. In response, on 21 October the Council of Ministers adopted a series of reform measures and finalized the 2020 State budget, with a 0.6 per cent public deficit target. The protests, however, continue, with calls for the resignation of the Government.

In Iraq, from 1 to 9 October anti-Government protests took place across the country, notably in Baghdad and in the southern governorates, and turned violent, resulting in scores of fatalities. The report of a governmental investigation, released on 22 October, put the total number of fatalities at 157, citing a lack of control at the local level by senior officials, in addition to the unauthorized use of force, including live ammunition, by security forces. The Government in Baghdad has announced measures to address the legitimate demands of the protesters, including employment opportunities for young Iraqis and housing subsidies for the poor.

A second round of large-scale demonstrations started in the late evening of 24 October in Baghdad and other locations in the south and continues to date. Intense clashes have been reported, along with the destruction of public and private property and the presence of armed spoilers. As of 27 October, the Independent High Commission of Human Rights had registered 74 deaths and 3,654 injured — most of whom were treated and have left the hospital — as well as 90 buildings burned.

In Syria, in almost nine years of conflict we have witnessed the devastating toll on civilians, including serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law, alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity, systematic detention and torture, attacks on medical facilities, schools and camps for internally displaced persons and the erosion of norms prohibiting the use of chemical weapons. A whole

generation of Syrian children has grown up in war. Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed and half the country's population has been displaced.

The Secretary-General and the Security Council have made it clear that a sustainable solution can be reached only through a United Nations-facilitated, credible political process, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015). It is hoped that the launch of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva will be the first step in a broader political process that will meet the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians.

Meanwhile, in the occupied Golan, the situation has remained calm. The ceasefire between Israel and Syria continues to be maintained in an environment that remains volatile. Violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement, including breaches of the ceasefire line, continue to occur.

As we work to address the threats to international peace and security in the Middle East, we must never forget that preventive diplomacy is one of the most important tools that we can use in order to defuse tensions before they turn into confrontation. The people of the Middle East have seen enough violence and injustice. The region cannot afford another war and we must continue our efforts to de-escalate tensions and create openings for political solutions in the interest of peace. In that context, I would like to return to the Israeli-Palestinian question and remind everyone that despite our collective efforts to prevent war in Gaza, those efforts cannot be sustained on a purely humanitarian basis. They need a political perspective that illuminates a path forward to intra-Palestinian unity and, ultimately, a two-State solution. We can no longer continue to address Gaza's critical needs on a month-to-month basis while failing to confront the broader political reality, including the stiffening closures, violence and lack of unity.

Similarly, we can no longer disregard the cracks emerging in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Settlement construction and expansion continue, the PA financial crisis is not resolved and the economy continues to stagnate. Therefore, we must reassert that to advance the goal of lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, the only way forward is to return to the negotiations with the goal of two States, living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition, based on relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and prior agreements.

As in Israel and Palestine, so in the rest of the Middle East, our collective efforts must be guided by the Charter of the United Nations. In each conflict in the region, preventive diplomacy and de-escalation are critical elements of our engagement. Long-term sustainable peace, however, can be based only on justice, human rights and international law.

The President: I thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I wish to begin by expressing our congratulations and appreciation to the Republic of South Africa for its most able leadership of the Security Council in this month of its presidency. I would like to welcome you, Madam Minister, and thank you for presiding over today's meeting. I would also like to welcome Her Excellency Ms. Antje Leendertse, State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany.

We thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mladenov, for his briefing on the current situation in occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem.

Every month, we come before the Security Council to appeal to it to act to ensure the implementation of its resolutions on the Palestine question, certain that only such action can bring us all back from the brink, stopping the senseless, painful human suffering caused by the man-made crisis and salvaging the prospects for a just peace. Yet, every month we are compelled to listen to reports of a worsening situation, as Israel, the occupying Power, intensifies its illegal occupation and colonization of our land and a political horizon for a peaceful solution remains obstructed.

It cannot be that the role of the Council is reduced to that of a gathering for the airing of grievances, statements of sympathy and solidarity, as important as they are, and helpless hand-wringing. The Palestinian people and the global community at large expect and await more. The mandate of the Security Council, under the Charter of the United Nations, to maintain international peace and security surely requires more.

As the calls to preserve multilateralism against current threats grow, shoring up the Security Council's role in the peaceful resolution of conflicts must be front and centre. That requires urgent action to uphold and

enforce international law, aimed at halting violations, deterring future violations and fostering an environment conducive to the pursuit and achievement of peace.

In the case of Palestine, the Council's relevant resolutions, from resolution 2334 (2016) to all resolutions preceding it, provide a solid basis for such action. The international consensus is firm and attempts to alter or negate it have failed. Indeed, we have often heard that, when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there is no need to reinvent the wheel. International law is clear. The parameters of a just solution are clear and there is no alternative to the vision of two States, based on the 1967 lines and in accordance with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map. But, in the absence of serious action to give tangible meaning to that consensus, the alternative is rapidly unfolding before our eyes and is one of an apartheid State in control of the lives of millions who are being oppressively, violently and unjustly deprived of their fundamental rights, even the right to live as free and equal human beings.

After over 52 years of illegal occupation and the cruel exile imposed on millions of Palestinians for over seven decades, it is clear that the failure to reach a solution is not for lack of attention to the conflict or lack of resolutions; it is for lack of genuine efforts to uphold the rules, decisions and humanitarian commitments that have been repeatedly pled for. As concluded by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory in his latest report:

“No occupation in the modern world has been conducted with the international community so alert to its many grave breaches of international law, so knowledgeable about the occupier's obvious and well-signalled intent to annex and establish permanent sovereignty, so well-informed about the scale of suffering and dispossession endured by the protected population under occupation, and yet so unwilling to act upon the overwhelming evidence before it to employ the tangible and plentiful legal and political tools at its disposal to end the injustice.”

Without accountability, the deplorable situation we have faced will surely only worsen, paving the way for more suffering and insecurity for all, with innocent civilians, among them children and woman, bearing

the heaviest and most heart-breaking weight of the international community's negligence. Indeed, despite decades of global attention, none of Israel's violations in occupied Palestine have stopped. Those include the colonization or de facto annexation of our land by all means, with the settlements and wall being the most insidious examples; the inhumane 12-year blockade and collective punishment of 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, inflicting devastating poverty and despair; the killing and injury of defenceless Palestinian civilians by the occupying forces and extremist settlers; the destruction of homes and properties and the forced displacement of Palestinian families, especially in occupied East Jerusalem — with 140 homes demolished in the city in 2019 alone — rendering homeless 238 Palestinians, more than half of them children; the dangerous provocations and assaults at holy sites; the impoverishment and detention of thousands of our civilians, or the blatant theft of our natural and financial resources. That all continues unabated.

The fact is that the occupying Power has been led to believe that it has carte blanche to act as a State above the law, going so far as to openly threaten to annex our land, in flagrant breach of the universal prohibition on the acquisition of territory by force. With or without a formal Government, Israeli politicians and candidates shamelessly compete to see who can be more brutal and punishing to the Palestinians and who can cater more to extremist Israeli groups that will never be satiated, as evidenced by their daily terror campaign against our civilians, as well as their incitement and their rabid land-grabs. Nothing else could be expected in the absence of consequences for such great violations by this most protracted foreign occupation in modern history. Only accountability can change that. I repeat — only accountability can change that.

Therefore, we appeal once more to the Security Council and all States to act. We urge them to mobilize the political will to fulfil their obligations by taking practical measures in line with international law and the relevant resolutions, which guarantee just and sustainable peace and security. The Security Council must shoulder its responsibilities and act immediately in line with its resolutions to bring about a halt to the occupation's crimes, avert further destabilization, protect innocent civilians and salvage any chance for peace. States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society must also uphold their respective roles and responsibilities.

Should Israel continue to defy the Council and the will of the international community, it must bear the consequences for its violations. All legitimate political and legal tools and measures available, including sanctions and court prosecution must be pursued to ensure accountability. That must include action pursuant to the call for distinction in resolution 2334 (2016) and other relevant resolutions including, inter alia, resolution 478 (1980), on Jerusalem, and resolution 465 (1980), in which the Council clearly called on all States not to provide Israel with any assistance to be used specifically in connection with its settlements in the territories occupied since 1967.

We urge States to take concrete steps in that regard, in both multilateral and bilateral frameworks, in conformity with their legal obligations and with affirmed support for the two-State solution. We reiterate our call for release of the database on businesses engaged in activities related to the illegal settlements, which was mandated by the Human Rights Council and will help States to uphold their obligations. States also have a duty of non-recognition of any decisions or measures altering or purporting to alter the geographic and demographic character or status of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, in violation of the law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. All such decisions and measures must be deemed unlawful, null and void and should incur consequences if not rescinded. The legal and historic status quo at the holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem, including at Al-Haram Al-Sharif, must be respected, as must Jordan's custodianship of the Muslim and Christian holy sites.

Lastly, we reiterate our call for continued principled support for the rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and freedom. Until they are realized, we shall continue our appeals for humanitarian assistance to alleviate the plight of our people, including Palestinian refugees and to ensure that they are not left behind. We recognize with deep gratitude the generous international support in that regard through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and urge strong backing for the renewal of its mandate, an important expression of responsibility and solidarity and an indispensable source of hope and stability until a just solution for the Palestinian refugees is realized based on resolution 194 (II). Only such determined, collective and coordinated action can

move us from deadlock to finally bringing an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, thereby fulfilling the Palestinian people's right to independence in their sovereign, contiguous democratic State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and achieving Israeli-Palestinian peace and security, the cornerstone for peace and security in the Middle East as per the long-standing international consensus.

For the sake of peace, the benefit of all peoples of the region and the respect for the authority of international law, we must act together to change course, restore hope and attain just and comprehensive peace. Failure to do so will have far-reaching repercussions and unravel decades of efforts and resources invested in our shared noble goals of peace, stability and human dignity. We must not let another generation suffer that injustice.

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

Mr. Danon (Israel): Every three months, we meet here to discuss the situation in the Middle East. As I am sure will happen today as well, the members of this organ will choose to talk about Israel, despite the horrific events that are taking place in the region.

Since our last meeting on this item (see S/PV.8583), Erdoğan has invaded northern Syria and caused instability in the region. As shocking as Erdoğan's recent aggression is, it should come as no surprise. For years now, Erdoğan has been destabilizing the region through violence and by supporting terror organizations. Erdoğan is dragging Turkey down a dangerous new Ottoman imperialist path. He threatens journalists, persecutes religious minorities and promotes anti-Semitism. It was not enough for Erdoğan to persecute the Kurdish citizens of his own country. He has now sent his troops to massacre Kurdish people in Syria as well. He is responsible for the deaths of many innocent people and for the displacement of tens of thousands.

The violence that he has caused in Syria has also led to the strengthening of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS). While he was busy murdering those who had helped keep the world safe from the threats of ISIS, he allowed ISIS members to break out of prison and subject the world to future attacks. That, too, should come as no surprise, as Erdoğan has a long history of supporting terror. Erdoğan has granted Hamas, a terror organization, political and financial support. He has allowed Hamas to continue to build its leadership and

infrastructure on Turkish soil. He has turned Turkey into a safe haven for Hamas terrorists and a financial centre for funnelling money to subsidize terror attacks. Erdoğan's Turkey shows no moral or human restraint towards the Kurdish people. Erdoğan has turned Turkey into a regional hub for terrorism.

As Erdoğan expands his terror campaign in Syria, the Security Council focuses on Israel. It is a disgrace to the Council's mandate that it continues to target Israel instead of the atrocities that are being committed by Erdoğan. As we sit here today, recycling old arguments against Israel over and over again instead of focusing on the devastation caused by Erdoğan will not save the lives of the Kurdish people. Israel warns against the ethnic cleansing of the Kurds and calls on the international community to take action and provide aid to the Kurdish people.

Unfortunately, Erdoğan's support for non-State terror organizations does not stand alone. For years, the region has experienced the growing influence of such organizations, and they now play a substantial role in shaping the reality of the Middle East. These terror organizations have been able to grow and act in an increasingly bold manner because they have been backed by countries. It is no secret that some in the region wish to pursue policies and develop capabilities that put the international community at risk. In some cases, countries blatantly defy the international community and pursue their weapons capabilities, as we have seen with Iran's continued development of its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. However, in other cases those countries wish to further their dangerous ambitions without appearing responsible for doing so. That is why Turkey supports Hamas and recklessly strengthens ISIS. That is why Iran has formed militias. The Iranian regime, whose nuclear ambitions represent the biggest threat to world peace, uses organizations as proxies to further its dangerous plans. Those organizations are doing Iran's dirty work and granting it a form of plausible deniability.

These organizations have multiplied and spread like a dangerous virus. They are now present in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, Gaza, the Sinai peninsula, Libya and other locations. For example, the Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi Shia militias have long stopped focusing on fighting ISIS and have since, under Iranian influence, been challenging the stability of Iraq. The militias' stronghold on the Iraqi-Syrian border, an area that serves as a crucial part of the Iranian land-bridge through

the Middle East, poses a threat to the security of the citizens of Iraq and to the stability of the Government. In northern Syria, ISIS has recently been strengthened by Erdoğan's attack on the Kurds and continues to pose a threat to peace and stability in the region. Hizbullah continues to strengthen its hold in western Syria and arm itself in Lebanon. Ansar Allah Houthis continue to be a source of violence, both in Yemen and in the rest of the region, as we recently witnessed in Saudi Arabia. In Gaza, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad continue to target innocent civilians on both sides of the border and defy the efforts made by parties in the region to bring the violence to an end.

These terrorist organizations do not all share the same ideology and they differ in their perverted interpretation of religious text. However, they all share one main goal — to rid the region of nation States and inaugurate a single religious leadership to preside over the world. These organizations undermine the sovereignty of States, disregard the rights of citizens and cause instability. They do not believe in the rights of women, the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, or the freedom of religion. These organizations have been using brutal force against civilian populations to pursue their agendas. They have been murdering and raping. They have been looting towns and using children as soldiers and human shields. When one of these organizations represents a single party to a conflict, its willingness to do whatever it takes can be dangerous; but when many parties act that way in a region that is already volatile, the consequences can be and have been horrific. These are the actors that are now playing a substantial role in shaping the reality of the Middle East.

Many of these organizations have set up camp on Israel's borders. Up north in Lebanon, there is Hizbullah; in Syria, there are Iranian militias and Hizbullah; in Gaza, there is Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad; and in the Sinai peninsula, there is ISIS. Israel will continue to do everything in its power to defeat those organizations and keep our civilians safe. However, it is not the safety and well-being of only one country or even one region that are on the line. The lack of stability has grave consequences for the entire international community.

The recent Iranian attacks on Saudi Arabia, for which Iran got the Houthis to claim responsibility, did not only cause unrest in the region, but also affected the world economy. The price of oil jumped after the

attacks on the oil facilities. Consumers worldwide bore the literal cost of the harm to the global supply of crude oil. The non-State terror organizations of the region act in ways that are dangerous to the world economy and their effects are felt far beyond the region.

The economy is not the only way in which those organizations affect the international community. When citizens are persecuted in their own homes and are terrorized by those organizations, they do not stay home. They seek to flee as far as they can and they become refugees. Sometimes they stay in the Middle East, but, as we have seen in recent years, many make their way to Europe. By the end of 2016, nearly 5.2 million refugees and migrants had reached European shores after enduring agonizing journeys from Syria, Iraq and other countries.

Unfortunately, many more did not manage to reach those shores. In 2018, more than 138,000 people risked their lives trying to reach Europe by sea. More than 2,000 of them drowned. In Yemen, 3 million people have been forced to flee their homes because of increased violence. Many flee to neighbouring countries such as Saudi Arabia, Djibouti and Ethiopia. The immigration crisis is a direct result of the growing power of non-State terrorist organizations in the region. The proxies of Iran and other terrorist-supporting States are forcing people out of their homes, leaving the rest of the world to take care of them.

This organ was created to promote stability and safety in the world. However, the world in which this organ was created — a world in which violence was played out among States — no longer exists. The international community is trying to win again new players, using an old strategy in a game that has long since evolved. If this organ wishes to truly serve its mandate of promoting safety and stability, it must adapt itself to a world with non-State actors.

For years, Israel has had to deal with non-State terrorist organizations that seek to destroy it. Through its experience, Israel has developed methods for dealing with them and looks to share those methods with the world. The international community must come together to return stability to the region by immediately taking the following four steps.

First, we must all recognize such non-State organizations for what they are — terrorist organizations. The international community must

designate them as terrorist organizations and publicly condemn them and their actions.

Secondly, we must prevent the funding of such organizations, which includes using our intelligence forces to find all sources of revenue that they hold and cutting them off. It also means forcing regimes to stop providing funding to those organizations and applying more sanctions.

Thirdly, we must encourage the countries in which those terrorist organizations live to take action against them, and we must assist them in those efforts.

Finally, if all else fails, we must take military action to stop those terror organizations. Israel congratulates our dear friend the United States on its recent, successful operation. Al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, posed a threat to the safety and security of the entire world. We thank the United States for making our world safer.

The four steps I have mentioned are not enough. If this organ wants to serve its purpose of promoting safety and stability in the new world order, it must adjust. We must work together to promote new methods and forms of cooperation. The Council was created to ensure the security and stability of the United Nations Member States. Non-State terrorist organizations represent the biggest threat to both security and stability. It is our human obligation to fight for the lives of innocent civilians; it is our moral obligation to fight for human rights for all; it is our mandated obligation to ensure that nation-States are not held hostage by terrorist organizations and the countries that support them. I call upon my fellow members to join forces in the fight against this threat.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa.

South Africa firmly believes that the question of peace in the Middle East will not be resolved unless the question of Palestine is resolved. Today, we debate the longest-standing subject on the agenda of the Security Council. Our failure to find a resolution to the plight of the people of Palestine and to secure their peace and freedom is a profound stain on our stated mission and objectives. In the period since our previous debate, the situation has deteriorated markedly, suggesting even less hope for peace.

The Council has a duty to the people of Palestine, which is clearly articulated in the Charter of the United Nations, and it is vital that dedicated attention be directed towards finally achieving the outcomes stated in manifold United Nations resolutions.

South Africa believes that it is always possible to find solutions to seemingly intractable challenges. Our own struggles were advanced by United Nations action and determination to end a crime against humanity. We need similar, vigorous international solidarity, indignation and commitment for Palestine. The Council is fully aware that it is in this very organ that the elusive breakthrough exists — that it is only several of the members present here that can ensure peace and security in Palestine and the entire Middle East.

Council resolutions have been breached and ignored. Resolution 2334 (2016) confirmed that the Council would not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those that were agreed by the parties through mediation. Yet those very agreed decisions and negotiations have been undermined through unilateral decisions aimed at predetermining the outcome of the negotiations. That points to bad faith and can never secure peace.

Of even greater concern is the fact that the people of Palestine seem to have become a forgotten people whose hopes are dissipating in the face of diminishing world support and the absence of any real attempt at honest and genuine negotiations. We in South Africa are gravely concerned by the continued disregard for the long-standing Middle East peace process through the systematic foreclosing of the final status issues, particularly with regard to the borders, the return of refugees, the status of Jerusalem and the ever-expanding illegal settlements. There is clearly no intention to seek or achieve peace by those implementing such actions. How is it possible to believe in the Council, in peace and security, in the face of such offending breaches of its very decisions?

The Council must find ways to repair its damaged and waning credibility as a source of peace and security. First, the Council must insist on receiving regular written reports on the implementation of its decisions, particularly with respect to resolution 2334 (2016). Secondly, the Council must visibly show its solidarity with the long-suffering people of Palestine by ensuring that the long-overdue field visit to the

occupied Palestinian territory is conducted by those on the Council willing to do so. Thirdly, the Council must take further action against the continued violation of human rights and disregard for international law.

South Africa fully supports a two-State solution and an agreed peace process aimed at ensuring two coexisting viable States side by side, offering hope and example to those who suffer hatred and insecurity. This solution would bring important benefits for the entire region. We also utterly condemn the human rights violations against the Palestinian people and the violence directed at the people of Gaza and the West Bank through occupation and aggression by Israel.

The Council cannot be seen to condone such actions of violence and hostility as the building of further barriers and walls, the closing of schools and the killing of civilians. The Council should act to ensure gestures of hope and the building of trust between the parties, which requires, as a first step, a firm statement against intolerance of violent infringements and other negative actions.

This institution, the United Nations, was founded on the principles of ensuring the presence and practice of human rights, respect for the worth and dignity of every person, equality whether rich or poor, mighty or weak, and a world of justice, peace and respect for international law. On the subject of Palestine, we have clearly failed on these principles. Our commitments have fallen short, and suffering continues unabated. We must do more before the next debate.

There are many who will speak on this subject today, which indicates great trouble and great interest in this troubling inadequacy. Let us remember that while debate is important, we lose credibility as an institution when words are not accompanied by action. The people of Palestine require action.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the other Council members who wish to make statements.

