



Security Council

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Letter dated 28 October 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefing provided by Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, as well as the statements delivered by His Excellency Mr. Sergey Vershinin, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation; His Excellency Mr. Dang Minh Khoi, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam; His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ali Nafti, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia; and by the representatives of Belgium, China, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, the Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, in connection with the video-teleconference on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question” convened on Monday, 26 October 2020. Statements were also delivered by His Excellency Mr. Riad Al-Malki, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Observer State of Palestine, and by the representative of Israel.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members for this video-teleconference, the following delegations and entities submitted written statements, copies of which are also enclosed: Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Costa Rica, Cuba, Egypt, the European Union, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, the League of Arab States, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Namibia, Norway, Peru, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

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

(Signed) Vassily Nebenzia
President of the Security Council



Annex 1**Statement by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov**

We meet this month as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues across the Middle East, threatening local health systems and fraying the social and economic fabric of society as we struggle to meet the challenges ahead. As the pandemic stretches on and its consequences accumulate, Palestinians and Israelis alike are feeling the effects. I remain particularly concerned about the spread of the virus in Gaza and the long-term damage to the Palestinian economy and social cohesion, including its effects on education for the next generation.

Last month at the General Assembly, the Secretary-General renewed his appeal for a global ceasefire in response to COVID-19, calling for a major push to make this happen by the end of the year. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, that means focusing on preventive diplomacy to avoid escalation and war in Gaza and working with all to alleviate the health and socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic. It means modernizing the economic relationship between the two sides and working towards re-establishing credible negotiations with the goal of a two-State solution, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions. The commitment of the international community to support both sides in this process remains unwavering. What is required, however, is leadership from both Israelis and Palestinians to work together and advance the cause of peace.

During the reporting period, the resurgence of COVID-19 seriously compounded the humanitarian and economic challenges on the ground, with a significant tightening of restrictions in Israel and Gaza and the extension of the State of emergency throughout the occupied Palestinian territory for 30 days, beginning on 2 October.

The humanitarian community continued its efforts to address the pandemic, including by addressing critical gaps in medical supplies and equipment. Responding to a severe shortage of equipment, including COVID-19 testing kits in the occupied Palestinian territory, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and international organizations delivered materials for more than 100,000 tests, dozens of ventilators and oxygen therapy machines. Those new supplies, along with millions of personal protective equipment items, are crucial to efforts to contain the spread of the virus.

Arrangements brokered by the United Nations continue to enable the transfer of patients from Gaza for medical treatment outside the Strip and allow for importing humanitarian supplies into the occupied Palestinian territory, even as the Palestinian Authority's decision to halt coordination with Israel remains in place. I wish to reiterate, however, that the United Nations cannot replace the roles and responsibilities of the Palestinian Authority or the Government of Israel. Any increase of responsibilities for the United Nations in that regard should be limited and time-bound.

I welcome the ongoing support from the donor community to the United Nations COVID-19 response efforts and urgently call for increased assistance as the crisis extends into the foreseeable future.

As we remain focused on urgent health concerns, the viability of the Palestinian Authority is being severely undermined by an economic and fiscal crisis that has been exacerbated by the Palestinian decision to end civilian and security coordination with Israel. The fiscal crisis derives primarily from a collapse in

domestic tax revenues during the COVID-19 emergency and from the Government's refusal to receive its clearance revenues.

The United Nations stands ready to mediate solutions to the fiscal crisis and to get the Palestinian economy on a better footing. I reiterate the Secretary-General's call for both sides to re-examine the nature of their economic relationship and to improve it for the benefit of both peoples.

In that context, I appeal to the Palestinian leadership to resume its coordination with Israel and accept its clearance revenues — money that belongs to the Palestinian people and cannot be replaced by donor funding. When public health conditions permit, Israel should facilitate freer movement of Palestinian workers and goods into Israel and between the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. For its part, the international community should accelerate humanitarian and development initiatives in the occupied Palestinian territory, including those outlined in the humanitarian response plan and the United Nations COVID-19 Response Plan.

On 14 and 15 October, Israeli authorities moved forward with some 5,000 settlement housing units. That resumption of major settlement activity, which follows an eight-month break in Area C housing advancements, is of great concern. This move by the Civil Administration High Planning Committee is one of the largest collective housing advancements to date. Approximately 85 per cent of those units are in settlements in outlying locations, deep inside the West Bank — all in areas impeding the contiguity of a future Palestinian State.

While the location of those units is particularly worrisome, I reiterate that all settlements are illegal under international law and remain a substantial obstacle to peace. Settlement-related activities should cease, as they undermine the prospect for achieving a viable two-State solution in line with United Nations resolutions, international law and prior agreements.

During the reporting period, Israeli authorities also demolished or seized 59 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and three in East Jerusalem, thereby displacing 82 Palestinians, including 23 women and 40 children, and affecting 200 others. The demolitions were carried out due to the lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain.

A donor-funded school in the Bedouin community of Ras Al-Tin, in the Ramallah governorate, faces imminent threat of demolition due to the lack of a building permit. If demolished, it would affect nearly 50 children. An Israeli court has issued an interim injunction halting the demolition pending further legal proceedings. There were no demolitions of residential structures in East Jerusalem in the reporting period.

I urge Israel to cease demolitions and seizures of Palestinian property throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law, and to allow Palestinians to develop their communities.

Over the past months, Israel did not respond to visa-renewal requests for international staff members from the United Nations Human Rights Field Office in Gaza. While the Office continues to deliver on its mandate, most international staff members in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) are now working from outside the mission area. After the release of the report to the Human Rights Council on business activities in Israeli settlements in February 2020, Israel froze its relations with OHCHR. I am deeply concerned that critical mandated work on human rights by the United Nations is obstructed in that

manner. I urge Israel to facilitate the return of international staff members to the occupied Palestinian territory.

On 24 September, Fatah announced that it had reached a series of understandings with Hamas, including an agreement to hold legislative and presidential elections under a proportional representation system. Those discussions are a welcome development and represent yet another effort to organize long-overdue and much-needed Palestinian leadership elections on the basis of the Palestinian Liberation Organization platform. The Palestinian people have not been allowed to elect their leaders for too long. Democracy and elections are critical to enabling people to determine the direction of their national cause. The United Nations stands ready to support the Palestinian people in exercising their democratic rights.

It is unfortunate that violent incidents continued throughout the reporting period. On 1 October, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) arrested two Palestinian men who had crossed into Israel through the Gaza security fence, carrying a homemade bomb. The next day, the IDF opened fire on a group of Palestinians who approached the security fence in Gaza, injuring one of them.

On 5 October, militants fired one rocket from Gaza towards Israel. The rocket landed in an open area in Israel, with no injuries or damage reported. In response, Israeli Air Force aircraft fired two missiles targeting a military observation post in Gaza, also with no injuries reported.

On 20 October, the IDF announced that it had located and exposed a Hamas tunnel entering Israeli territory from the southern Gaza Strip