Ms. Leendertse (Germany): Germany is firmly committed to a rules-based international order and multilateral cooperation, which is why Germany, together with France and other States, hosted a ministerial event during the high-level week here in New York under the auspices of the Alliance for Multilateralism, with the participation of ministers

from more than 50 States. Global challenges need to be addressed together, in a joint effort and in a multilateral framework that is able to defend what has been agreed.

What is true at the global level is also true at the regional level, including when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The best and only way to achieve a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is for the international community to work together, remain committed to a common set of rules and values, and do so in the framework of the United Nations.

Germany therefore remains fully and firmly committed to a negotiated two-State solution based on the internationally agreed parameters. We believe a two-State solution is the only viable answer to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs, fulfils Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967, resolves all permanent status issues, and guarantees equal rights for all inhabitants.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is first and foremost a political conflict that requires a political solution. Addressing the economic aspects of the conflict alone cannot replace a political solution negotiated between the parties for the purposes of achieving lasting peace. In line with the European Union and our European partners, we welcome and support any initiative that aims at reviving the peace process as long as it is based on a commitment to a viable two-State solution, as internationally agreed, and as long as it is acceptable to both parties, Israelis and Palestinians.

Joint efforts to restore a political perspective for the resumption of the peace process are urgently needed. We therefore support any attempt to restart meaningful direct talks and negotiations between the parties with the objective of reaching a just and lasting solution.

There will not be and there cannot be a fast track to peace. Forgoing the most controversial questions of the peace process by taking them off the table or creating facts on the ground will not lead to sustainable peace. We therefore call on all parties to refrain from taking unilateral measures and collectively counter the negative developments on the ground that are undermining the viability of a negotiated two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of the internationally agreed parameters.

One of the main obstacles to a political settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is, in our view, the continued settlement activities in the territories occupied since 1967. We reiterate our position that Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories are illegal under international law and undermine the prospects for a negotiated two-State solution. We call upon Israel to end the expansion of settlements, the legalization of settlement outposts and the demolition, seizure and evictions of Palestinian-owned structures. Germany will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including those concerning Jerusalem, other than those agreed upon by the parties. Resolution 2334 (2016) needs to be fully implemented, not only regarding settlement activities. The obligations it sets out with regard to acts of terror, violence against civilians, incitement, provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric need to be honoured as well.

Germany condemns all attacks on Israel, including the repeated firing of rockets from Gaza by Hamas and other groups, in the strongest possible terms. Indeed, Hamas and other groups must stop firing rockets from Gaza into Israel. They must renounce the path of violence and allow the Palestinian Authority to return to Gaza. Against this backdrop, Germany welcomes the announcement by President Abbas to hold elections in the near future. Germany remains steadfast in its commitment to Israel's security as a Jewish and democratic State. We will not be silent whenever Israel's security or right to exist is questioned or compromised.

The increase in violence and provocative rhetoric and actions is deeply worrying. We strongly urge all sides to de-escalate, exercise restraint and refrain from provocative rhetoric and actions. Considering recent events at the Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount, we recall the paramount importance of maintaining the agreed status quo for keeping the peace at these holy sites.

The deteriorating humanitarian and economic situation in Gaza, in particular the situation in the health-care sector, remains deeply worrisome. We also call upon Israel and the Palestinian Authority to do their part to improve the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. We encourage States Members of the United Nations to step up their financial support in order to close the current funding gaps of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near

East (UNRWA), and to ensure the provision of basic health-care services in Gaza.

UNRWA remains indispensable for meeting the basic needs of Palestinian refugees. By providing humanitarian assistance, health-care services and education, UNRWA is key to maintaining stability in the region. As the largest bilateral donor, Germany remains firmly committed to UNRWA and continues to significantly contribute to the Agency's budget. We encourage others to similarly continue their political and financial support for UNRWA's crucial work. However, we also expect UNRWA to work arduously towards the swift termination of ongoing internal investigations.

Mrs. Craft (United States of America): The present issue is one of the more complex issues that the Council has to navigate. I therefore wish to thank the Special Coordinator for his good-faith efforts and for the even-handed perspective he brings to these briefings.

Before discussing today's topic, I want to make brief mention of the important event that occurred over the weekend. As President Trump stated, the world is a much safer place following the operation by American special operations forces that resulted in the death of Al-Baghdadi. I want to thank Americans, fearless women and men in uniform, our intelligence community and our partners, who executed this mission flawlessly, for their efforts in bringing the leader of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant to justice.

In my remarks on the issue last month (see S/PV.8625), I largely focused on Israel, which receives a disproportionate amount of the United Nations attention when it comes to the discussion of peace and security in the Middle East. This attention is unfairly negative and one-sided. In the past two years, there have been some 20 resolutions in the General Assembly either implicitly or explicitly criticizing Israel.

Today, I want to use my remarks to shed light on an actor that somehow receives far less criticism than Israel and whose behaviour has never been seriously scrutinized by the Council or by the General Assembly: Hamas, a terrorist organization that oppresses the Palestinian people in Gaza through intimidation and outright violence while inciting violence against Israel.

Hamas is one of the largest obstacles to real peace and prosperity for Palestinians and to the resolution of this conflict. If this institution is genuinely concerned with peace, we should be eager to examine Hamas'

behaviour more closely. To begin, Hamas exhibits a blatant lack of respect for democratic principles. In recent months, as frustrated residents of Gaza have voiced their opposition to the intolerable living conditions created by Hamas' rule, Hamas has brutally beaten peaceful protesters, raided homes and detained organizers and journalists advocating for better living standards. I condemn this behaviour. We all should.

The disregard Hamas shows for the will and rights of the Palestinian people is matched only by the disregard for innocent human life. We all know that Hamas blindly fires rockets into Israel, as they have done hundreds of times in 2019. But it is important for us to understand what that means at a human level. The vast majority of rockets fired by Hamas are unguided, which means that a lethal munition is just as likely to hit a classroom full of children as it is to strike a military asset. We cannot imagine the fears of Israeli mothers who know their children may spend recess running from the playground to the bomb shelter, or the Palestinian fathers who know that unguided rockets fly over their roofs while their children sleep. I condemn these indiscriminate attacks. We all should.

If there is anything more despicable than Hamas' attacks on civilian areas, it is the way they treat their own children as pawns in a political game. Every Friday, Hamas encourages minors to join riots at the security fence, hoping that violence will erupt and that the children will be injured or even killed as a result, thereby feeding their propaganda machine. A more cynical and shameful approach could not be devised. This is child abuse, plain and simple, and I condemn it. We all should.

We have a responsibility to say what is plainly true about Hamas, as well as the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other militant actors in Gaza, just as we have an obligation to say what is plainly true of human rights abusers around the world. To remain silent in this instance would be an act against principle and an insult to the Palestinian people. It is therefore my genuine hope that this Chamber and, indeed, the halls of the United Nations will one day resound with the truth that we have spoken about Hamas. Lasting peace in the Middle East and a better future for all Palestinians depends on it.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): France, together with the European Union, offers its steadfast support for the two-State solution. We continue to defend

this position, not only because it is just and in line with international law, but also because it is realistic. It is the only way to meet the aspirations of both the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples and, ultimately, bring lasting peace to the region. It must enable the establishment of a fully functioning Palestinian State, living in peace and security alongside the State of Israel, within secure and internationally recognized borders along the 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

For its part, France will continue to defend, as it always has, the creation of a Palestinian State. We will also continue to oppose, as we always have, all those who attack the security — and indeed, the very existence — of Israel. Every day we witness how the absence of a political perspective fuels despair, radicalization in all its forms and the risk of regional destabilization. The parties must therefore refrain from any measure contrary to international law that could endanger the viability of the two-State solution.

Bolstered by those convictions, the international community and the Council in particular have defined and endorsed this two-State solution. All Council resolutions remain valid and relevant, from resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) to resolution 2334 (2016) on settlement building, as well as resolution 1515 (2003), adopted unanimously by the Council and which enshrines the two-State solution. The jurisprudence of the Council must be respected in its entirety; it is not an *à la carte* menu.

At a time when the prospect of a two-State solution may seem to be further and further away, it is more important than ever to remind the parties that there is no viable alternative. Any peace plan that distances itself from the two-State solution is an illusion. The aspirations of one people cannot be sustainably realized to the detriment of the rights and aspirations of the other. The economic development of the occupied Palestinian territories is a necessary condition, and that is why France and the European Union support the action of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians. But that is not enough — there will be no peace without a genuine and comprehensive political solution.

The most recent developments must be considered in the light of this collectively defined objective of the two-State solution. France welcomes the announcement made by President Abbas to the General Assembly on the holding of general elections (see A/74/PV.7). In

order for these elections to be pluralistic and inclusive, it is important that they be held in all Palestinian territories, including the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. In any case, President Abbas' announcement must be an element of inter-Palestinian reconciliation, which constitutes one of the conditions for achieving peace. I wish to highlight the efforts made by Egypt in this regard.

The arrangement reached at the beginning of October between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on the transfer of income is also commendable, pending the conclusion of a comprehensive and lasting agreement. Despite that, the situation on the ground continues to deteriorate and renders peace more difficult. In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the ongoing building of settlements, illegal under international law as reaffirmed by resolution 2334 (2016), is fuelling tensions and undermining the viability of the two-State solution. Recent statements on the possible annexation of certain areas of the West Bank are also very worrying. This would constitute a barrier to peace and a grave and unprecedented violation of international law. Along with our European partners, we will continue to monitor the situation closely, including any movements towards annexation, and act accordingly.

In Gaza, despite the maintenance of a precarious calm and respect for the truce since mid-September, the humanitarian situation remains catastrophic. Beyond emergency responses, there will be no lasting improvement in the situation in Gaza without a political solution involving the return of the Palestinian Authority and the lifting of the blockade, with credible security guarantees for Israel. We call for respect for the right to peaceful demonstration and the proportionate use of force.

As we await lasting peace, which will provide a just response to the issue of refugees, our collective support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East remains essential. Such support is all the more important as we approach the triennial renewal of its mandate by the General Assembly this fall.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that France will continue to work towards the two-State solution. Because France is a friend to both Israel and Palestine, we stand ready to encourage them to resume dialogue. Since the spring of 2014, there has been no peace process, only constant announcements of postponed

initiatives that never see the light of day. The Security Council must play its role, both in terms of ensuring the implementation of its past resolutions and supporting the emergence of a solution that can only come from the parties themselves.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Madam President, we wish to welcome both your presence in the Security Council today and the fact that you are presiding over this meeting. We also welcome the presence of the State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany. We wish to thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, and reiterate our full support for his efforts and mandate, which he is ably fulfilling in a difficult and delicate security and political environment.

Upon joining the Organization, States Members of the United Nations adopt the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter, including the specific mandate given to the Security Council under Article 24, in which Member States confer upon the Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Council acts on their behalf. Furthermore, Member States agree, in accordance with Article 25 of the Charter, to accept and carry out Council resolutions. Today, at a time when Israel, the occupying Power, continuously ignores or violates the resolutions of the Security Council, and make it impossible to resolve the Palestinian question, which represents the core of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and thereby to achieve a just and comprehensive peace, we would like to highlight the binding nature of Security Council resolutions.

First, the Charter of the United Nations is an international treaty, whose articles carry the same weight and trigger the same kinds of obligations that other instruments of international law do, particularly in terms of their mandatory nature, which binds Member States in terms of such principles of international relations as the sovereign equality of States and the illegality of the use of force against States. Since the founding of the United Nations in 1945, the Security Council has adopted dozens of resolutions on the Palestinian question, most of which have focused on calling on Israel, the occupying Power, to end its occupation of and violations committed in occupied Palestinian territory. However, those resolutions have

remained ineffectual, despite of the fact that they are binding on all countries.

Secondly, although States Members of the United Nations have delegated a major part of their authority to the Security Council, the Council has regrettably been incapable of making the occupying Power implement its resolutions. Of further concern is the contempt with which the occupying Power treats the Council and its resolutions, particularly those aimed at protecting the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and at putting an end to all illegitimate and illegal actions taken against them, their property, sacred places and fundamental rights.

Thirdly, given that the Security Council is the organ mandated by the Charter to assume responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the strength of its resolutions derives from the fact that no State has the right to renounce its obligation to implement those resolutions, particularly those adopted in the context of Council efforts to end conflict.

Fourthly, Council resolutions are of particular importance in addressing the Palestinian question because international consensus on the issue is a fundamental pillar of any peace agreement and represents the legal basis and key reference point for all endeavours and negotiations aimed at resolving the issue, in particular the two-State solution and the principle of living side by side in lasting peace.

Fifthly, it is regrettable that Israel, the occupying Power, continues to act as if Council resolutions on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict are irrelevant. In fact, Israel is attempting to alter the historical and demographic situation on the ground, particularly in Jerusalem, by resorting to military force and expansionist settlement policies, despite the call in resolution 2334 (2016) for an end to such policies. Today, Israel is demolishing Palestinian buildings and houses, resulting in forced displacement of residents. Violence is committed by settlers against local inhabitants. The Gaza Strip is under siege. Attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque are regular events. Moreover, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which has provided essential services to the Palestinian refugee community for decades, is under tremendous financial pressure. We wish to take this opportunity to express our full support for UNRWA and its mandate and condemn all practices aimed at

acquiring territory by force, in violation of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

The Security Council has the primary duty of maintaining international peace and security, acting on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations as their executive organ. Council resolutions are therefore binding, which means that Member States have an international responsibility to hold to account those States that are not complying with the Council's resolutions, namely, in this case, the State of Israel, the occupying Power, which has deliberately disregarded the legal nature of Council resolutions for decades and has shown nothing but contempt for the Charter of the United Nations and fundamental human rights.

Earlier, my Palestinian colleague mentioned tools available to the Council, including the imposition of sanctions under Article 41 of the Charter, that might ensure that Israel respects and implements relevant resolutions. We once again call on members of the Council to visit the occupied Palestinian territory to see the effects of occupation as well as the tragic consequences for the Palestinian people, with a view to taking necessary steps and measures to put an end to the occupation.

Finally, while Israel occupies Palestine and ignores the will of the international community, we reiterate our support for the Arab, Islamic and international stance that holds that peace is the strategic choice and that a lasting, comprehensive and just solution must be based on the two-State solution, in accordance with the agreed terms of reference, namely, relevant Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative. Accordingly, the Palestinian people will be assured of all their legitimate political rights, including the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. Moriko (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, my delegation welcomes your participation in today's meeting in your capacity as Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, and we are pleased to see you presiding over our work. We also welcome the presence of Her Excellency Ms. Antic Leendertse, State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany. We also wish to commend Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his excellent

briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

The 24 October marked the seventy-fourth anniversary of the adoption of the founding Charter of the United Nations, the main objectives of which are to build a world of peace, security and social progress. Since the adoption of the Charter, the international community, through the Security Council, has not flagged in its efforts to promote peace and security around the world. However, despite our many successes, several hotbeds of tension continue to afflict the world and currently represent a genuine threat to our collective security.

The decades-old Israeli-Palestinian dispute is representative of those conflicts, the regional and international repercussions of which continue to undermine peace and security on a global scale. That is why Côte d'Ivoire remains deeply concerned about the political impasse that has prevailed since the signing of the Oslo Accords, as well as the cases of sporadic violence that contribute to moving us further away from the hope for a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict. My delegation welcomes the holding of this debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, which provides us once again with an opportunity to reiterate our firm belief that only constructive dialogue between the two parties on all of the issues causing current divisions might lead to a lasting and mutually acceptable solution.

Côte d'Ivoire launches once again an urgent call for the resumption of negotiations without preconditions between Israelis and Palestinians, while also urging the international community, including the United Nations, to work with stakeholders to achieve the two-State solution, with two independent States peacefully coexisting within the 1967 borders. In this regard, my delegation commends the visit of Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, from 5 to 11 October, to the Middle East, in particular to Jerusalem, where she spoke of the need to revive the dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians in order to promote the two-State solution. It is therefore important that both parties refrain from unilateral actions that could further degrade an already precarious security environment and jeopardize the international community's efforts towards rapprochement and reconciliation.

My country would also like to reiterate its commitment both to Israel's security and to the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Those are two fundamental requirements that are not mutually exclusive, but rather mutually reinforcing, and are in strict keeping with the two-State solution.

My delegation believes that the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories continues to worsen, fuel tension between Fatah and Hamas, and stoke Palestinian resentment against the State of Israel. This very worrying situation is undeniably exacerbated by persistent youth unemployment and water and electricity shortages, all in the context of an acute economic crisis in the Palestinian territories. In this regard, Côte d'Ivoire urges the international community to provide the needed humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian population in distress and to promote the economic recovery and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip through adequate financing and investment. Accordingly, we welcome the pledges of support to the budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in order to reduce the Agency's budgetary deficit.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire renews its support for the efforts of Mr. Nickolay Mladenov to promote peace and stability in the Middle East, in general, and between Israeli and Palestinians, in particular. It is fully aligned with the objective of a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East and reiterates its readiness to work together with all Council members to ensure a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis in accordance with the relevant Council resolutions.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome the Foreign Minister of South Africa as she presides over today's meeting, and I thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his briefing.

At the root of the turbulence in the Middle East, the Palestinian issue must be placed at the centre of the international agenda. At present, the Middle East peace process is stalled. The conflict over the final status of Jerusalem continues, the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory remains grave, and settlements continue to be built. China finds all of these elements to be very concerning. What we lack is not a grand plan, but the courage to deliver on commitments and the conscience to uphold justice. I wish to make some observations.

First, we must promote the overall goal of the two-State solution. The two-State solution and the principle of land for peace represent the bottom line of international justice, from which we cannot retreat any further. The establishment of an independent State is an inalienable national right of the Palestinian people, a right that cannot be traded away. In the spirit of responsibility towards the Palestinian and Israeli people and with a view to achieving regional peace, the international community, especially countries with influence over Palestine and Israel, should uphold the two-State solution, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace and other international agreements based on consensus in order to get the Middle East peace process back on track.

Secondly, we should stick to the general approach of maintaining a peaceful dialogue. The task at hand is to act to prevent the escalation of tensions and resume Palestinian-Israeli peace talks as soon as possible. We should immediately put an end to all actions that undermine peace talks and mutual trust, earnestly implement Council resolution 2334 (2016) and cease new settlements and violence against innocent civilians. The recent clashes at the Al-Aqsa Mosque are disconcerting. All parties must remain committed to the relevant United Nations resolutions and resolve the final status of Jerusalem through political negotiations. We should gradually rebuild and increase mutual trust and create favourable conditions for peace talks.

Thirdly, we should continue to pursue a comprehensive solution. We should promote political negotiations and concentrate on development. We must also closely follow and improve the economic and humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people and unwaveringly promote peace through development. China encourages both Palestine and Israel to resolve the issue of tax collection through consultation and calls for the earnest implementation of the Paris Protocol, other relevant international treaties and the relevant United Nations resolutions. We also call for the formal lifting of the blockade on Gaza as soon as possible.

The international community should continue to firmly support the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and improve the humanitarian conditions of Palestinian refugees. China is ready and willing to continue its cooperation with Palestine in the areas of the economy, finance, culture, education and health,

and take concrete actions to promote the national stability and development of the country.

The world today faces the prominent threat of unilateralism and protectionism. Tension in the Middle East is escalating, and its spillover effects are becoming increasingly apparent. Furthermore, terrorism is presenting additional challenges. At this critical juncture, when the future and fate of the world are at stake, major countries bear a special responsibility for maintaining international stability. In this regard, the permanent members of the Security Council should play an exemplary role. In his address at the general debate in the Assembly in September, Chinese State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Wang Yi, put forward a three-point proposal on the situation in the Middle East and the Gulf (see A/74/PV.9). Russia also recently released its collective-security concept for the Gulf region.

China welcomes any dialogue initiative that is conducive to peace and security in the Middle East and will maintain open lines of communication with all parties. As always, China will stand on the side of peace and justice and is committed to resolving disputes through dialogue and consultation and to addressing common threats through international cooperation. We also pledge to promote a world of lasting peace and universal security and to play a constructive role in maintaining international peace and security.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to welcome Mrs. Naledi Pandor, Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, to the Security Council today. I take this opportunity to congratulate her and her delegation for the success of their presidency of the Council this month. We also welcome Her Excellency Ms. Antje Leendertse, State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany.

We would also like to once again thank the team represented by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for their significant contributions. We also welcome the presence of the Israeli and Palestinian delegations, as well as that of other delegations here in the Chamber, for the importance they attach to this question, manifest in their having joined the list of speakers.

Two months from the end of the year, we find ourselves in the Council again engaging in the monthly debate on the situation in the Middle East, including

the Palestinian question, at a time when insurgency and the lack of political will have not yet stopped producing deaths, destroying infrastructure and forcibly displacing millions of innocent people from their homes and properties.

It is disheartening that despite the numerous initiatives and regional unilateral and multilateral efforts to put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we are still far from discerning a mutually acceptable peaceful solution. The two-State solution continues to be the only viable option to put an end to the conflict. There is no reasonable alternative plan to replace it. Since the consideration of this issue at the United Nations first began in 1947, with unquestionable repercussions throughout the region, that has been the wish of an overwhelming majority of its Members, as attested to by the various resolutions adopted on it to date. Many of the eminent persons from around the world who have spoken in the Council and the General Assembly have affirmed it too. In the long term, it is the choice that will benefit both Israelis and Palestinians, and to reject it would be to repudiate the multilateralism that we embraced once more with the foundation of the United Nations after the Second World War.

Equatorial Guinea supports a two-State solution based on direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. While it may well entail painful concessions by both parties, the very nature of dialogue involves being willing to make concessions and accepting their necessity. All negotiations should be conducted within the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. One of the outcomes of the negotiations must determine the final status of Jerusalem. These negotiations have been stagnating for several years, during which time events such as Israel's policy of building and expanding settlements have increased tensions on the ground while fomenting further hatred between the parties. Many reports confirm that this policy undermines the viability of a two-State solution and the prospects for lasting peace in the region.

The militant actions of armed groups from Gaza must also cease. Provocations and attacks on Israel will not help to reach a solution to the conflict. On the contrary, they can increase the tensions between the parties even more, thereby endangering the lives of women and children and of the peoples on both sides in general. Given the situation, we continue to insist on the need to support Egypt's efforts to facilitate an

intra-Palestinian reconciliation and thereby enable the reunification of Palestine under a single, legitimate, democratic Government that not only takes into account the aspirations of the Palestinian people but also helps to substantially improve the socioeconomic and security conditions there.

I should not conclude without paying tribute to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for the noble humanitarian services it provides and calling on the international community to continue to furnish it with the financial support it needs to improve their effectiveness.

In compliance with the mandate of the United Nations established in the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations, Equatorial Guinea reaffirms its commitment to supporting every initiative that takes into consideration existing instruments of international law such as the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and others that are internationally recognized. For us, the most important thing is to find a solution based on negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians and endorsed by the international community. That can only be a solution involving two independent States living in peace, with security guarantees for both sides and for the other States of the region. Palestine and Israel must respect each other's right to exist.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to welcome you, Madam President, to today's debate, along with the State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany. At the outset, I also want to thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his very comprehensive briefing.

Let me begin by reaffirming Poland's commitment to a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a two-State solution and an agreement that ends the occupation that began in 1967, ending all claims and fulfilling the aspirations of both parties, including the security needs of both Israelis and Palestinians and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters.

We should continue to seek an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by reviving the peace process. A return to meaningful bilateral negotiations, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and international law, can only make a positive contribution to the

process. That is the only path to a two-State solution and a resolution of all final-status issues. At the same time, we encourage the parties to the conflict to take action in order to achieve reconciliation and safeguard the dignity and sanctity of the holy sites, particularly in Jerusalem. We strongly believe that the aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem must be fulfilled, and a way to resolve its status as the future capital of both States must be found through negotiations. The status of Jerusalem should also take into account the mutual recognition of the historical relations and national rights of both parties to the city. A key element in that context would be a meaningful dialogue among the three main monotheistic religions.

We continue to follow developments in the intra-Palestinian reconciliation closely. In that context, we have taken note of the Palestinian Authorities' call for general elections, the first in 13 years. The issue is very important, especially because the reconciliation process has reached a stalemate, despite Egypt's best efforts to facilitate it.

Turning to Gaza, I want to underline that the situation remains dire and continues to fuel extremism and radicalization and foster instability. We call on all the parties to take urgent steps to promote fundamental change in the humanitarian, political, security and economic situation in Gaza, as well as to end the closure policy and ensure the sustained opening of the crossing points that are important for Gazans' daily lives, while at the same time addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. We commend the efforts led by Egypt, Qatar and the Special Coordinator to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza as part of a future Palestinian State. I also want to underline the importance of the agreement reached by the Palestinian Authority with Israel on restoring some of its tax revenues. We strongly believe that additional revenue will ease the financial crisis and at least partially ensure payments to civil servants. More than 160,000 Palestinian Authority employees will receive their salaries.

Today I would also like to underline our commitment to Lebanon's unity, stability, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. In considering the difficulties faced by the Lebanese economy, exacerbated by regional turmoil and the refugee crisis, we greatly appreciate the efforts of the Government in Beirut to address the concerns in that regard. Introducing reforms can be challenging, but they must be implemented to avoid further deterioration in the country's socioeconomic

conditions. Along those lines, we believe that the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is providing the stability needed in the mission's mandate area. Today it is difficult to imagine the security environment in southern Lebanon without UNIFIL's presence. The international community must fully appreciate UNIFIL's contribution to the stability of Lebanon, and we are very happy to contribute to that endeavour, as Poland is returning to UNIFIL.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome you, Madam, as you preside over the Security Council today. We also thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing.

Today we are once again discussing the situation in the Middle East. What is the Middle East? Is it even possible to consider the region in isolation from North Africa or the Persian Gulf? In our opinion the answer is obvious. However, the issue of a Palestinian-Israeli settlement is central to all the problems in the Middle East. We have recently been seeing attempts to shift the focus away from this problem, which underlies everything that has been happening there, and replace it with other issues that are often artificially pumped up. Besides that, we are seeing dangerous trends on the Palestine-Israel track aimed at expanding unilateral measures and aggressively revising formerly settled arrangements. To state it unequivocally, as far as we are concerned the internationally recognized foundations for a settlement in the Middle East, including the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Madrid principles, remain unshakeable.

We believe that today it is more essential than ever to take practical measures to extract the peace process from its dangerous impasse. Russia is continuing its efforts to revive a direct dialogue between the Palestinians and Israelis both bilaterally and in other formats. We are extremely disturbed by Mr. Mladenov's analysis of the situation in which he says that in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip the situation is barely being prevented from even further deterioration, let alone improving. Sooner or later, and most likely sooner, that state of affairs will end up erasing the already unacceptable virtual boundary between shaky stability and chaos. Concrete measures to improve the situation are therefore essential, and the recipes for them are obvious. First of all, Israel's settlement activity in the West Bank and its policies of confiscation of Palestinian property must end. Both Palestinians and Israelis must

refrain from violence and aggressive and provocative rhetoric. The same goes for the announcements of plans to annex residential areas in the West Bank.

We believe firmly that no breakthroughs can be achieved through actions undertaken on their own, as the history of the Middle East has repeatedly confirmed. And yet despite that there are continuing persistent attempts to impose so-called alternative schemes for a settlement of the situation that undermine the long-established internationally recognized parameters for resolving the question of Palestine. The decision by the current United States Administration on Jerusalem and its illegitimate recognition of Israel's sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan are gross violations of international law and Security Council resolution 497 (1981) in particular. In that context we want to emphasize that there can be no question that the Golan Heights are Syrian territory occupied by Israel as a result of the 1967 war and unlawfully annexed 14 years later. It is clear to us, like most of our colleagues, that the only way out of all of this is through concerted international and regional efforts, with the United Nations and its Security Council playing a central role.

Active steps are needed to improve the depressing humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. We will continue to assist the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, whose activity has a political as well as a humanitarian dimension and an important stabilizing effect in the Palestinian territory and the countries of the Middle East.

Israel and Palestine have major religious significance for hundreds of thousands of adherents of the monotheistic religions. The establishment of a lasting peace in these lands is in the interests of every Christian, Muslim and Jew. Meanwhile, the destabilization of the situation in the Middle East and North Africa has been a terrible blow to the region's religious and ethnic minorities. Extremists are exploiting ethnic and religious factors in order to incite hatred and add to their own ranks. We must take immediate measures to stop the mass exodus of Christian and other minorities from the countries of the Middle East and preserve the unique balance in which the peoples of the region have coexisted for centuries.

The unresolved problem of Palestine, along with the years of instability in the region as a whole, has built up the potential there for protests and radicalism.

The situation demands concerted efforts on the part of responsible members of the international community. The Secretary-General was instructed to work on this issue under resolution 598 (1987), and there is interest in pursuing this among the countries of the region. The need to develop a sustainable mechanism for collective security in the region through dialogue on an equal footing is becoming all the more urgent. Russia's initiative in that regard is aimed both at unblocking conflict situations and developing measures for confidence and control. We urge our international and regional partners to carefully consider Iran's initiative on confidence and security measures in the Strait of Hormuz. It is an invitation to a serious dialogue with the goal of improving the situation in the region that we will always firmly support.

If we do not consolidate the efforts of all interested parties, including the countries of the region and its immediate neighbours, it will be impossible to create the conditions necessary to end the bloodshed in Libya and make progress towards a dialogue aimed at a political and diplomatic settlement of the situation there under the auspices of the United Nations.

We have been carefully following the current situation in Lebanon and hope that the country will be able to surmount these difficult times and emerge from them even more united.

There have been signs of a modest de-escalation in the situation in Yemen, with prospects for making progress on a path to a peaceful settlement with the assistance of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, and we will work to reinforce those trends.

Russia has put a great deal of effort, through constructive, inclusive and honest work, with no double standards, into shifting the focus of the conflict in Syria onto a political track. We hope to see progress in its resolution based on agreements reached by the Syrians themselves. It is they, and only they, who bear the chief responsibility for their country's fate.

We are ready to cooperate constructively with our partners on every item on the Middle East agenda. We believe that it is crucial to improve our coordination and our development of consolidated and unbiased approaches in the interests not of external actors but of the Governments and the peoples of the Middle East.

Mr. Duclos (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome your presence here in presiding over today's open

debate, Madam President, and we thank Mr. Mladenov for his comprehensive briefing.

Peru has been following the situation in Palestine with deep concern. The rigidity of the positions and the absence of dialogue between the parties, along with the continuing eruptions of violence, make for a highly volatile environment with unpredictable consequences, including ongoing acts of terrorism. We deeply deplore the fact that we continue to see fatalities, many of them children, as a result of the situation, and a marked deterioration in security conditions for millions of Palestinians and Israelis. We emphasize the importance of ending the violence and holding the parties accountable for the numerous serious violations of international law and international humanitarian law. Impunity exacerbates the conflict and helps to normalize a disregard for human rights.

In the current circumstances, a solution based on two States with internationally recognized and secure borders, negotiated directly by the parties themselves, on a basis of existing resolutions and agreements, is the only viable pathway consistent with international law. We therefore consider it vital to end the actions that undermine the necessary trust. That means in particular the harmful practices of building settlements, demolishing houses and evicting people in the Palestinian territories that have been occupied since 1967, which undermine the possibilities for a two-State solution and are contrary to the Council's provisions in resolution 2334 (2016). These illegal practices must cease. We also consider it imperative to reject hate speech, anti-Semitism and discrimination in all its forms. It is the responsibility of the leaders of both parties to demonstrate concrete signs of moderation and a commitment to peace. In that regard, we emphasize how important it is that the Council show that it is capable of a minimal degree of consensus and can speak out when the situation on the ground warrants it, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Peru has been dismayed to see the growing deterioration of living conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory and how that contributes to higher levels of radicalization and extremism among its population. We are particularly alarmed at the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza. We believe that providing basic goods and services in this area, as well as ending the confinement of millions

of Palestinians, should be priority issues for the international community.

In that regard, we deem it indispensable to make progress on the intra-Palestinian reconciliation process, making it possible for the legitimate Palestinian Authority to resume effective control of Gaza. This would alleviate the humanitarian situation and lay the foundations for a resumption of dialogue with Israel.

We thus underscore the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. It is important to endow it with stable and predictable financing and to allow for the normal functioning of its offices in East Jerusalem, in line with the existing legal framework.

Bringing an end to the deterioration in the political and humanitarian conditions underlying the question of Palestine is a complex but urgent undertaking. The risk of further escalation in the Middle East must be addressed by the Council as a serious threat to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): Madam President, it is an honour to have you here presiding over this important debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. My delegation would also like to welcome Her Excellency the State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, who has contributed to this debate.

We wish also to thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his comprehensive briefing. We agree with many of the points he made, in particular the importance of prioritizing preventive diplomacy.

Indonesia takes this opportunity to reiterate once again its unequivocal support for the Palestinian cause, the same support that Indonesia, together with other members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, reaffirmed a couple of days ago at the Movement's Summit, held in Baku. As many speakers have stated this morning, this issue has been one of the longest standing ones on the Council's agenda. The question was asked as to how many more debates we need. We agree that there is a need to have closure on this issue, but so long as there is no independence for the people of Palestine, we will continue to raise our voice, loudly.

It is a matter of great significance that this morning's debate follows disturbing new Israeli threats of the formal annexation of Palestinian lands in the occupied territory, including East Jerusalem. This is a

serious and clear threat to the two-State solution. With that in mind, allow me to make the following points.

First, Israel must be held accountable for its illegal actions. Indonesia condemns the continued expansion of illegal Israeli settlements and the intended annexation of the occupied Palestinian territory. A recent report by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs stated that 547 Palestinians have lost their homes this year alone to demolitions in the West Bank. Furthermore, 443 structures have been targeted in more than 80 communities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; that is a 43 per cent increase compared with the same period in 2018.

Also of grave concern to us are the continuous provocations by Israeli settlers and security personnel at the holy sites. These actions constitute a flagrant violation of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), and a great obstacle to a peaceful resolution of the issue. I reiterate Indonesia's persistent call on the Council to stand by its obligation to hold Israel accountable.

Secondly, sustaining humanitarian assistance is crucial. The blockade of Gaza, alongside the relentless expansion of settlements, violence and demolition of property in the West Bank, have, sadly, continued to degrade the humanitarian situation of Palestinians. The Gaza blockade represents a collective punishment of all Palestinians. It is unjust and does not contribute to resolving the conflict. It must be lifted.

Let me also draw attention to the serious financial situation that continues to confront the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), hampering the organization's ability to perform its vital mandate. Indonesia once again stresses that UNRWA's role is critical, not only as a lifeline but also as a safeguard for the Palestinian right of return. We thus need to reinforce our support for the Palestinian people, including through ensuring continuation of the work of UNRWA.

Thirdly, there is a need to consolidate our efforts to reverse the negative trends. As each day passes, the prevailing negative trends in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continue to increase the threats to international peace and security. These trends have to be stopped and reversed. We cannot afford inaction. Our failure to act will have great repercussions not only for the prospects of a peaceful and lasting solution to the Israeli-

Palestinian conflict, but also for peace and stability in the whole region.

In this regard, I wish to reiterate Indonesia's profound commitment to, and support for, all efforts to bring the peace process back on track, based on the internationally agreed parameters, the relevant United Nations resolutions and previous agreements.

Convinced that unity and reconciliation are of paramount importance, we again encourage all Palestinian factions to work harder towards reconciliation, for in unity lies strength.

To conclude, there is no viable solution to the conflict other than the two-State vision. Renouncing this vision can only lead to an endless cycle of violence and instability in the region and beyond, with the threat of a humanitarian catastrophe. We can and must do much better than that. We as the Council have the power, the duty and the moral obligation to do the right thing for the sake of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom remains concerned by the negative trends on the ground in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. We continue to be deeply concerned by ongoing Israeli settlement advancements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in violation of international law. We urge Israel to fulfil its obligations as an occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

I would also reiterate here the United Kingdom's position that annexation of any part of the West Bank would be destructive to peace efforts and could not pass unchallenged. Annexation of territory by force is prohibited under international law.

We are troubled by the increase in settler violence. Many recent incidents, including assaults on Palestinian farmers, setting fire to olive trees and the stealing of produce have coincided with the Palestinian olive harvest, which began earlier this month. The Israeli authorities have a responsibility to provide appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

We are also extremely concerned at the fact that the number of structures demolished this year has increased by almost 40 per cent compared with the same period last year. We condemn the demolition of Palestinian property and evictions of Palestinians from their homes. Ongoing and periodic tensions on Al-Haram Al-Sharif, or Temple Mount, are a further source of concern. We recognize that Jerusalem holds

huge significance and holiness for Jews, Muslims and Christians, and reiterate the fundamental necessity of maintaining the status quo at the holy sites.

Turning to Gaza, the reduction in violence at the border fence is welcome, and we urge continued calm. Indiscriminate attacks against civilians are unacceptable and unjustifiable. Hamas and other terrorist groups must cease all actions that are violent or provocative. The United Kingdom fully supports Israel's right to defend its citizens from such acts of terror.

I would also like to echo the concern relayed by the Special Coordinator that Hamas is putting children at risk of violence at the demonstrations at the Gaza fence. Children should never be the target of violence. They must never be put at the risk of violence or encouraged to participate in violence. It is totally unacceptable that Hamas and its operatives have been cynically exploiting the protests for their own benefit. Hamas must cease all actions that proactively encourage violence or that put civilian lives at risk.

The United Kingdom underlines the damage that Israeli restrictions are doing to the living standards of ordinary Palestinians in Gaza. We call on Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Egypt to work together to ensure a durable solution.

In more positive developments, we welcome the agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on the transfer of tax revenues. We urge Israel and the Palestinian Authority to continue to work together to meet their obligations under the Oslo Accords. We continue to urge the Palestinian Authority to make reforms to prisoner payments, ensuring that they are needs-based, transparent and affordable.

We welcome the work of the Palestinian leadership towards genuine and democratic national elections for all Palestinians.

We need a viable Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement that addresses the legitimate concerns of both parties, which means we need genuine and committed engagement from both Israelis and Palestinians, including the end of actions that undermine trust and threaten the viability of the two-State solution.

Mr. Trullols Yabra (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We also thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process for his briefing.

The Dominican Republic remains its previously expressed deep concern about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its enormous consequences for the civilian population. The continuing conflict trends in the occupied Palestinian territory, as well as the ongoing deterioration of the humanitarian and socioeconomic situation, heightens the level of uncertainty about the future of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. In the same vein, we join the concern expressed by the Secretary-General about the possible annexation by Israel of the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea, which would constitute a serious violation of international law and could spell disaster for the goal of resuming negotiations between the parties.

The Security Council adopted resolution 2334 (2016), which calls on the parties to put an end to territorial claims, respect sovereignty and liberate occupied territories. However, we continue to see demolitions and seizures of Palestinian property structures by the Israeli authorities.

The Dominican Republic believes that it is crucial to redouble efforts aimed at conciliation between the parties, with the support of the international community, through meaningful and just dialogue about the many obstacles that threaten the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to national independence and sovereignty. Similarly, we also believe that it is crucial to respect Israel's right to live in peace, within safe and recognized borders, free from threats or acts of violence. The firing of rockets and mortars at civilians is an inhumane act. Hamas and other groups must put an immediate end to that practice.

The Dominican Republic deplores the grave humanitarian situation on the Gaza Strip and calls upon the international community to respond effectively to the urgent needs of the affected population. Palestinian refugees face many health challenges, due to poor sanitation and inadequate infrastructure, limited access to medications, the lack of nutrition and deficiencies in hygiene. Malnutrition occurs in all Palestinian refugee camps, regardless of their location, but is particularly problematic in Gaza. We acknowledge the work and challenges of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which requires adequate funding for its critical work.

The Dominican Republic continues to defend the existing international consensus that the only way forward for Palestinians and Israelis is to negotiate a

two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 lines. We encourage all parties to put an end to actions that undermine support for the two-State solution and ultimately hinder peace.

In conclusion, we reiterate the importance of creating an environment conducive to the advancement of peace, which will pave the way for a comprehensive process of negotiations aimed at resolving all final status issues, including Jerusalem.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing.

I would like to focus my attention on two recent developments. The first is President Abbas' recent announcement that a date would be set for elections in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in Gaza. A credible electoral process, which ensures, in particular, the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, is essential to building democratic and inclusive institutions in order to establish a democratic, viable and sovereign Palestinian State. We expect all Palestinian factions to engage in this process, with full respect for human rights and the rule of law. In this regard, we also reiterate our call on the Palestinian factions to engage in good faith in the reconciliation process. As an integral part of a future Palestinian State, it is essential that the Gaza Strip be returned to the control of the Palestinian Authority.

Secondly, we have taken note of the negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis that have led to a transfer of tax revenues. We encourage both parties to continue negotiations in order to find a lasting solution.

The continuation of the settlement policy and its related measures in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, brings us ever closer to the point of no return for the two-State solution. It is illegal under international law, including resolution 2334 (2016). The recent events near the settlement of Yitzhar and the Palestinian village of Burin illustrate that the settlement policy leads to tensions and violence on the ground. We condemn the use of all violence, call for a de-escalation of tensions and ask that those acts of violence do not remain unpunished. It is essential to preserve the status quo in the holy places in Jerusalem.

Lastly, we reiterate our deep concern about the worrisome increase in the number of demolitions and

seizures of infrastructure and humanitarian projects in Zone C. We urge the Israeli authorities to put an end to those demolitions and to return what has been seized or pay compensation for the damages suffered, for the benefit of the Palestinian people.

With regard to the situation on the Gaza Strip, we are deeply concerned about the impact of the demonstrations on children. While we recognize Israel's right to ensure its security, we condemn the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force. We urge Israel to respect the right of Palestinians to demonstrate peacefully. However, it is not acceptable for demonstrations in Gaza to be hijacked by extremist elements.

We would like to commend the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, whose mandate and work we fully support.

I would like to conclude by stressing that there is no alternative to the two-State solution, with the city of Jerusalem as the future capital of those two States, in accordance with internationally agreed parameters. Peace can be comprehensive, just and lasting only if it meets the legitimate aspiration of each party to build its national destiny in peace and security in a stabilized region.

The President: I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Turkey): Every three months we meet here to debate the agenda item "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". If these meetings are really meant to be helpful, we must start by finding a more appropriate and more frank name for the agenda item. I suggest that the name be "The situation in the Middle East, including the suffering of the Palestinian people at the hands of a Government that sponsors terror" or, if we want to be more precise, we can call it "The situation in the Middle East, including Israel's crimes against humanity".

We need to make that change because in all these meetings we hear stories about how the Government of Israel violates the basic rights of Palestinians on a daily basis. We are told of the number of children

killed by the extremists running the Government of Israel. We learn about the number of Palestinians who cannot receive medical treatment or who cannot go to school just because the Israeli Government is hijacked by a terrorist state of mind. We hear of how many Palestinians are in prison for protesting Israel and how many Gazans are starving just because the current Government of Israel believes that inhumane policies will help them to extend their borders. And as if all those stories were not enough, in all these meetings we have to listen to the delusional excuses of the representatives of that Government of terror as to why killing a child is in line with international law. Today, once again, we have listened to our daily dosage of lies. When these lies come from the representative of a Government of terror, they are just a waste of time. And no — those who want to advance their political careers over the dead bodies of children cannot lecture us about international law and human rights.

Recently, the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the occupied Palestinian territory indicated that during the Great March of Return, Israeli soldiers committed violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, some of which may constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity. According to the report, week after week at the protest sites by the separation fence, more than 6,000 unarmed demonstrators have been shot by military snipers. Israeli snipers have shot at journalists, health workers, children and persons with disabilities, knowing they were clearly recognizable as such. Is it perhaps time for the representatives of Israel to tell us what is the purpose of those killings? Why would anyone kill a kid or a disabled person? How does that help the security of Israel?

Israel must also immediately stop all settlement activities, as well as house demolitions, land confiscation and other policies that deny the Palestinians' right to development. The attempts to deny the historical and legal rights of the Palestinian people violate international law. These rights, including the right to return, cannot be withheld. The continuation of those practices will only deepen the sense of injustice and breed desperation. That is not in anyone's interest.

This ongoing tragedy was created by the current Government of Israel. And now it wants to discredit the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and end it. But we are not going to allow that. For seven decades, UNRWA

has been indispensable to the well-being of Palestinian refugees and to the stability and security of the region. At a time when the region is witnessing conflict and significant volatility, the impact of a potential disruption in UNRWA services would be gruesome. Can anyone imagine the terrible repercussions of the closure of 700 UNRWA schools? We cannot fail 530,000 Palestinian refugee children. Next month, together we should task UNRWA to continue to provide assistance and protection to about 6 million Palestinian refugees. We have an obligation to support UNRWA until a just and lasting political solution is found. That is our collective responsibility.

A two-State solution, with the establishment of an independent State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, is the only way to achieve just, comprehensive and lasting peace. It is also the only way to protect the Palestinians against the terrorist ideology of the current Israeli Government. Any peace plan or initiative should be and will be based on those established parameters. That requires unity, courage and resilience, particularly on the part of the Security Council.

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

Ms. Bahous (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and South Africa on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month and to thank you for your wise leadership of the Council's work. I would also like to welcome the State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany and to thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

In his speech before the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, who is the custodian of Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, stated the following:

“It is a terrible irony that a land holy to three faiths that share the great commandment to love one's neighbour should ever be a place of conflict. That is the land where prophets have walked and where generations of Muslims, Christians and Jews have sought to live in obedience to God, teaching their children compassion, mercy and respect for others. Segregation, forced displacement, violence and mistrust do not belong in that Holy Land.”
(A/74/PV.3, p. 39)

Based on our strong belief in those principles, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan continues to strive to protect Jerusalem and its holy sites — both Islamic and Christian — and to preserve its Arab, Islamic and Christian identity, as well as its legal and historical status. Jerusalem has always been the key to peace.

Moreover, we will continue to work with the international community to break the deadlock in the political process and put an end to the Israeli occupation so as to achieve comprehensive and just peace. However, Israel's daily actions, which include violations of the rights of the Palestinian people, illegal settlement activities and the confiscation of property and attacks on Islamic and Christian holy sites, undermine any chance of achieving peace in accordance with a two-State solution, which is the only path to just and comprehensive peace. Israel's continued violation of resolutions of international legitimacy and its persistent occupation, oppression and repression will neither achieve peace and development in our region, nor will it guarantee security or stability.

Next month, the General Assembly's Special Political and Decolonization Committee will consider its agenda item on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA). In that regard, we call on all fraternal and friendly States to vote in favour of extending the mandate of UNWRA and to work to meet its financial needs and maintain its role and mandate until a just solution is achieved with regard to the Palestinian refugee issue, in accordance with international law and in a manner that guarantees refugees the right of return and compensation.

Preserving UNRWA and its services in its five areas of operation means preserving the right of 5.5 million Palestinian refugees to a dignified life, maintaining the right of half a million students to education, and preserving the right of hundreds of thousands of people to access health care and many other essential social services. That is our collective international responsibility until we find a just solution to the Palestinian refugee issue within the framework of a comprehensive solution and in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant international resolutions, first and foremost General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948.

We reaffirm that there can be no military solution to the crisis in Syria. We must intensify our efforts to

put an end to that crisis in a manner that would preserve sisterly Syria and its people through a political solution developed and accepted by Syrians that would safeguard the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Syria; bring security and stability to the country and rid it of terrorism; and guarantee the voluntary and dignified return of the Syrian citizens who have been displaced by the crisis. We would also like to stress the need for sisterly Syria to recover its health and role as the pillar of security, stability and development in the Middle East and of the system of collective Arab action.

Jordan has always been a destination for all those seeking succour and we have opened our hearts, our doors and our homes to all those who have sought our help. We have faced many challenges since the Syrian crisis began and, from the very start, we have shouldered a large part of the humanitarian disaster that ensued. We have borne that burden on behalf of the international community. Today, Jordan hosts the second largest percentage of refugees compared to the size of its population, according to statistics of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. From this Chamber, we reiterate our call on the international community to assume its responsibilities and to provide Jordan and other countries hosting refugees with continuous support. Syrian refugees are the victims of the disastrous Syrian crisis and it is incumbent upon all of us — not just the host countries — to collectively bear the responsibility of offering them a dignified life until they can return home.

Serious collective action and diligent multilateral diplomatic efforts must succeed in tackling these urgent international issues and arriving at peaceful political solutions to crises, as well as supporting efforts to achieve sustainable development. We must offer more opportunities and hope, especially to young people, men and women so as to avoid despair and prevent the spread of violence, extremism and terrorism — scourges that find fertile ground in poverty, oppression, injustice and the absence of hope.

In conclusion, the primary crisis in the Middle East is the Palestinian question. The region will not enjoy security, stability and peace without the elimination of occupation and a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict based on a two-State solution that will guarantee the Palestinian people their right to liberty, statehood and a dignified life. Such a solution must lead to the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders and with East

Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

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

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I welcome the presence of Her Excellency Mrs. Naledi Pandor, Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of friendly South Africa, and thank her for presiding over this important meeting of the Security Council. I also welcome the positions taken by her country based on international law and the Charter of the United Nations. I greet all those who have focused on the essence of this agenda item, namely, the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict and nothing else, without deviating from it.

The founders of the United Nations sought to establish our Organization based on the principles of international law, foremost of which is respect for the sovereignty and equality of States, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and rejection of aggression, occupation and hegemony. The founders gave our Organization the mission to realize and achieve the ambitions of our peoples in terms of peace, security, development and prosperity. However, the winds were favourable neither to our ship nor to its sailors. A handful of powerful Western countries have tried to knock the ship of peace off course and turn it into a tool to serve their agenda of hegemony and piracy.

Since the creation of the United Nations, we have seen a significant increase, not a reduction, in the number of crises, wars and practices of aggression. Unfortunately, our Organization has been a mere spectator with regard to many of these conflict situations. The Organization has sometimes been used to propagate false accusations and to provide grounds for legitimizing invasions and occupations in various regions. The peoples of our Arab region have been suffering the lion's share of such aggressive practices and artificial crises. One such conflict in particular continues to have grave repercussions for our situation today, after 70 years of conflict — the Israeli occupation of the occupied Arab territories in Palestine, the Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon. The United Nations, especially the Security Council, has been incapable of enforcing the relevant resolutions calling for an end to this occupation.

In light of the current backdrop and challenges, many diplomats and interested parties are faced with several legitimate questions. What has become of

the Organization, which today is unable to uphold the principles of international law and the provisions of its Charter? Will the role of the Organization be limited to mourning the victims of wars, aggression and occupation? Will the Organization limit itself to addressing the rights of the peoples suffering under the yoke of occupation in Palestine, the Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon merely in public debates so as to temporarily vent tensions, cause confusion and carry out manoeuvres in order to hinder a solution? Is it possible to accept that the Secretariat remains indifferent while its Special Coordinator Mladenov pays no heed to the issue of the occupied Syrian Golan in his briefings? What significance does the Charter have if some of its supposed guardians are those who violate it, either directly or through their own tools? Were the provisions of the Charter intended to apply only to small countries and be manipulated for purposes that violate its very purpose? Is it time to admit that the United Nations was a beautiful dream that has now shattered and begin asking ourselves what the alternative might be?

Instead of witnessing efforts to achieve peace and stability in our region, we have recently witnessed a new chapter of the Israeli escalation that has led to record levels of tension. The occupying Israeli authorities have repeatedly carried out attacks on Syrian territories, as well as the territories of other neighbouring Arab countries, in flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, including relevant Council resolutions. Moreover, Israel, the occupying Power, pursues its attempts to distort the history of the occupied Syrian Golan, stealing its monuments and wealth and modifying its demographic nature and Syrian national identity by seizing the lands of resistant Syrian citizens in the Golan, with a view to extending its illegitimate settlements and launching new occupation projects, for example by building wind turbines for energy production. Our inhabitants of the Golan are forced to register the land they inherited from their fathers and grandfathers with the Israeli land registry at the risk of having these lands confiscated if they protest. There are also so-called local elections to appoint Israeli puppets. All of these are serious violations of international law and international humanitarian law, committed by some with double standards and a great deal of hypocrisy.

These Israeli violations would not have continued and escalated without the blind support for the occupying authorities from known Governments.

These Governments are therefore responsible for the consequences of Israeli practices, crimes and violations. We have seen the decision of the United States to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan and, before that, to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and transfer the United States Embassy there. We have also seen the United States tireless efforts to eliminate the Palestinian question. Such events constitute an ugly manifestation of this support, while all these decisions are null and void and have no effect. These decisions show pure contempt for international legitimacy.

In conclusion, the Government of my country affirms that the occupied Syrian Golan is an integral part of the territories of the Syrian Arab Republic and that restoring the borders of 4 June 1967, through all means enshrined in international law, will remain a priority and a compass for Syrian policy. My country's Government reiterates its call on Israel to release the captive Sedqi Al-Maqet, the Nelson Mandela of Syria, and all other Syrian captives in Israeli jails. We reiterate our support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establish their independent State throughout their national territory, with Jerusalem as its capital. We also underscore the right of refugees to return to their homes under resolution 194 (III) of 1948 and we reiterate our call to grant the State of Palestine full membership to the United Nations.

The President: I appeal to all speakers to limit their statements to no more than the four minutes allocated.

I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I would like to take a few moments to address the situation in the region. Norway is deeply concerned about the situation in northern Syria. We note the recent agreement reached between Turkey and Russia but remain worried about the consequences for both the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the humanitarian situation, which is already deteriorating. Protection and access remain critical to the humanitarian response in north-eastern Syria, and whoever exercises control there will face the expectation and close scrutiny of the international community, including with regard to safeguarding detention centres for ISIL prisoners. We strongly support the work of Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and welcome the convening of the important first meeting of the Constitutional Committee.

The increased tensions in the Gulf region remain a matter of great concern. We urge all actors to refrain from actions and statements that could contribute to any further escalation. Norway is deeply concerned about the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. We acknowledge the recent pledges of humanitarian assistance while also noting that a substantial funding gap remains. However, we are encouraged by the reports of progress being made in the Jeddah talks and by the recent decrease in violence and release of prisoners. We support the efforts of Special Envoy Martin Griffiths. The participation of more women in political talks will be important. Only an inclusive political solution can resolve the conflict and bring lasting peace and stability to Yemen and the region.

The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians, the international donor group to Palestine, met at the ministerial level in New York on 26 September. The meeting, which was hosted by the United Nations and chaired by Norway's Foreign Minister, emphasized the broad international support for a negotiated two-State solution as the basis for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The members of the Liaison Committee called for taking immediate steps to resume the transfer of revenues collected by Israel to the Palestinian Authority. In that regard, Norway welcomes the recent arrangement reached between the parties. We encourage Israel and the Palestinian Authority to extend their dialogue with a view to finding durable solutions to other outstanding economic issues. Furthermore, the members of the Liaison Committee urged donors to step up their humanitarian support for Gaza. Ending the blockade of Gaza, facilitating trade and opening up Area C in the West Bank for Palestinian use are all preconditions for achieving a sustainable Palestinian economy.

Norway is concerned about the recent Israeli calls for annexing large areas of the West Bank. As determined by the Security Council, any future decision by Israel to change the status of the occupied West Bank or impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the area will have no international legal effect. Actions such as settlement expansion, house demolition, the use of violence and the unilateral use of force, including in East Jerusalem, are unacceptable. They undermine the possibility of a two-State solution, the peace process and the Palestinian economy and threaten regional stability. We call on the parties to comply with their obligations under international law. Norway has a long-

standing and continuing commitment to enabling and improving the conditions for peace and security in the Middle East. Promoting the resolution and mediation of conflicts in the region remains a key priority of Norwegian foreign policy. If elected to the Security Council for the 2021-2022 term, we will accord that issue the highest possible priority.

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

Mr. De Souza Monteiro (Brazil): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this quarterly debate on the Middle East.

The Middle East continues to occupy a large portion of the Council's attention as new challenges emerge and existing crises continue to unfold. The lack of progress in resolving conflicts and improving people's lives is causing frustration, especially among young people, who are increasingly leaving the region to seek opportunities elsewhere. Long-term political stability and economic prosperity are tied together, and we hope that the international community can act as one in carrying out effective strategies towards achieving those goals.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains one of the central causes of instability in the region. Brazil reiterates its support for a two-State solution to the conflict, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. We encourage the parties to seek to establish a constructive political environment that is conducive to a return to meaningful negotiations. The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains extremely fragile and highlights the need for a fair, just and mutually agreeable political solution to the conflict. In that spirit, Brazil encourages all the parties involved to engage in new and creative diplomatic efforts with an open mind in order to achieve a just and comprehensive settlement. Peace will be achieved only with difficult decisions and concessions being made by all sides.

Regarding the situation in Syria, Brazil remains concerned about the escalation of violence throughout the north of the country. We encourage the Council to find common ground with a view to establishing a lasting ceasefire in Idlib province. With regard to developments in north-eastern Syria, Brazil urges all parties concerned to exercise maximum restraint and ensure safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid in the region. We emphasize the obligation of all parties to respect international humanitarian law and strongly

condemn any attack that might affect civilian lives and infrastructure, including on medical facilities and medical workers, who must be protected at all times.

Brazil underscores its support for the work of Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and welcomes the establishment of the Syrian Constitutional Committee as an encouraging step towards achieving an urgently needed political solution, based on the parameters set forth in the relevant Council resolutions, especially resolution 2254 (2015), and the Sochi declaration. We also welcome the convening of the first meeting of the Constitutional Committee, to be held in Geneva. We continue to believe firmly that only a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led United Nations-facilitated political process, with due regard for the preservation of Syria's territorial integrity, will bring about lasting peace and alleviate the Syrian people's humanitarian suffering.

Brazil condemns in the strongest terms the September attacks on oil facilities in Saudi Arabia and commends the Saudi Government for inviting international experts, including from the United Nations, to take part in the investigations. The attacks increased the risk that the Yemeni war could expand into a wider regional conflict. We therefore call on all the parties to refrain from any actions that might lead to a further increase in hostilities and to take the necessary steps towards the full implementation of the Stockholm Agreement. Furthermore, we urge the parties to continue to work with Special Envoy Martin Griffiths regarding a comprehensive political solution to the conflict and the provision of continued and unimpeded humanitarian assistance. Brazil reiterates its commitment to the monitoring of the ceasefire by the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement, to which we have agreed to deploy Brazilian military and police officers. We hope that the activation of the tripartite monitoring mechanism of the ceasefire may further contribute to the prevention of military escalation in the port city.

Lastly, Brazil is closely following developments in Libya and urges all sides to exercise maximum restraint in order to avoid an escalation of violence, and to engage with the United Nations, the African Union and the relevant stakeholders with a view to achieving a full and comprehensive cessation of hostilities throughout the country. We condemn the recent attacks on the Libyan population and United Nations personnel. Brazil urges all parties to abide by international humanitarian law and uphold their obligation to protect

civilians. We remain convinced that establishing peace and national unity in Libya and countering terrorism and transnational crime in the region ultimately require the establishment of an inclusive Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process, in accordance with the Libyan Political Agreement and the United Nations Action Plan for Libya. We therefore call on all the parties to work with Special Representative Ghassan Salamé with a view to reaching a comprehensive political solution to the security crisis and the dire humanitarian situation in Libya. We continue to hope that a Libyan national conference will be held at the earliest possible opportunity.

The President: I once again remind all speakers to keep to the allocated time limits.

I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I would like to thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his briefing.

Japan remains committed to supporting a two-State solution to the Palestinian-Israeli question. The final status of Jerusalem should be resolved through negotiations based on the relevant Security Council resolutions and the known parameters. We must continue to encourage the parties to seek a solution through negotiations. Japan will remain engaged with both sides and will continue to promote confidence-building measures. The continued settlement activities and the demolition of Palestinian-owned structures, which Mr. Mladenov briefed us about today, undermine the viability of a two-State solution. Japan once again urges Israel to cease those activities. We are also deeply concerned about the continued violence in both Gaza and the West Bank. We strongly condemn violence and terrorism against innocent civilians, and call on the parties concerned to take immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence, provocations and incitement.

Last month in the General Assembly, President Abbas of Palestine announced his intention to hold general elections (see A/74/PV.7). Elections are fundamental to democracy. We call on all the parties to take the necessary measures for free and fair elections and hope that they will contribute to peace and stability in the region. Japan firmly believes that we can shed light on the pathway to peace and security by offering hope to Palestinians for their future and helping them maintain their dignity. Japan believes that the assistance of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) plays a

crucial role in that regard. We have already disbursed more than \$32 million to UNRWA this year and will soon provide additional assistance of around \$11 million for education, water and sanitation and food assistance. Along with other international partners, Japan will continue to support the Agency in this difficult time through multidimensional contributions.

We believe that every country can contribute to creating an environment that is conducive to peace efforts. In 2013, Japan, together with regional partners, initiated the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development in order to promote Palestine's economic development by utilizing the resources and experiences of East Asian countries. An increasing number of countries and partners from civil society and the private sector have joined the initiative, and we hope that still more will do so.

Let me conclude by briefly addressing wider regional issues. Since energy resources and many other goods are transported from, to and through the Middle East, peace and security in the region, including securing the safety of navigation, are extremely important to international peace and prosperity, including for Japan. The current high tensions in the region are therefore of serious concern. Japan believes that continued diplomatic efforts are needed to decrease the tensions and stabilize the situation. In cooperation with the relevant parties, we will make further diplomatic efforts to that end.

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

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): My delegation thanks the South African presidency for convening today's important debate.

In my very first statement to the Council on the situation in the Middle East in April 2015 (see S/PV.7430), I spoke of a growing tide of complex and interconnected challenges that threatened to push the region into a fresh vortex of violence and instability. Today, as I take the floor in what will be my last statement on the issue, I say with a heavy heart that the grim situation prevailing on the ground appears to have confirmed some of our worst fears. Riven by protracted and emerging conflicts, escalating violence and worsening humanitarian crises, the Middle East's geostrategic landscape is clouded by competing and divergent interests among the major regional Powers. The role that external actors are playing adds another

layer of complexity to an already fraught regional situation. Meanwhile, non-State actors and terrorist organizations have tried to exploit the turmoil to gain a foothold across the region. The activities of these terror outfits, including the Kurdistan Workers' Party and its affiliates, have created legitimate security concerns for regional States. At this precarious moment in history, reconciliation within the region is imperative if we are to avoid further instability. It is also essential if we are to achieve our shared vision of a peaceful and prosperous Middle East.

The framework for regional peace must be built on the abiding virtues of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence, which are not merely principles of international law or the Charter of the United Nations but also constitute the fundamental essence of the Islamic teachings of amity, goodwill and brotherhood. Guided by those considerations, Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan has been consulting with the leaders of Saudi Arabia and Iran to forge unity within the ranks of the Muslim Ummah. Pakistan will continue to play its part in promoting peace and stability in the region, and there are certain points that we consider critically important.

First, durable peace can be achieved only through inclusive political solutions. We must therefore prioritize respect for dialogue and diplomacy.

Secondly, de-escalatory steps and confidence-building measures are vital to reducing tensions and preventing the eruption of new conflicts. In that connection, we welcome the recent gains made in advancing the political process in Syria. We are also encouraged by the positive overtures by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen on the political situation in the country. That momentum must be sustained.

Thirdly, it is critical to abandon narrow national interests and instead invest in lasting stability. Any attempts to shape the region according to specific political preferences are counterproductive and must be avoided.

Fourthly, while the stability of the Middle East has always been a question of global concern, the involvement of the international community must be based on an unequivocal commitment to multilateral solutions and political processes. Not only are the threat or use of sanctions, embargoes and kinetic actions a throwback to imperial tactics, the recent history of

the region also affirms that unilateral measures have brought only greater suffering and pain to its peoples. Yet nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of the occupied Palestinian territories, where established norms of international law, including Security Council resolutions, continue to be deliberately and systematically flouted. Meanwhile, the continued military occupation and expansion of settlement activity in the occupied territory, including East Jerusalem, along with the looming threat of the annexation of the West Bank, have not only undermined the goal of a two-State solution, they have also imperilled peace and security in the Middle East and beyond.

Pakistan's solidarity with the people of Palestine is firm and unwavering. It is, after all, an abiding lesson of history that attempts to suppress and subjugate people living under foreign occupation and to deny them their fundamental rights, including the right to self-determination, are ultimately bound to fail. Yesterday, Kashmiris across the world marked the seventy-second anniversary of the illegal Indian occupation of Jammu and Kashmir. Next month the Palestinians will mark the seventy-second anniversary of a partition plan that outlined the creation of an independent Palestinian State. Despite the fact that the continuing tragedy of the Palestinians and the Kashmiris still waits to be addressed, they are nonetheless reassured in their conviction that while it may be dark and forbidding, the night of occupation will one day yield to the light of freedom and dignity for them and other people living under foreign occupation.

Let me say finally that your own struggle against apartheid, Mr. President, is itself living testimony to that eternal prophecy.

The President: I wish the representative of Pakistan well in her next assignment.

I now give the floor to the representative of Namibia, who will speak both in his national capacity and in his capacity as Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. Gertze (Namibia): Namibia thanks you, Sir, for organizing this open debate on the important topic of the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I would also like to thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process for his briefing on the situation in the region.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by the representative of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Since my previous statement to the Security Council (see S/PV.8583) on this most fundamental issue of international peace and security, the situation on the ground has not changed. Furthermore, as the Special Coordinator outlined in his eleventh briefing to the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), no concrete steps have been taken to implement the resolution, and no steps were taken to immediately and completely cease all settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. On the contrary, Israeli authorities advanced approximately 3,000 housing units in the occupied West Bank, including some 400 in East Jerusalem. I want to take this opportunity to reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law and represent an obstacle to peace and the achievement of a two-State solution. We are also extremely concerned about statements made concerning Israel's annexation of the Jordan Valley. Annexation is strictly prohibited under international law. The demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures by the Israeli authorities also represent an obstacle to peace. Those actions have continued unabated, displacing men, women and children.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) plays a fundamental role in the region. The Agency provides services to the more than 5 million Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza. Its provision of vital services represents a stabilizing element in a region that continues to be a victim of violence. Namibia remains concerned about the ongoing financial shortfall that UNRWA continues to suffer from. We also want to take this opportunity to reaffirm Namibia's support for the Agency, and we look forward to the renewal of its mandate.

We have taken note of the fact that the overall levels of violence in Gaza have decreased and also take this opportunity to condemn all forms of violence committed against civilians. Namibia welcomes the increase in the energy supply to households in Gaza, which has more than doubled, according to the Special Coordinator's report. Israel's easing of the import and export restrictions and extension of the permitted fishing zone to 15 nautical miles from the coast are also welcome developments. But despite those positive

steps, the humanitarian situation remains extremely concerning. Namibia is particularly worried about the state of the health system, which remains on the brink of collapse. In July, 44 per cent of essential medicines in Gaza were completely depleted, and there was less than a month's supply remaining of 26 per cent of essential medical disposables. Those staggering numbers underline the fundamental necessity of the ongoing presence of UNRWA health centres, which see an average of 100 patients a day.

Finding a solution to the ongoing fiscal crisis facing the Palestinian Authority is a matter of urgency. The continuation of the crisis is affecting the already fragile Palestinian economy and threatens to destabilize an already volatile situation. We urge the parties to implement and respect their bilateral agreements.

It has been almost three years since the adoption of resolution 2334 (2016), a historic document that gave Palestinians hope and expectations for a solution to be found to this protracted conflict. However, the humanitarian, social and political situation has only worsened since its adoption, and tensions have risen drastically. Actions have been taken that have severely undermined the process of reaching a mutually acceptable, just and lasting solution. The people of Palestine have a fundamental right to self-determination and independence. We must achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians with the establishment of two States coexisting in an atmosphere of peace and security. No amount of humanitarian and economic support can substitute for a negotiated two-State solution, the only one that can meet the legitimate aspirations and security needs of both Israelis and Palestinians.

I will now deliver a statement in my capacity under rule 39 as Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

At the outset, on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, I would like to commend the leadership of the delegation of South Africa in its presidency of the Security Council this month.

As we gather quarterly in the Council to collectively consider the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, I can only lament the ongoing illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory and the worsening situation on the ground, which have a negative impact not only on the rights of Palestinians,

including children, but also on the security of Israelis and the prospects for a peaceful and just solution to the question of Palestine, which has already been too long delayed. The violence and loss of life have continued, illegal Israeli settlements have expanded, demolitions of Palestinian homes and evictions of their inhabitants have accelerated, and the humanitarian and economic situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, has continued to deteriorate under the oppressive weight and as a result of the illegal practices of Israel's 52-year military occupation.

I want to reiterate in the strongest terms that the Israeli settlements in occupied areas are illegal under international law, and that as has been reaffirmed in resolution 2334 (2016), among other things, Israel must halt its expansion immediately and completely. The Committee joins the calls for the Secretary-General's reports on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) to be provided in writing and to include Member States' reports on how they comply with operative paragraph 5, which requires Member States to distinguish in their dealings between Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Such measures of distinction are crucial to upholding international law, including the relevant United Nations resolutions, and to ensuring that this illegal situation does not receive support or recognition. In that regard, the Committee looks forward to the publication by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights of the relevant database, as mandated by Human Rights Council resolution 31/36.

The Committee would like to express its profound concern about the escalating rhetoric and threats by Israeli officials concerning intentions to annex settlements and the Jordan Valley. The Jordan Valley makes up 30 per cent of the occupied West Bank and is home to more than 65,000 Palestinians. Annexation is strictly prohibited under international law and cannot go unchallenged by the international community, obliging the Council to act should any such aggression be committed. As was recently stated by Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk,

"By annexing these areas, Israel will further confine Palestinians to live in small, fragmented and disconnected cantons while others will continue to live under Israeli military rule. The annexation, if realized, will effectively ... entrench a one-State reality of separate and vastly unequal legal systems, political rights and social opportunities."

The international community must consider what that would mean with regard to the viability of the long-standing international consensus on a two-State solution, based on the pre-1967 borders, which such an action would effectively terminate.

The Committee is also gravely concerned about the recurrent and rising tensions in Jerusalem at the holy sites, including continuing provocations, incitement and violations at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Committee urges Israeli authorities to abide by international law and avoid actions that undermine an already fragile situation there, and calls for respect for the historic and legal status quo and the sanctity of the holy sites.

In Gaza, the situation also remains volatile, as weekly Great March of Return demonstrations and the ensuing casualties among Palestinian civilians have continued, alongside the indiscriminate firing of rockets into Israel. The dire economic situation, especially the insufficient energy supply, combined with the scarcity of essential medicines, is causing a health crisis, with the health system reported to be near collapse. We reiterate our call on Israel, the occupying Power, to abide by international standards with regard to the use of force. We also call on Palestinian militants in Gaza to stop the indiscriminate firing of rockets into southern Israel.

The Committee welcomes the steps taken by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians as presented in its September report to bring relief to the population through a package of urgent humanitarian and economic interventions for Gaza. These measures should go hand in hand with efforts to address the continuing fiscal crisis faced by the Palestinian Government, which hampers its ability to deliver services to the population.

In September, UNRWA was able to reopen 709 schools, allowing 530,000 refugee children to continue their education. However, the Agency's financial situation remains challenging albeit improved following the ministerial pledging conference held on 26 September in New York. The Committee reiterates its call on all Member States to provide UNRWA with the reliable and sustainable funding necessary to deliver critical humanitarian services to Palestinian refugees in all five fields of operation, contributing to their development and protection and to stability in the region. We also urge Member States to continue

strongly supporting its General Assembly mandate, which is to be renewed in November.

We commend Egypt and others for their ongoing efforts to advance the reconciliation process and call on the Palestinian parties to actively engage towards that end. Achieving reconciliation and holding general elections, which will be organized soon, as announced by President Mahmoud Abbas during the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session (see A/74/PV.7), would constitute positive steps towards reuniting the Palestinian people under a single, legitimate Palestinian national Government.

Finally, the only just and viable solution to ensure peace and prosperity in the region remains the international consensus on how to resolve the conflict: two States living side by side in peace and security along the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian State.

We are at a critical juncture, and it is time for the parties and the rest of the international community alike to break the inertia and walk the talk. We must implement all the resolutions adopted in this Chamber and face our collective responsibility vis-à-vis past and future generations of Palestinians and Israelis.

We all know that making the two-State solution a reality is the only way forward for peace and stability in the region. It is time to act to bring an end to the Israeli occupation; to realize the long-denied Palestinian rights, including to self-determination and freedom; and to make peace a reality. Failure to act will only hasten the demise of the two-State solution and bring more conflict and suffering.

The President: On behalf of us all, I really want to thank the interpreters, security personnel and engineers for having donated 15 minutes of their available time for peace and hope in the Middle East.

There are a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. I intend, with the concurrence of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.15 p.m. and resumed at 3.10 p.m.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the text in writing

and deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your friendly country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month. We wish you every success.

We also thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process for his invaluable efforts and for his briefing this morning.

The international community is following the accelerating events and developments unfolding in the Middle East. However, the Arab-Israeli conflict, after more than seven decades, remains at the core of the crises in the region. More time continues to elapse and we still have not found a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question. That could lead to a deterioration of the situation and have serious repercussions on regional and world stability and security.

The international community recognizes that ending the Arab-Israeli conflict is a precondition for restoring peace and stability in the Middle East. That is why the United Nations bears responsibility for ending the suffering of the Palestinian people. It must allow them to regain their rights and fulfil their legitimate aspirations. Today, after a number of solutions have been examined but have not led to the outcome desired by the Council and the world, it is asserted that settling the Palestinian question will be possible only on the basis of the terms of reference agreed by the international community, in particular ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan and the occupied Lebanese territories; accepting a two-State solution; establishing a viable independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security, in line with relevant Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative; the return of refugees; ending settlement activities; dismantling Israeli settlements in the occupied territory; and lifting the blockade on Gaza Strip and other Palestinian areas.

The State of Qatar recognizes its responsibilities for achieving stability and peace in the Middle East. That is why it has not stood idly by. Despite the obstacles to the peace process, we have made tireless and concrete efforts to improve the humanitarian situation and that, in

turn, will help reduce tensions and achieve peace. This year, the State of Qatar has contributed \$480 million to promote the Palestinian Authority's budget. We have provided humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip, as well as fuel to enhance the electricity supply. We have also supported United Nations recruitment programmes for securing jobs in the Gaza Strip. The State of Qatar continues to coordinate with our partners in the international community to make every effort to find a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question, leading to stability and peace in the whole region.

The brotherly Syrian people continue to seek security, peace and a life of dignity through a political solution that meets their legitimate aspirations, based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2015), in a way that preserves the unity, territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of Syria. We look forward to launching the Constitutional Committee and have hopes in that regard. The State of Qatar will continue to support all efforts to remove all obstacles to achieving peace and implementing a political solution, based on the legal terms of reference of the United Nations.

In Libya, the military operations launched by militias against Tripoli, targeting the legitimate, internationally recognized Government, threaten the unity and stability of Libya. We call on all actors to shoulder their responsibilities and to respect the will of the fraternal Libyan people in achieving a peaceful solution. We warn that any interference in the situation in Libya would further complicate the crisis, prevent international consensus and contravene Security Council resolutions. We fully support the efforts of Mr. Ghassan Salamé, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya.

With regard to Yemen, we again stress that ending the conflict will require all authorities to engage in dialogue to achieve a political solution and national reconciliation, based on resolution 2216 (2015), so as to preserve the unity of Yemen and achieve its security and stability. We express our support to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen. We stress the dire need to meet the basic needs of all the Yemeni people, facilitating the delivering of humanitarian aid and protecting human rights.

The serious situation and the plethora of crises in the Middle East underscore the need to respect international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights laws, on which there can be no compromise or delay. That is why the Security Council must take the appropriate measures to stop violations and defuse tensions, which could have further catastrophic consequences for international peace and security and place an additional burden on the United Nations, while distracting it from discharging its main duties. That is why refraining from instigating crises and levelling accusations to achieve illegitimate objectives will help enhance the ability of the United Nations and the Security Council to confront all challenges.

In that regard, the illegal unilateral actions and unjust blockade imposed on the State of Qatar for more than two years now by the siege States, as well as the cybercrimes committed against the Qatari news agency to justify the blackmail and extortion campaign against the State of Qatar, contravene United Nations efforts in the area of preventive diplomacy and peaceful resolution of crises. In addition, those illegal measures flagrantly violate the Charter of the United Nations, international law and human rights. The bad intentions behind the imposition of the blockade and the attempts to offend Qatar have been made clear by the fact that to this day the siege States have failed to provide any evidence for their allegations, while still refusing to come to the negotiation table. The State of Qatar is committed to stability and security in this region, one that is so vital to the world. We are also committed to implementing our well-known policy of respecting international law and resolving disputes and conflicts through peaceful means, in line with the Charter. We have stressed our willingness to settle the crisis through unconditional dialogue based on mutual respect. In that regard, we want to once again express our appreciation for the sincere efforts made by Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of our sister State of Kuwait.

In conclusion, the challenges that we face in our region, which are based on policies that disrespect international will and international law, require that we act quickly and effectively to end their implementation and ensure the accountability of those responsible for them, in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter and while continuing to maintain international peace and security.

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

Mr. Ahmed (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your brotherly country's successful presidency of the Council this month. I also want to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing.

We are meeting today as the security and stability of the Middle East continue to deteriorate, thanks to the various crises afflicting the region, particularly in the occupied Palestinian territories, with the situation in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem worsening owing to the practices and policies of the Israeli occupation, as has been described in reports of the United Nations and the relevant international organizations. Egypt has always stressed that we cannot achieve stability and security in the Middle East without a just and durable solution to the Palestinian question that will fulfil the aspirations of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State within the borders of 4 June 1967 and with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, as well as other terms of reference, particularly the Arab Peace Initiative, which Egypt still considers a viable basis for a solution to the Palestinian question.

Egypt is concerned about Israel's announcement that it intends to annex territories in the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea area, in addition to its announcement that it will construct new housing units as part of its expansionist settlement activities, all of which undermines the possibility of a two-State solution and contravenes Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 2334 (2016).

Israel's continued blockade of the Gaza Strip and closure of all the crossings between Israel and Gaza has led to deteriorating living standards for Palestinian citizens and a decline in or even prevention of the provision of basic services to them. Egypt is committed to assisting its Palestinian brothers and alleviating their suffering. We are working to maintain calm and stability in the Gaza Strip and to create conditions conducive to intra-Palestinian reconciliation. Here we should not fail to mention the Israeli practices that are aimed at altering the historical and legal status of East Jerusalem, which is of profound significance to the Islamic and Arab worlds. There have been repeated incursions into the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The continuing

Israeli practices violate the rights of the Palestinian people as well as all the relevant United Nations and Security Council resolutions. Such practices contribute greatly to destabilizing the region and encouraging the dissemination of terrorism and extremist ideology in the absence of a just solution to the Palestinian question.

Egypt is still hopeful that a just and comprehensive solution can be found to the Palestinian question, ending the suffering of our brother Palestinian people and fulfilling their long-awaited desire to establish an independent State based on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Until then, we call on the international community, especially donor countries, to continue lending their support by backing the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The Agency plays a vital role in providing basic services to Palestinian refugees, which is why we should all support it. Egypt would like to take this opportunity to call on all Member States to ensure that during the current session of the General Assembly we can extend UNRWA's mandate for three years, thereby enabling it to continue to play its important humanitarian role.

Egypt once again stresses that the international community, as embodied by the Security Council, must shoulder its responsibility, end the suffering of the Palestinian people and resolve the Palestinian question by implementing the relevant Council and General Assembly resolutions. We cannot achieve security and stability in the Middle East without finding a solution to the Palestinian question and ending the suffering of the Palestinian people.

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

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, the United Kingdom and my own country Croatia, all of which are also members of the European Union (EU).

Our discussions today come at a critical juncture for the Middle East peace process and the viability of a two-State solution. Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) calls for positive steps to be taken immediately in order to reverse the negative trends on the ground that

are imperilling the prospects for a two-State solution. Almost three years after the adoption of the resolution, the situation on the ground has continued to deteriorate. Israel has continued its occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and its settlement activities. Recently there have also been calls for annexation. The constant threat of violence, the incitements to hatred and violence from extremists and terrorists and the lack of progress on intra-Palestinian reconciliation all erode the prospects for peace and a two-State solution. In the meantime, no proposals for peace have been made.

Against that backdrop, the EU reiterates its readiness to work with both parties and our partners in the region and the international community towards a resumption of meaningful negotiations, aimed at resolving all final-status issues and achieving a just and lasting peace. We continue to advocate for a negotiated two-State solution and for finally putting an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with an agreement that would end the occupation begun in 1967, put a stop to all claims and fulfil the aspirations of both parties, including ensuring the security needs of Israelis and Palestinians and meeting Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty on a basis of international law, the internationally agreed parameters and the relevant Security Council resolutions. The EU's firm and united position has been set out in detail on numerous occasions. In line with international law, including resolution 2334 (2016), the EU has consistently reiterated its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in that context. Any settlement activities in East Jerusalem seriously jeopardize the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States. The EU has also made clear that it will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed to by the parties. We expect both parties, including any future Israeli Government, to act in accordance with international law.

The political and security situation in Gaza remains volatile, and the humanitarian situation continues to be a matter of grave concern. All violence, including the firing of rockets into Israel from Gaza, reminds us that restoring a political horizon for peace is essential to reducing violence and containing extremism in the region. We reiterate our call on Israel to respect the fundamental right to peaceful protest, as well as our call on Hamas to ensure that protests remain strictly non-violent. We call once again on all parties to take

urgent steps, in line with resolution 2334 (2016), leading to a fundamental change in the humanitarian, political, security and economic situation in Gaza, including through an end to the closure policy, the full opening of crossing points and the granting of humanitarian access, while also addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. Such steps would implement resolution 2334 (2016) and would increase the chances for a two-State solution.

Since the refugee issue — another internationally agreed parameter for the resolution of the conflict — also remains unsolved, it is of the utmost importance that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) be able to continue to provide Palestinian refugees with the necessary protection and essential services. The work of UNRWA is also important for the stability of the region, and the EU will continue to support it.

The Palestinian Legislative Council was dissolved in December 2018. Strong, inclusive, accountable and functioning democratic Palestinian institutions that are based on respect for the rule of law and human rights are vital to the two-State solution. In that context, and taking note of the announcement by President Abbas concerning the holding of elections (see A/74/PV.7), a date should be set very soon for elections in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in the Gaza Strip. The EU calls on all Palestinian factions to unequivocally commit to democratic principles prior to the elections.

Successful negotiations between the parties are possible, as we saw recently when an arrangement was reached on tax revenue transfers. The agreement shows that progress can be made if there is political will. Both parties should summon the courage to use such political will to advance a two-State solution. It is still possible to reach peace based on the two-State solution if credible steps are taken. Ultimately, and as the EU has said previously, it is the lack of implementation of international law that is the real challenge to the achievement of peace and security in the Middle East. Progress towards a resolution to this conflict would also have an impact on efforts to resolve other crises in the region.

Allow me to briefly turn to the situation in Syria. It remains one of the worst crises of our times — a conflict that has killed half a million people, displaced half of the Syrian population and threatened the stability of the

entire Middle East. It has also provided fertile ground for the rise of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS). Barely a month ago, during the high-level week at the General Assembly, the European Union hosted a ministerial event on Syria with the objective of reaffirming the strong commitment to achieving a political solution to the Syrian conflict and to sustaining international support for the Syrian people through the pledges made at the three Brussels conferences. The event also helped to reiterate our support for refugee-hosting countries while reaffirming the EU's firm position on reconstruction, namely that the EU will be ready to assist in the reconstruction of Syria only when a comprehensive, genuine and inclusive political transition, in the framework of resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva process, is firmly under way.

During the event, there was a rare spark of optimism in the Hall in the light of the Secretary-General's announcement on 23 September that the Syrian regime and the opposition had reached an agreement on the launching of the Constitutional Committee — the first inter-Syrian agreement since the start of the war in 2011. However, events move fast in Syria, and only two weeks later we witnessed Turkey's unilateral incursion into north-eastern Syria. The EU swiftly condemned Turkey's military action, as it seriously undermines the stability of the whole region, and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities. The fighting has resulted in civilian suffering and further displacement, and has also hindered access to humanitarian assistance. Extrajudicial killings have been reported, and they need to be investigated thoroughly in order to establish accountability.

The Turkish incursion has significantly undermined the progress achieved so far by the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, the latter which remains a threat to European, regional and international security. It has also made the prospects for the United Nations-facilitated political process to achieve peace in Syria far more difficult. The continued efforts of the international community, including in the Security Council, are needed in order to permanently halt this military action. Turkey's security concerns in north-eastern Syria should be addressed through political and diplomatic means and in full accordance with international law and international humanitarian law.

The situation in north-western Syria, where violence and civilian displacement persist, also remains of great concern. The presence of United Nations-listed

terrorist groups in the area contributes to the suffering of civilians, yet fighting terrorist groups cannot be used by the regime and its allies as a reason to justify violations of international humanitarian law. The EU continues to call on Russia and Turkey to restore the ceasefire in Idlib upon which they agreed under the Sochi memorandum.

As we have always said, there can be no military solution to the Syrian crisis. We will maintain our strong support for the United Nations-led process in Geneva and continue to support the United Nations Special Envoy's efforts to revive the political process and assist in the establishment of a balanced and inclusive Constitutional Committee to pave the way for free and fair elections in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015); to support Syrian civil society, including women and their equitable and meaningful engagement in the political process; to identify confidence-building measures between parties to the conflict, including on the issue of detainees and missing persons; and to maintain an international dialogue on Syria.

Furthermore, we will remain at the forefront of international efforts to promote accountability and justice and to combat impunity as part of any future process of national reconciliation in Syria, and we reiterate our support for the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Those Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. We reiterate the EU call to have the situation in Syria referred to the appropriate justice mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court.

The EU strengthened its sanctions against the Syrian regime earlier this year and will continue to consider further restrictive measures as long as the repression continues. We support the right of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons to a safe, voluntary and dignified return. Conditions defined by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees need to be put in place and robustly monitored.

Finally, we are pleased to report that since March, when the third Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region was held, where pledges reached a total of €8.3 billion for 2019 and beyond, two-thirds of those funds were pledged by the EU and its member States, of which 92% have already been committed.

The President: I thank the representative of Croatia for delivering the shortest speech of the day; he spoke for an average of 40 seconds per European Union country. If everybody could speak for only 40 seconds, we would be finished before 4 p.m.

I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mr. Dinh (Viet Nam): My delegation wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important quarterly open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I also thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his informative briefing and continuous efforts.

Peace cannot be sustained in the Middle East unless the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is resolved. For over half a century, the international community, and the Security Council in particular, have been making tireless efforts to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, hope for achieving a just and viable peace process through meaningful dialogue and negotiation is waning during a period in which provocations, violence, the demolition and seizure of Palestinian structures, the injury and killing of children and innocent civilians and the implementation of unilateral actions occur every single day.

According to the *Protection of Civilians Report* for 1 to 14 October 2019 of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, during the first half of October one Palestinian was shot dead and 261 Palestinians, including 127 children, were injured by Israeli forces in protests in Gaza; while another 37 Palestinians, including 2 children, were injured in protests in the West Bank. We also note with great concern that the Israeli authorities continue to demolish or force people to demolish Palestinian structures in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. It is very worrisome that the movement of people and commodities in the occupied Palestinian territory is still restricted when the economic and humanitarian situation in Gaza is worsening.

There is an urgent need to act and make many more efforts to avoid further deterioration of the situation on the ground. In such an alarming and critical situation, I would like to stress the following three points.

First, tension on the ground must be de-escalated; that is the first step towards creating an environment

conducive to dialogue and negotiation. We condemn all attacks on Palestinian and Israeli civilians, including firing on Palestinian demonstrators and rocket launches into Israel. We therefore urge all concerned parties to strictly comply with international law, refrain from all acts of provocation or violence and end attacks on Palestinian and Israeli civilians. We also commend and encourage all Palestinian efforts, as well as initiatives of the United Nations and its Member States, aimed at fostering unity among the Palestinian people in their national quest for an independent and prosperous State.

Secondly, illegal occupation is the root cause of the conflict and illegal settlement constitutes the biggest obstacle to the peace process. Negotiations are impossible in the context of ongoing construction of illegal settlements. We call on Israel to immediately cease all its settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory and fulfil its obligations pursuant to resolution 2334 (2016).

Thirdly, we call on Israel to lift its restrictions on the movement of people in the occupied Palestinian territory and urge all parties concerned to take more action to improve the living conditions of the Palestinian people in Gaza. We reiterate our full support for the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

In conclusion, Viet Nam reaffirms its unwavering support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people for their inalienable rights, including their rights to self-determination and establishment of an independent and sovereign State. We firmly believe that the only viable solution is to establish a Palestinian State on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, living side by side with the Israeli State in peace, security and mutual recognition.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Auza (Holy See): The latest briefings on Yemen heard by the Council just over a week ago (see S/PV.8642) indicated that the humanitarian situation remains very dire. Children are starving, access to clean water is scarce, the economy continues to struggle severely and those who cannot flee the front lines of war remain cut off from basic supplies as humanitarian workers are impeded from operating in some areas. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs described September as the deadliest month this year, with an average of 13 people being killed

every day. Although the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen spoke of signs of hope, he also added that they were "fragile and in need of our diligent care and attention" (*S/PV.8642 p.4*). In spite of some small positive steps, a nationwide ceasefire, which the Council has repeatedly called for, is essential if the intolerable suffering of the Yemeni people is ever to come to an end. Coherence and honesty demand that the call for a ceasefire be accompanied by a concrete end to the flow of arms in the region. Indeed, the world's worst humanitarian crises play out where weapons and ammunition freely circulate.

In Syria, the formation of the Constitutional Committee, scheduled to convene in Geneva on 30 October, is a very important step towards rebuilding trust and confidence among Syrians in a Syrian-owned constitution and between the Syrian authorities and the international community. However, the recent events in north-eastern Syria are a cause for great concern. Pope Francis renews his appeal to all to spare the population from further suffering. He calls on all the actors involved, as well as the international community, to commit themselves to sincere and transparent dialogue.

Moving now specifically to the Palestinian question, we are approaching the three-year anniversary of the adoption of resolution 2334 (2016), and there is indeed cause for concern as the situation on the ground worsens. As the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process noted in his 20 September briefing in this Chamber:

"Settlements have expanded, demolitions have accelerated, violence and incitement have continued. Achieving intra-Palestinian unity seems an ever-more distant prospect, and credible negotiations have yet to be launched." (*S/PV.8625 p.6*)

All of that impacts the prospects of durable peace and a two-State solution. Israel's failure to form a Government is also a cause for concern.

While everything must be done to ensure that the Holy Sites are protected, in line with international law and the status quo in the city of Jerusalem so that people of all religions can visit and worship without fear, it is of deep concern that native Christian communities feel constrained to abandon those lands — the very cradle of their faith — in search of peace and security for themselves and for their children. More should be done to ensure their protection and their full flourishing in the land of their birth and of their ancestors.

Some have claimed that the Council's credibility is being eroded precisely because of the failure to fully implement its own resolutions regarding the Palestinian question. It is high time that decisions taken and mechanisms already in place be used effectively to realize the objective of a Palestinian State living in peace and security alongside the State of Israel, within secure and internationally recognized borders.

In conclusion, as we consider the tragic conflicts in the Middle East, it becomes all the more pressing that all those concerned observe the limitations imposed by international humanitarian law. It is indeed essential to protect the life and dignity of the victims of armed conflicts and to ensure the protection of defenceless peoples and civilian structures, especially hospitals, schools, places of worship and refugee camps.

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

Mr. Bin Momen (Bangladesh): Let me begin by thanking the presidency of South Africa for a successful steering of the work of the Security Council during the month of October.

I take this opportunity to thank Mr. Nikolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his comprehensive briefing.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement that will be made by the representative of the United Arab Emirates on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The volatile situation in the Middle East, particularly that of Palestine, is one of the most regrettable and long-standing crises of our times. It remains one of the root causes of so many other crises and dilemmas. Yet a peaceful, just and viable political solution to that very central crisis continues to elude the international community. The widely expected meaningful and decisive political and legal actions to end Israel's illegal, decades-long foreign occupation of the Palestinian territory have been lacking from the Security Council.

The limitless aggression, indiscriminate killing of innocent Palestinians, including women and children, intensification of Israeli settlement policies, ongoing assault on Islamic and Christian holy places, particularly the Al-Aqsa Mosque, constitute the most blatant manifestations of the injustice committed against the Palestinian people. These are changing the

demographics of the occupied territory. The Israeli illegal blockade is making the already volatile situation more perilous, thereby exacerbating the humanitarian catastrophe. More and more Palestinian civilians are being made homeless and forced to live under inhumane conditions. An Israeli rights group recently stated that Israeli authorities have demolished at least 140 Palestinian homes in occupied East Jerusalem this year — the highest annual number since it began keeping records, in 2004. Bangladesh condemns all those acts of wrongdoing and reaffirms its commitment to the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine.

We are deeply concerned by the continued socioeconomic downturn faced by the Palestinian people, particularly the challenges they face in the achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Israeli occupation has been directly contributing to prolonging poverty, unemployment and humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will fail miserably if our Palestinian brothers and sisters continue to languish in their political, social, economic and cultural hardships. The international community must deliver on its commitment to leave no one behind by giving due attention to the legitimate rights and needs of the Palestinian people. We are concerned that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) programmes, which over the years have been providing essential humanitarian services to refugees, are faced with serious budgetary shortfalls. We urge the international community to come forward in a collective show of generosity to ensure enhanced, predictable and sustainable funding for UNRWA.

Israel's continued acts of aggression have given rise to an egregious culture of impunity; ensuring accountability is therefore a must. The international community, with the Security Council at the forefront, must fulfil its responsibility in ensuring accountability for all Israeli atrocities and human rights violations, upholding the rule of international law and providing protection for the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. We reaffirm our support for the accession of the State of Palestine to international organizations and treaties and reiterate our call for the Security Council to recommend and positively consider its admission as a full Member of the United Nations. We also urge for the timely implementation of the relevant Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), to end the

Israeli occupation, which is the bedrock for achieving lasting peace in the Middle East. The implementation of the Quartet road map and the Arab Peace Initiative, along with the efforts of Middle East Quartet, is also crucial.

During our war of liberation, in 1971, our people had to endure the worst form of genocide — about 10 million Bangladeshi people had to take refuge in neighbouring India. Our painful experiences have emboldened us to stand by oppressed peoples, which is why our Constitution stipulates our nation's unequivocal support for oppressed peoples waging a just struggle throughout the world. That is why we did not hesitate to respond to the call of the distressed humanity and opened doors to over 1 million Rohingyas fleeing atrocious crimes in Myanmar. Driven by our constitutional and moral obligations and the avowal of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina — expressed yet again during the recently concluded high-level week of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session — to “stand firm in our support for our Palestinian brothers and sisters” (A/74/PV.10, p. 22), Bangladesh will continue to firmly stand by the cause of the Palestinian struggle until the establishment of the State of Palestine on the basis of a two-State solution and the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

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

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on successfully presiding over the Security Council for this month. I wish friendly South Africa all the best.

On 14 September, my country endured awful attacks against Saudi ARAMCO oil facilities using Iranian weapons, which led to a decrease in oil production by almost 50 per cent. That act of aggression is a flagrant violation of international rules and norms and against international peace and security. The international community must take a historic stance. This is a grave threat to the world oil supply and the international economy, and not only to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, my country was able to contain the repercussions of those attacks and resume normal production in record time.

It is clear that those and other attacks against international energy production, as well as missile attacks against my country, are in defiance of the strong and steadfast policies of my country. They are in defiance

of collective international counter-terrorism efforts and an attempt to intervene in the internal affairs of States in our region. In that regard, my country appreciates the condemnation of the international community for those attacks. We call on the international community to take stronger and more comprehensive measures to assume its responsibilities in confronting those subversive policies that support terrorism and foment sectarianism in the region. They support armed militias and seek to destroy the countries of the region by sowing strife and threatening the world oil production. The international community must realize that it is time to act decisively and form a united front to protect the region and the world's economy from any reckless behaviour that could lead to further crises in the region and the world.

I reiterate the clear position of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia against any strife and war in the region. We do not seek war. However, at the same time, we will not hesitate in protecting our territories from any aggression. We will not hesitate in protecting our citizens and the resources of our country by all legitimate means. We believe in the principles of dialogue and the peaceful resolution of disputes. However, any dialogue must be coupled with an effective cessation of threats and hostilities. All countries that call for dialogue must abandon their policies of exporting their revolutions and creating sectarian pockets in other countries as a means of interfering in their internal affairs.

Over the course of past century and up until today, the world has not seen a crisis as prolonged as the Palestinian crisis, suffering as deep as that of the Palestinian people or policies as repressive as those of Israel. Although Israel joined the United Nations as a State Member, it has disregarded all the resolutions of this international Organization and the Security Council, which was tasked with maintaining international peace and security. Israel continues its heinous violations of human rights in Palestine before the eyes of the entire world. Israeli policies are based on a fait accompli — an approach that must change in order to end the greatest crisis in the world to have befallen an entire people.

The Palestinian people have suffered one of the most heinous forms of occupation in modern history. However, Palestinians have not given up. They have continued to struggle amid the support of their brothers and friends in order to reach a just solution. This crisis cannot be resolved without addressing its root causes, namely, Israeli occupation and its hostilities. We believe

that the Palestinian question is of the utmost importance to stabilizing the region. Any solution must be based on a two-State solution, in line with the international terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, which calls for establishing the Palestinian State along the borders of 4 June 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital. It also calls for the return of refugees and an end to the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Arab Golan and of Lebanese territories.

Historically, my country has been among the largest donors and supporters of the Palestinian people. That is why, in September, we announced the contribution of an additional \$50 million dollars in support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and its programmes and in order to provide humanitarian assistance and basic needs to the Palestinian refugees. Therefore, in total, we have contributed nearly \$800 million to UNRWA over the past two decades.

My country once again welcomes the agreement to create the Syrian Constitutional Committee. It gives us hope for the possibility of reaching a political agreement that would put an end to the suffering of the fraternal Syrian people and ensure the safe and voluntary return of Syrian refugees in line with international standards. My country condemns the Turkish military operations in northern Syria. It is important not to take any measure that would exacerbate the Syrian crisis and the suffering of the Syrian people. All parties must refrain from any measures that would undermine international efforts against terrorist Da'esh or threaten Syria's unity and territorial integrity.

The Government of my country reiterates its call for confronting the armed militias and expelling them from Syria. Those militias serve foreign agendas and seek to destroy Syria by fomenting instability in the region. We call on the international community to unite against any unilateral measure that would undermine a political solution in Syria, in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

My country fully supports the Yemeni Government and the fraternal Yemeni people during the current crisis in their country and will continue to do so until a comprehensive political solution is reached and stability is restored in Yemen. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia recently provided \$500 million to Yemen, through the United Nations, to support the humanitarian response plan in the country for 2019. This means that the

Kingdom has contributed more than \$14 billion in the form of support and aid to Yemen. We also hosted a dialogue recently between the Yemeni Government and the Southern Transitional Council to bridge any differences regarding the solution in Yemen and addressing the Houthi coup. The dialogue concluded with what will be known as the Riyadh agreement, which will be signed soon. According to this agreement, a new Government in Yemen will include 24 efficient ministers and will seek to create a united front, using State institutions in the service of all the Yemeni people while providing them with their essential needs.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supports United Nations efforts to solve the crisis in Yemen and welcome the progress made in creating joint observation posts in Al-Hudaydah. My country once again calls on the international community to take all necessary measures to support the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, which was adopted almost a year ago but is yet to be implemented due to the stalling of the Houthi militias. The Stockholm Agreement is necessary to reach a comprehensive solution in line with the three terms of reference, in particular Council resolution 2216 (2015).

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

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I congratulate the delegation of South Africa on presiding over the Council throughout October. I also thank the Russian Federation for successfully presiding over the Council last month.

Despite resolutions and agreements adopted at the international level, including at the United Nations, the Palestinian people are still waiting for the Israeli occupation to end and to exercise their legitimate right to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. Under His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Kingdom of Morocco calls on all parties to refrain from any acts of violence and unjust policies against the unarmed Palestinian people, including settlement policies, the demolition of houses and any other practices that constitute a flagrant violation of international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and international humanitarian law and that stand in the way of the two-State solution. The Kingdom of Morocco condemns the latest announcement to annex the Jordan Valley and

northern Dead Sea. Such announcements constitute a grave escalation and, if implemented, would represent a new violation of international law and international resolutions and jeopardize all efforts under way to find a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The Kingdom of Morocco also rejects any attempt to alter the legal and historic status of Jerusalem. His Majesty King Mohammed VI has launched several serious and practical initiatives to serve the Jerusalemites and Palestinians in general. In cooperation with His Holiness Pope Francis, and in the context of his visit to Morocco on 30 March, at the invitation of His Majesty, the King called for measures to be put in place to serve the people of Jerusalem. His Holiness and His Majesty agreed that it was important to maintain the current status of Jerusalem as the common heritage of humankind. Its special character as a multi-religious city must be preserved. All its inhabitants of the three monotheistic religions must have access to the religious sites.

In that context, the Kingdom of Morocco, during a reception that His Majesty King Mohammed VI organized for His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein during his visit to Morocco on 28 March, launched a joint initiative with the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, aimed at defending the holy city and protecting it from any attempts to change its historic, legal and political status, as well as its Islamic and Christian religious and cultural landmarks. The Kingdom of Morocco stresses the importance of the historic Jordanian custodianship of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

It is incumbent upon the international community to shoulder its responsibilities and to find a way out of the stalemate that we have been witnessing ever since the interruption of negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis, leading to more violence and tension. That is why the international community must take the lead and bring Palestinians and Israelis back to the negotiating table to implement the two-State solution along the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine. These negotiations must be based on genuine foundations of goodwill and in line with a set time frame in order to restore trust among all parties and establish a viable country. This will enable both States to live side by side in safety and stability in line with international legitimacy resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. We also appreciate the

efforts made by various States with a view to establishing lasting peace and security in the Middle East.

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

Mrs. Baghirova (Azerbaijan): It is an honour for the Republic of Azerbaijan to take the floor on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries at this quarterly open debate on a matter to which we have historically attached special importance, namely, the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine.

At the outset, it is a great privilege to convey our profound respects to Her Excellency Mrs. Naledi Pandor, Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, a fellow non-aligned country, and to congratulate her delegation on its presidency and leadership of the Security Council throughout this month.

Just five days ago, the Ministerial Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement on Palestine was convened in Baku to review the latest developments in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Regrettably, the situation remains critical and clearly unsustainable. In its unanimously adopted political declaration, the Ministerial Committee renewed, inter alia, the Movement's abiding solidarity with, and unwavering support for, the inalienable rights and just cause of the Palestinian people and called once again for a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine, which has been delayed for too long and caused too much human suffering and tragedy over the decades. In that regard, the member States of the Movement seize this opportunity to once again reaffirm that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict — with the Israeli occupation at its core — continues to pose a serious threat to regional and international peace and security and requires urgent attention and action, in accordance with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and, of course, the Charter of the United Nations itself, as well as the tools provided by multilateral diplomacy for the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The Security Council has a clear responsibility to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security. It must uphold its Charter duties and act to implement its own resolutions, which not only constitute the foundation for a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the conflict but are also legally binding on

all States Members of the United Nations. The question of Palestine cannot be the exception. Hence we remain deeply concerned that this organ has for too long been unable to fulfil its mandate on this important question, owing to the use of the veto by one of its permanent members. The members of the Movement called on the Security Council to overcome its paralysis and fulfil its Charter duties on the Palestine question in order to restore its credibility and uphold its obligations towards the achievement of a just and peaceful solution.

The Non-Aligned Movement still believes that resolution 2334 (2016), which reaffirmed many other relevant Council resolutions on the matter, provides the only viable path to peace, setting forth the essential requirements and parameters for achieving a just settlement on the basis of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders and in accordance with the long-standing terms of reference for peace endorsed by the international community, namely, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles — including the principle of land for peace — the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, and ensuring the fulfilment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their rights to self-determination and independence within their own State of Palestine and with East Jerusalem as its capital. Hence we call for full respect for resolution 2334 (2016) and the effective implementation of its provisions and obligations, particularly on the part of the occupying Power, including States' obligations with regard to distinction — a matter that is central to accountability.

Similarly, the member States of the Movement continue to call for full respect for and the implementation of all other relevant resolutions, including with regard to the complete cessation of all Israeli settlement activities and the status of occupied East Jerusalem, as that would create the necessary conditions to put an end to the occupation, justly resolving the conflict in all its aspects and making Palestinian-Israeli peace and security a reality, which would be to the benefit of both peoples, the region and the international community as a whole. It is imperative that action be taken immediately, in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, in order to redress the situation on the ground, de-escalate tensions and foster an appropriate environment for the pursuit of peace, including by averting unilateral, provocative or arbitrary measures that serve only to embolden Israel in further pursuing its illegal policies and practices

in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Actions that violate Security Council resolutions and the historic status quo of Jerusalem and its holy sites are provocative and dangerous and destroy the prospects for peace. They should not be supported or celebrated by any country. Threats of annexation by Israeli officials must be unequivocally condemned, and any measures taken in that regard must be forthwith rejected as null and void and without any legal effect and must be met with firm measures of accountability for such grave breaches.

In relation to the Gaza Strip, the situation remains of great concern to the Movement, particularly the grave humanitarian situation, which regrettably continues to deteriorate day by day. The Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its call for the complete lifting of the Israeli blockade, which continues to impose untold humanitarian, social and economic suffering on the more than 2 million Palestinian children, women and men in Gaza. This crisis must be comprehensively addressed in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law, international human rights law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. That should be done in the context of the overall situation regarding the continuation of the illegitimate and belligerent Israeli foreign occupation of Palestinian territory since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and the unequivocal calls to put an end to that more than half-century occupation.

In the absence of a solution, the member States of the Movement reiterate their call for the continued provision of needed humanitarian and socioeconomic assistance to the Palestinian people, including Palestinian refugees. The Non-Aligned Movement therefore stresses the importance of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), along with other United Nations agencies and international organizations, in alleviating the plight of the Palestinians. We call for full support for the renewal of UNRWA's mandate in order to ensure the continuity of its vital programmes and its contribution to regional stability. Given that Israel — the occupying Power — has clearly abdicated its obligations to protect the Palestinian civilian population in respect of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, we also reiterate our long-standing call for the international community to ensure the protection of the Palestinian people. That is urgent in order to alleviate the dire state of insecurity of the occupied population and prevent the further

loss of innocent human lives. Failure to do so can lead only to further escalations and the tragic loss of more civilian lives.

In that connection, we reiterate our grave concern about the lack of accountability for all the violations committed by Israel, many of which may amount to war crimes. The absence of justice fosters greater levels of impunity, leads to the recurrence of crimes and destabilizes the situation on the ground, thereby further diminishing the prospects for peace. We continue to call for international action, particularly on the part of the Security Council, in order to ensure a cessation of, and accountability for, the violations that are being systematically committed by the occupying Power against the Palestinian civilian population under its occupation. Israel must comply with its duties and responsibilities under international law and must be held to account should it continue to show blatant contempt for the Council and its own international legal obligations.

With regard to the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, the Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms that all measures and actions that have been or will be taken by Israel — the occupying Power — that purport to alter its legal, physical or demographic status or its institutional structure, such as its illegal decision of 14 December 1981, as well as any Israeli measures to apply its jurisdiction or administration there, are null and void and have no legal effect. In that regard, in line with our principled position, we once again demand that Israel abide by resolution 497 (1981) and fully withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967, in implementation of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). In addition, we reiterate our condemnation of the unilateral and arbitrary proclamation of the United States of America in recognizing the Golan Heights as part of Israel, and we renew our call for the Security Council to unequivocally condemn that provocative act. Moreover, the member States of the Movement emphasize the necessity that Israel withdraw from all Lebanese territories, including the Shaba'a farmlands, the Kfar Shuba Hills and the Lebanese part of Al-Ghajar village up to the Blue Line, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular resolution 1701 (2006).

To conclude, we take this opportunity to reiterate our call for the international community to act collectively and with responsibility to uphold international law and to exert and intensify all necessary efforts in support

of the Palestinian cause, the ultimate goal of which is to bring an end to this historic and grave injustice. We reaffirm our commitment to promoting a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine in all its aspects, including the plight of the Palestine refugees, and reaffirm our support to the Palestinian people in their struggle to achieve justice and fulfil their inalienable rights and legitimate national aspirations, including to self-determination, freedom and independence in their sovereign and independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

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

Mr. Bougacha (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased at the outset to announce that Tunisia is delivering this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States in New York.

I thank you, Sir for convening this debate and commend your able leadership of the Council for the month of October. I also thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, on behalf of the Arab Group, for his briefing.

Over the past decades, the Security Council has adopted dozens of resolutions on the Palestinian question in particular and the Israeli-Arab conflict in general. However, they are yet to be implemented. That has allowed Israel, the occupying Power, to continue its aggressive and repressive policies against the Palestinian people, its systematic violations of holy sites and its expansionist settlement activities, thereby defying international will, rejecting peace and disregarding the relevant United Nations resolutions.

This situation has prolonged the conflict and deepened the suffering of the Palestinian people. It has raised tensions in the region and threatened regional and international stability, peace and security, which are at the heart of the Security Council's mandate. The region and the world cannot enjoy peace, stability and security without a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian question that would allow the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate rights, notably their right to self-determination and to establish an independent State on their territories, based on the 4 June 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital, and enable the settlement of all final status issues in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the two-State solution.

In order to achieve those goals, there must be an international desire for peace. The Security Council must assume its historical responsibility for maintaining international legitimacy and compelling Israel to respect the United Nations resolutions, end its occupation of the Palestinian and Arab territories, cease its expansionist settlement activities and lift the unjust blockade on Gaza.

The stalemate continues in the peace process as Israel continues to block all initiatives aimed at reviving it. The intransigent Israeli policies have led to serious escalation as Israel continues to impose a fait accompli and flout all relevant terms of reference, including by attempting to change the historical and legal status of Jerusalem, the occupied Syrian Arab Golan and the occupied Lebanese territory, as well as by violating the sovereignty of Lebanon by air, land and sea. In furtherance of that policy, the Prime Minister of Israel announced last September his intention to annex parts of the occupied West Bank, in flagrant defiance of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant United Nations resolutions, which would lead to further violence and escalation in the region.

The Arab world remains committed to peace as a strategic choice. However, that does not mean accepting Israeli occupation and aggressions indefinitely or the continued Israeli attacks on and killings of the Palestinian people. It does not mean accepting violations of international resolutions, attempts to change the historical and legal status of Jerusalem and other Arab and Palestinian territories or attempts to pre-empt the final status negotiations.

The Arab States renew their commitment to their principled positions, as announced by their leaders at various international and regional forums, including the most recent, the thirtieth summit of the League of Arab States in Tunisia and the fourteenth Islamic summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Mecca.

The Arab Group in New York would like to stress once again the following points.

First, we reject all unilateral policies and measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the historical, legal and demographic status of East Jerusalem and to violate Muslim and Christian holy sites in the city. We call on the countries of the world to not recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and not move to their embassies there. We support the historical Hashemite custodianship of the Muslim

and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, and we believe that the Jordanian Jerusalem Waqf Council is the only legal authority over the Al-Aqsa Mosque in terms of management, maintenance and organization of entry and exit.

Secondly, we again condemn the so-called Jewish nation-State law, which perpetuates racism and denies the rights of the Palestinian people, especially their right to self-determination.

Thirdly, we call on the international community, especially the Security Council, to assume its responsibility in providing the necessary protection to the Palestinian people, in line with the Geneva Conventions and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including those of the Security Council and the General Assembly — most importantly resolution ES-10/20, of 13 June 2018. We also call for the implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendations, issued in accordance with that resolution.

Fourthly, we call on the international community to continue supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in order to allow it to carry out its mandate and overcome its current financial difficulties.

The Arab Group reiterates that it stands ready to support any serious efforts to revive the peace process, end the occupation and reach a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian question, including the Israeli-Arab conflict, in accordance with the relevant international terms of reference, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative. That solution should follow a timetable that would lead to an agreement on the final status issues with international guarantees, including the status of Jerusalem.

The Arab Group stresses that any effort or initiative to settle the conflict that does not take into consideration the aforementioned terms of reference and the two-State solution will fail to make any progress towards the settlement of the conflict. The Arab Group affirms once again that it stands with the State of Palestine in its endeavours to become a full-fledged Member of the United Nations.

In conclusion, the Arab Group is committed to respecting international legitimate resolutions, international law and international humanitarian law. We call for intensifying international efforts to ensure the implementation of the relevant Council resolutions,

promote peace in the service of international peace and security and enable the peoples of the region to live safely and peacefully.

The President: I now give the floor to the permanent Observer of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Abdelaziz (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council and to thank you for holding this important meeting, which coincides with a number of significant international developments concerning stability in the Middle East region.

Those developments required the League of Arab States to convene a number of extraordinary meetings at the summit and ministerial levels, while the Security Council is still incapable of effectively dealing with them although they are directly linked to the maintenance of international peace and security.

There are many hotbeds of tension throughout the Arab world. However, the Palestinian question remains at the heart of such tension. The League of Arab States is extremely concerned about the electoral crisis in Israel, which means that there is currently no recognized partner in the peace process. Nevertheless, we underscore once again the unchanging principles and international parameters underpinning the peace process, most importantly the two-State solution, the establishment of a Palestinian State within the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the need for negotiations to include the five key issues of the final status: settlements, water, refugees, security and Jerusalem. The League reiterates its rejection of any unilateral decision that would undermine the Palestinian negotiating position in any final peace negotiations. We also reiterate our refusal to change the status of Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

We call for effectively countering the Israeli settlements brutal attacks against Palestinian territories. The defenceless Palestinian people must be protected against Israeli attacks. The Security Council must consider the alternatives proposed by the Secretary-General in his report (A/73/346), following the resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly on 13 June 2018.

We also underscore the importance of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and its role

in assisting Palestinian refugees and meeting their humanitarian needs until they are allowed to enjoy the right to return in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948 and until a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian question is reached.

The League hopes that peace negotiations on all issues between the Palestinian and Israeli parties will begin as soon as the new Israeli Government is formed, based on the internationally agreed parameters, the Oslo Accords, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative. We are convinced that the international actors, especially the Security Council, will provide their support for a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict in its entirety.

Meanwhile, we commend all the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Coordinator, Mr. Mladenov. We welcome the reports on illegitimate Israeli settlement activities, which are provided pursuant to resolution 2334 (2016), which is and will remain a milestone in the work of the Council and a cornerstone of international legitimacy that must be respected.

Iran's flagrant interference in the internal affairs of Arab countries continues. Iran is supporting terrorist organizations and cells that are opposed to the Governments of Arab countries, which is a source of deep concern for the League of Arab States and the international community. That is why the Arab Summit, held in Mecca in May, dealt with that issue and issued the Mecca communiqué, reaffirming the declaration issued at the previous Arab Summit held in Tunisia. The recent Arab ministerial meetings held in Cairo in September and the ministerial coordination meeting held at the beginning of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly adopted declarations confirming the firm and unequivocal position of the Arab League, including the need for the Security Council to counter these threats.

Although we have communicated all of those statements to the Secretary-General to be circulated to the Security Council and the General Assembly as official documents, I will focus only on their most salient points.

First, we condemn Iranian interference in the domestic affairs of Arab States, in particular in the Arabian Gulf region. We condemn military actions carried out and supported by Iran against the Kingdom

of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and in the Gulf of Oman.

Secondly, all countries of the League of Arab States stand in full solidarity with the States of the Arabian Gulf in countering threats and acts of aggression. We urge the Security Council and various international and regional Powers to redouble their international cooperation to ensure international and regional peace and security while forcefully and decisively confronting attempts to threaten energy security, safety of maritime facilities in the Arabian Gulf and other waterways whether by Iran or its followers.

Thirdly, Arab States are committed to meeting all challenges and countering flagrant Iranian interference under international law, international legitimacy and the Charter of the United Nations, while compelling Iran to meet its obligations as a State Member of the United Nations and as a neighbouring country of the Arab States in the Arabian Gulf. That will also avoid any military confrontation in our region.

Our region has seen other developments with regard to the issue of Syria. While we were expecting a de-escalated situation thanks to the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, leading to the establishment of the Constitutional Committee, we were surprised by the withdrawal of United States forces from the north-eastern part of Syria, which enabled Turkey to launch a military offensive in Syria with a view to establish a buffer zone.

Although Syria is a suspended member of the League of Arab States, on 12 October the Council of Ministers of the League adopted resolution 8454, condemning fully the Turkish act of military aggression and explicitly calling on the Security Council to intervene to stop it. We commend the efforts undertaken by the United States and Russia, which have led to successive agreements with Turkey, including ambiguous arrangements on Arab Syrian territory. The League nevertheless reiterates the need to stop Turkey's military aggression in Syria and the withdrawal of all Turkish aggressive forces from Syria.

We call on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities and ensure the prevention of any provisional agreement that would undermine the territorial integrity and unity of Syria or have a negative impact on the international efforts under way that have enabled the eradication of Da'esh in Iraq and countered its activities in Syria, the latest of which was

the targeting the leader of Da'esh in the north-western part of Syria, which was announced yesterday.

In that regard, the League of Arab States reiterates the contents of the outcome document of the regular Arab Summit held in Tunisia, which refused to recognize Israel's sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Arab Golan. We also stress Syria's sovereignty over the Golan, in accordance with resolution 497 (1981), which was adopted unanimously. We also reiterate that we are ready to officially refer the issue to the Security Council and the International Court of Justice, notwithstanding the fact that Syria's membership in the League is still suspended. We are undertaking consultations in that regard with the parties concerned, in coordination with the Arab member in the Security Council.

In conclusion, the League of Arab States will continue to play its key role, together with the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union, in support of the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, Ghassan Salamé, to bring about comprehensive peace. We will spare no effort to support the work done in Yemen by Mr. Griffiths in his capacity as the Special Envoy. We will continue our support for the stabilization efforts under way in Algeria, the Sudan, Somalia, Iraq and other Arab States. We hope to step up our cooperation and joint action with the United Nations and with all other regional and political organization in order to bring peace and security to the Middle East.

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

Mr. Othman (Malaysia): I join others in welcoming and thanking our briefer today and commend you, Mr. President, for having convened this open debate.

Malaysia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

For decades, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has cast a shadow over the Middle East. The region continues to experience a vicious cycle of war, political tensions and divisions. Many have been killed, injured or displaced. For Palestinians, humanity is on the brink of failure.

Let me be clear: the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not just about a land dispute. All Palestinians, including women, young people and children, are entitled to the same rights as we are — the right to a dignified

life, justice, freedom from fear and prosperity. But our solidarity with the Palestinian people must not be based only in empathy, as worthy as that is. We have an obligation to them to do everything in our power to end their long ordeal.

For the same reason, Malaysia continues to extend its support and commitment to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which provides assistance, protection and advocacy for over 20 per cent of the world's refugees. This is not a matter of charity. We see this as the responsibility of the international community to protect and promote the human rights and dignity of our Palestinian brothers and sisters.

The recent violence in Gaza and the West Bank continues to undermine hopes for a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. We cannot continue to stand idle and allow Israel to continue to carry out its brutal occupation and repressive policies that violate numerous United Nations resolutions and international law, including humanitarian law.

Malaysia cannot and will not recognize any blatant seizure of Palestinian land by Israel for its settlements, as that constitutes a flagrant infringement of the Palestinian people's rights and their right to self-determination. We also reject any unilateral action regarding the final status of Jerusalem.

Malaysia therefore calls upon the international community to act swiftly and decisively to prevent any further loss of defenceless, innocent Palestinian lives. When we served on the Council in 2016, Malaysia, along with other Council members, succeeded in adopting the historic resolution 2334 (2016), which, *inter alia*, demanded that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. We remain hopeful and urge the relevant parties to ensure full respect for and the implementation of this important resolution.

Malaysia also firmly upholds its position that a two-State solution with the Palestinians and Israelis living side by side in peace, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, is the only viable solution to the conflict.

The tragic circumstances surrounding the Palestinian people are nothing new. The Council has arduously debated them for decades. We must act now. It is absolutely necessary to work collectively to reverse

any threat to the two-State solution. We must continue to encourage dialogue and demonstrate our faith in diplomacy and multilateralism.

We also need to do more to bridge or possibly even close the gap between words and deeds. We need strong political will, and if we are to succeed in resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, we believe that such success may create new openings to forge progress towards broader and peaceful conflict resolution in other parts of the region.

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

Mr. Rivero Rosario (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to begin by expressing our delegation's gratitude for South Africa's exemplary leadership of the work of the Security Council as President of the Council for the month of October. We take this opportunity to welcome the presence of Mrs. Pandor, Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa. We welcome also the Secretary of State of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany.

We align ourselves the statement made by the representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

Since the previous quarterly open debate on the Middle East, including the situation in Palestine (see S/PV.8583), far from taking measures to immediately and completely put an end to the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, Israel has with impunity continued to expand settlements in occupied areas and has threatened to annex the Palestinian territories of the Jordan Valley in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. These fresh actions are serious and troubling.

Cuba condemns the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and all illegal and colonization policies, practices and measures, including the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territory, punitive demolitions, seizures of Palestinian structures by the Israeli authorities, the forced displacement of hundreds of Palestinian civilians, the blockade of the Gaza Strip and the increased violence and use of indiscriminate and disproportionate force against Palestinian civilians, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law.

We call once again upon the Security Council to demand an immediate end to the occupation of

Palestinian territory and to Israel's aggressive and colonization policies, in accordance with the resolutions adopted on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, particularly resolution 2334 (2016). It is unacceptable that the Security Council has not even condemned the escalation of violence or the tragic events in the Gaza Strip since 30 March 2018. The repeated obstruction of the United States, which is complicit with Israel's occupation and aggression, is a discredit to this body.

The international community cannot remain silent. International peace and security must be safeguarded, and we must ensure compliance by Israel with international law, including humanitarian law and international human rights law, and with all the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Council, particularly the aforementioned resolution 2334 (2016).

We reiterate our unconditional support for a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that will make it possible for the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and live in an independent, sovereign State, within pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and that guarantees the right of return of refugees.

We reject the unilateral action by the United States Government in recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and establishing its diplomatic representation in that city, without regard to its historical status. We condemn the cutting off of financial support to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, as well as all unilateral measures aimed at undermining the two-State solution, which is the only viable and realistic solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We reiterate our rejection of the so-called deal of the century drawn up by the current United States Government, which does not envision the creation of a State of Palestine and ignores the two-State solution, which has received the historical support of the United Nations, NAM, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and other international stakeholders.

We call for respect for multilateralism and an end to the use of double standards and to interference in domestic affairs, foreign aggression, illicit arms trafficking and the sponsorship of terrorist groups in the region.

We reiterate our strong condemnation of the decision by the United States Government to recognize the occupied Syrian Golan as Israeli territory, which is a grave and flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, in particular 497 (1981).

We will continue to support the demands of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to recover the Golan Heights, and again call for Israel's total and unconditional withdrawal from the Syrian Golan and all occupied Arab territories.

We express our firm rejection of the application of new, arbitrary and unjust unilateral coercive economic measures announced by the Government of the United States against the Islamic Republic of Iran. The withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme, the increase in the number of unilateral sanctions and the military threat against the Islamic Republic of Iran have all led to greater instability in the Middle East.

We condemn the attacks on two oil facilities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

We call for restraint and moderation so as to prevent instability and conflict in the Middle East. We demand that this organ fulfil its responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security.

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

Mr. Mimouni (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Madam President, and the delegation of South Africa on your tireless efforts in presiding over the Council, especially while addressing important international developments, such as those unfolding in the occupied Palestinian territories and the Middle East.

I would also like to thank the Ambassador of the Russian Federation for successfully presiding over the Council last month.

Allow me to also thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing on the developments on the ground.

We meet today as the Middle East is undergoing a delicate and precarious phase. A number of brotherly countries have been hit by crises and suffer from the

presence of terrorist organizations that threaten their very existence. Regrettably, we must acknowledge that the situation has deteriorated because the international community has been unable to adopt an appropriate approach that would allow for the settlement of those crises, according to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. That has led to greater chaos and confusion and an increased risk of the collapse of some Arab States.

The Palestinian question remains at the core of the Islamic and Arab world. In remaining unresolved, it has led to greater tension and violence in the Middle East and the wider world. The most recent tragic developments and the suffering of the Palestinian people indicate that prospects for a peaceful settlement have become elusive, as the occupying Power continues to defy international legitimacy, insists on imposing a fait accompli, reneges on its commitments and disregards all agreements with a view to eliminating the goal of establishing a sovereign Palestinian State.

We express our deep concern about the general situation of the Palestinian question. In the light of the continued violations committed by the Israeli occupying Power, the international community must make greater efforts to ensure that the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, shoulders its full responsibility. The United Nations must honour its legal obligations, uphold the law and defend international order. It must act according to the law. It must fulfil its moral obligations to ensure accountability for those crimes and provide protection for the Palestinian people.

The settlement activities carried out by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan, are attempts to impose a fait accompli, in flagrant violation of international law, including resolution 2334 (2016). It is regrettable that Israel seeks to dictate erroneous terms of reference and to suggest half solutions, claiming that they are realistic, even as it seeks only to undermine the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. The world has shown broad solidarity with the Palestinian question and condemned certain countries for the relocation of their embassies to Jerusalem. That is a hostile and provocative act against the national rights of the Palestinian people and is in flagrant violation of international law as well as an aggression against the international system including the United Nations.

The unarmed Palestinian people are unable to enjoy their most basic national rights — including the right to return to their usurped land. We also condemn any attempt to alter the character of Jerusalem. Algeria again expresses from this Chamber its principled position regarding in support of the just question of the Palestinian people. We hope that the United Nations will shoulder its historic responsibility and allow the Palestinian people to decide their own fate. It must reject any unjust actions targeting the Palestinian people. It must put an end to the practices and arbitrary occupations by Israel in Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Against the backdrop of a complete impasse in the peace process, which has been obstructed for years, Algeria calls for intensifying diplomatic efforts in the Council and, at the level of international and regional organizations, taking practical steps to defuse tensions in the region and creating the necessary conditions to break the current deadlock. We hope that such discussions will constitute an incentive for the United Nations to shoulder its responsibility and support the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people as they seek to regain their territory and establish an independent and sovereign State, on the basis of the 4 June 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Ever since Algeria gained its independence, we have adopted a clear and steadfast position based on two main principles in our foreign policy. The first is non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, which is a core rule of international relations. The second is support for consensus-based political solutions that uphold the sovereignty and unity of Arab countries and meet the aspirations of the Arab people, without sectarian strife or foreign intervention, regardless of its manifestations or source. That is why, with regard to the situation in sisterly Syria, it is important to focus on the political solution and on national reconciliation so as to enable all Syrians to return to their homeland and start reconstruction in the context of preserving the unity and sovereignty of that fraternal country and safeguarding it from external intervention, pursuant to the Charter and international law.

In conclusion, Algeria assures its unconditional support for all genuine initiatives aimed at achieving lasting peace and stability in the Middle East. We are aware that the international community must ensure unity among the members of the Security Council and bear its historical and legal responsibility to restore

lost justice. Their failure to do so will have an adverse effect on international and regional peace and security. We hope that our deliberations will pave the way for a courageous resolution that will end the current precarious situation in the Middle East.

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

Mr. Nasir (Maldives): I would like to thank South Africa for organizing today's important debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. The Maldives remains deeply concerned about the situation in the Middle East and views the question of Palestine as particularly important.

This year has witnessed a further deterioration in the human rights situation of the Palestinian people. The limited electricity supply in Gaza has compromised its water supply, sewage treatment and hospital operations, and Gaza now has one of the highest unemployment rates in the world. The Government of Israel, the occupying Power, continues to place severe restrictions on the human rights of the people of Palestine, limiting the movement of people and goods into and out of the Gaza Strip, as well as accelerating the unlawful transfer of Israeli citizens to settlements in the occupied West Bank. The occupation stands in the way of every measure that would afford the Palestinians a modicum of dignity. I wish to reiterate my Government's position on adopting an international consensus on a two-State solution, with the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, where the Palestinian people may live in peace, dignity and prosperity.

It is deeply troubling that while Israel, the occupying Power, seeks to further exploit, damage and deplete the natural resources in the occupied Palestinian territory, we still find ourselves in this Chamber today expressing our concerns about how little progress has been made on ending such actions. The Maldives calls on Israel to stop its attacks on Palestinian civilians, including women and children, and to fully implement the relevant Security Council resolutions on the question of Palestine. The Maldives also urges the Council to do more to bring lasting peace to the Palestinian people and the region.

The ongoing conflict in Syria continues to result in human rights violations and humanitarian crises. This multilayered catastrophe in the Middle East has had dire consequences for international security. The

mass exodus of refugees has further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis facing the Syrian people. Yet the conflict is locked in a stalemate with no end in sight. My Government believes that the United Nations and the international community must do more to reinvigorate talks to reach a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

The war in Yemen has affected millions of civilians, with children being the hardest hit. We must do more to help alleviate the dire situation of the most vulnerable. Peace and prosperity must be at the heart of the efforts to resolve the conflict, and peace must be seen as a prerequisite to development.

The continued presence of conflicts in the region has bred terrorism and violence, with implications extending beyond the Middle East to all parts of the world. The Government of Maldives strongly condemns terrorist attacks in the region, including those targeting civilians, shipping routes and, most recently, two pumping stations on the Saudi Aramco East-West pipeline in Al-Dawadmi and Afif. These attacks threaten the security and stability of the region as well as the global economy. The scourge of terrorism is the biggest threat to global peace and security. It is a global problem that requires a global solution. The Maldives stands ready to assist international efforts to combat terrorism and counter violent extremism. The Security Council, whose task is to maintain international peace and security, must do more to ensure that its influence and legitimacy are not compromised. It should increase and further accelerate its efforts to see that its decisions are enforced, which is essential if global peace and security is to be maintained. The Maldives reaffirms its support for the Council, as well as for the Secretary-General, in all their ongoing efforts to bring lasting peace to the Middle East.

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

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank the South African presidency of the Security Council for convening today's open debate. We sincerely value South Africa's principled positions and laudable efforts in the Council.

I also align myself with the statement to be made by the representative of the United Arab Emirates on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

To date, the Security Council has adopted almost 2,500 resolutions, some 365 of which are related partly or entirely to the Palestinian question. Many of them are exclusively focused on the question of Palestine and were adopted pursuant to Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. However, none of them have been implemented. Rather, the Israeli regime has continued to pursue its illegal policies and brutal practices in total impunity, including by systematically committing all four core international crimes. For instance, it has waged more than 15 wars, invaded all of its neighbours without exception and attacked other countries from the Middle East to Africa. Israel still occupies territories belonging to Palestine, Lebanon and Syria and conducts invasions and aggressions against countries of the region, of which the latest example is its periodic violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon and Syria. It also continues to pursue expansionist policies by building additional settlements. The most recent example of that is its Prime Minister's declared intention to illegally annex the Jordan Valley. It has also continued to develop every kind of weapon of mass destruction and refused to join the relevant treaties. It has brazenly threatened a country of the region with nuclear annihilation.

Moreover, Israeli forces continue to brutally kill innocent Palestinians. In 2018 alone, according to the World Health Organization, they killed 299 Palestinian civilians and wounded more than 31,000 others, mostly during the Great March of Return in Gaza. Another of Israel's heartless practices is its illegal and inhumane blockade of Gaza, which has lasted for more than a decade. The long dark list of Israel's brutalities goes on and on, leaving no doubt that by any measure, it is an outlaw regime in the most extreme sense.

Unfortunately, the Council has failed to fulfil its duties with regard to Israel for a reason that is crystal clear — the unwavering, systematic shielding of Israel by the United States. The United States recently moved its embassy to Al-Quds Al-Sharif and recognized Israel's sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan. Both are material breaches of international law. The United States' latest gambit — the so-called deal of the century — is founded on the illusion that it can buy all causes, aspirations, honour, dignity, property and territory as well as the inalienable rights of entire nations. The serious, severe and systematic violation of international law by the Israeli regime continues to have serious adverse ramifications for international

instruments and institutions. It gravely erodes the credibility of the Security Council and the Organization itself, and the world's trust and confidence in them. The other effects of these trends are as devastating as an all-out war, if not worse.

In order to preserve international peace and security, no nation must be left unheard, unnoticed, unattended, frustrated and in despair. That can result only in a complete lack of trust and confidence in international instruments and institutions, thus leading our world down a path of international disorder. The Council must be vigilant about the alarming dangerous trend and live up to its responsibilities to prevent the crimes and threats of the Israeli regime.

The representative of the League of Arab States made certain allegations against my country. Unfortunately, he used the agenda of the Council's open debate on Palestine to accuse my country of intervention. All his claims are a fabrication and are thus rejected. I therefore do not wish to dignify them with an answer. However, I would remind him that the real name of the body of water between Iran and the Arabian peninsula is the Persian Gulf.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the States members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in my capacity as Chair of the OIC Group.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate South Africa on its successful presidency of the Council this month. I would also like to thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his comprehensive briefing this morning.

Today's discussion highlights the alarming situation on the ground and the need to act urgently to save the prospects for peace and the two-State solution. In that regard, the OIC member States remain committed to an outcome that enables an independent Palestinian State based on the 4 June 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, according to the relevant resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map.

We would like to once again reiterate that reaching a just and comprehensive solution to the conflict will not only enable Palestine and Israel to live side by side

in peace and security but also support the stability of the region. Otherwise, the continuation of that injustice will be exploited by extremist groups for recruitment and radicalization, which can only further destabilize the region.

Therefore, we call on the Council to implement effective measures, in line with its duties under the Charter of the United Nations and its own resolutions, to put an end to this conflict, including by compelling Israel to halt its illegal policies in Palestine.

The OIC member States particularly deplore the continued building of new settlements and the expansion of existing ones, as well as the annexation and confiscation of land in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. We also draw the Council's attention to the resolution adopted by the OIC in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 15 September, in which the OIC member States rejected and condemned any intention to annex parts of the West Bank. The OIC resolution considers such actions a dangerous escalation and a flagrant breach of the United Nations Charter.

Another source of concern is the unlawful effort to alter the historical status and demographic composition of occupied East Jerusalem. That includes the illegal and provocative acts concerning the Christian and Islamic holy sites in the city, including in particular Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Such actions threaten the sanctity, stability and status of those holy sites and may fuel further violence and extremism in the region.

Similarly, we are worried about the deterioration of the humanitarian and economic situation in Palestine, especially in the Gaza Strip, which remains under an Israeli blockade. As we have heard in every briefing on this issue, Gaza is suffering from a lack of medicines and health-care equipment, limited supplies of electricity and water and high rates of unemployment and poverty. The harsh living situation has spread despair among the 2 million people living in Gaza, leading to what the health teams of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) call an epidemic deterioration of mental health conditions. In addition, the United Nations warned in a recent report that an increasingly fragile Palestinian economy will lead to a higher risk of violence and instability. Such trends are alarming and should be a source of grave concern to us all.

Given the current challenges, the OIC member States recommend that the Security Council and the wider international community prioritize the following.

First, we must create an environment conducive to peace efforts by reversing negative trends on the ground. That requires halting any illegal and provocative measures that undermine the two-State solution, such as settlement activities, which are highlighted in United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016). This is fundamental to salvaging the two-State solution and ultimately bringing an end to this illegal occupation.

We also call for Israel's full withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967, in accordance with Security Council resolutions. We further affirm the need for all external parties to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and reiterate our support for the political solution of the Syrian crisis consistent with resolution 2254 (2015).

Secondly, we need to drive international momentum to launch credible negotiations on all final-status issues in the Middle East peace process, in accordance with the established terms of reference.

Finally, we must urgently avert the further deterioration of the humanitarian and economic situation in Palestine and alleviate the humanitarian needs and suffering of the Palestinian people, including Palestinian refugees. We encourage Member States to provide funds or to increase their contributions to UNRWA, the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations entities that are working diligently to provide education and health care, to improve the livelihoods of Palestinians and to support economic recovery and development. In that regard, the OIC member States reiterate their strong support for UNRWA, which plays a vital role in supporting Palestinian refugees and maintaining regional stability, and for the renewal of its mandate.

In conclusion, we affirm that our goal is to achieve the long-delayed vision of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security. The OIC member States will continue to support international efforts to promote a just, comprehensive, lasting and peaceful solution to end this conflict, which, in our view, is a vital prerequisite for regional and international peace and security.

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

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting on the increasingly complex situation in the Middle East in the light of the recent developments that constitute a challenge to international peace and security. I would like to commend the able leadership of your friendly delegation in managing the work of the Council during the month of October. I would also like to thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov for his valuable briefing.

Achieving peace requires the consistent implementation of the Charter of the United Nations and its noble purposes, in particular non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, respect for good-neighbourly relations, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the implementation of United Nations resolutions to preserve the sovereignty, dignity and stability of countries. All countries must refrain from any policies that threaten or undermine regional and international security, whether directly or indirectly, while working collectively to counter terrorism and achieve sustainable development.

A just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region cannot be achieved without resolving the Palestinian question and without granting the fraternal Palestinian people their legitimate right, in line with that of other peoples, to establish an independent State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. That would be in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative, the two-State solution and the relevant international resolutions. The Kingdom of Bahrain will spare no effort to ensure the development and prosperity of the fraternal Palestinian people. The international community must also shoulder its responsibilities and compel Israel to implement all relevant international resolutions.

With regard to the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic, the Kingdom of Bahrain stresses the need to safeguard the independence of Syria, while rejecting the occupation of any part of Syria by any foreign force. We underscore the need to reach a political solution, in line with the first Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and the relevant United Nations resolutions. We reiterate that the Golan is occupied Syrian Arab territory pursuant to relevant international resolutions.

Along with other fraternal countries in the Arab coalition to support the legitimate Government in Yemen, the Kingdom of Bahrain will continue to make every effort to establish security and stability in the sisterly Republic of Yemen. We also express our great appreciation for the efforts of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to bring together all national parties and the legitimate Government in Yemen with a view to combating the Iran-backed Houthi militias, as well as all other terrorist groups threatening the security and stability of the country. The aim is to reach a peaceful solution to the crisis, in line with the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference and resolution 2216 (2015), with a view to ensuring the unity, territorial integrity and regional neighbourhood of Yemen.

In July, the Kingdom of Bahrain hosted an important international military meeting on scaling up international efforts to promote regional security. This month, together with the United States and Poland, we hosted a meeting of the Warsaw process and its working groups on maritime and aviation security with the aim of limiting the worst threats to stability and security in the Arab Gulf region and around the world. That meeting took place following attacks on maritime routes in the Arab Gulf and the region by States and terrorist groups, including attacks on commercial vessels and oil facilities in the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which posed a serious threat to the regional and world economies. That meeting was also part of a wider international cooperation to protect maritime and air navigation by identifying effective means to address the increasing threat levels and ensure the security of the regional countries and the stability of global economy.

In conclusion, ensuring peace, sustainable development and prosperity for all peoples of the world requires all of us to prioritize our supreme interests and be committed to the purposes and principles of the United Nations, which was founded to save all peoples from the scourge of war and ensure the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the achievement of peace and security throughout the world.

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

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, our delegation welcomes the convening of today's debate under the South African

presidency, and, especially, under your guidance. We wish to reiterate that the question of Palestine is an issue of ongoing importance for Ecuador. In this regard, we align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. We are also grateful for the enlightening briefing delivered by Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

On behalf of the Government of Ecuador, I would like to refer to three fundamental aspects. First, I should like to reiterate Ecuador's position regarding settlement practices and the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. Despite the mandatory nature of resolution 2334 (2016), settlement activity continues, particularly in occupied East Jerusalem, as well as evictions, demolition of Palestinian-owned infrastructure and house confiscations — practices that contradict international law. Ecuador condemns all acts of violence and terrorism regardless of where they originate.

We are extremely concerned by the humanitarian situation, human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory. We are also concerned about the continuing economic and financial crisis being faced by the Palestinian Authority. Unfortunately, those conditions continue to worsen and deteriorate.

Secondly, we believe it is imperative that the Council act and adopt all actions aimed at ensuring the full validity of the fundamental principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, for which there have been repeated calls.

Thirdly, we once again call on the international community to make tangible progress in supporting progress towards a peaceful, definitive and just political solution for both parties, based on the coexistence of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, pursuant to the consensus reaffirmed in resolution 2334 (2016). That is the only way to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East, thereby returning the Palestinian people's rights to them and establishing an independent State of Palestine that is incorporated into the United Nations as a full Member State.

We believe that sustainable solutions must be based on justice, human rights and international law. Preventive

diplomacy is a critical tool to dissipate tensions before they intensify and worsen. We support all international initiatives aimed at relaunching the peace talks and negotiations between Israel and Palestine.

Finally, I should like to stress that Ecuador values the tireless efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and we reiterate our full support for its mandate.

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

Mr. Itegboje (Nigeria): We wish to thank you, Mr. President, and your delegation, and congratulate South Africa on its successful presidency and leadership of the Council this month.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

We would like to make the following additional remarks in our national capacity.

Nigeria once again expresses its deep concern about the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. All efforts being made by the international community to reduce tensions between the Israelis and the Palestinians seem to not be moving in the intended direction of finding a lasting and comprehensive solution leading to the peaceful coexistence of the two parties. This fact was manifest at the Ministerial Committee Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement on Palestine convened in Baku, Azerbaijan to review developments in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, on issues that regrettably remain unresolved.

The question of Palestine is a lingering issue affecting international peace and security. Nigeria's position on the issue is clear and unambiguous. We continue to call for a viable, contiguous Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital and based on the 1967 borders, in accordance with numerous United Nations and Security Council resolutions. We once again call on States with influence over the parties concerned to encourage them to re-engage in dialogue on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and other existing agreements. We reaffirm our unwavering support for a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine existing side by side in peace. The

relevance of a two-State solution needs no reiteration in these debates, as we believe that there is no alternative to it. All parties and interlocutors should take concerted measures to create the necessary conditions conducive to the achievement of a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

In that regard, it is our expectation that this debate will offer new suggestions on how best to address the prevailing challenges and gaps for the implementation of all relevant United Nations and Security Council resolutions on the matter. To this end, we once again call on Israel to take concrete steps to freeze all settlement-related activities in the West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem as a confidence-building measure. In the same vein, we call on the State of Palestine to play its role in building confidence by signalling, through enhanced efforts, its readiness to return to the negotiating table in order to forge unity and deal with acts of militancy for the achievement of a just solution.

My delegation would once again like to reiterate its call on Israel and Palestine to exercise the utmost restraint in their actions and utterances. The two parties should heed the well-meaning appeals endorsed by the international community to resume negotiations without further delay. Progress in the direction of a two-State solution will depend on the resumption of direct negotiations, demonstrable political will and commitment to the process. My delegation would therefore like to call on the international community to continue to support and encourage Israel and Palestine to sheathe their swords and embrace the peace process as a means of resolving the lingering conflicts.

Nigeria reaffirms its support for the rights of the Palestinian people, including the protection of their fundamental human rights, particularly their right to free movement and self-determination.

In conclusion, it is my delegation's belief that achieving lasting peace in the Middle East will depend on the commitment and determination of both Israel and Palestine to make painful sacrifices. This would bring about the much-desired peace and justice and

reduce the serious threat to regional and international peace and security.

The President: The representative of Israel has asked for the floor to make a second statement. I give him the floor.

Mr. Bourgel (Israel) (*spoke in French*): I should like to offer a brief response to the statement made by the representative of Iran.

I recall yet again that the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the greatest sponsors of international terrorism. Iran exports its missiles, promotes terrorism and broadly disseminates its destructive ideology, in violation of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1701 (2006) and 2216 (2015). Be it in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen or the Gulf, the Iranian regime acts under the same modus operandi, in full impunity, with a view to destabilizing the region and exporting its revolution. Moreover, the Islamic Republic of Iran is seeking to turn Syria into a platform for launching attacks on Israel. The deployment of Iranian armed forces to Syrian territory poses a grave threat to regional and international security. The Security Council must firmly condemn Iranian violations and take all useful measures to end them.

On 1 September, barely a few days after the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, Hizbullah launched several anti-tank missiles from southern Lebanon at targets in Israeli territory. Israel has regularly warned the international community against the efforts of Iran and Hizbullah to strengthen the latter's arsenal, in flagrant violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). Hizbullah's precision-guided missile programme is the most alarming manifestation of that strategy.

The international community must take all measures necessary against those who continue to fuel violence and to promote terrorism with the sole aim of undermining peace and security.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.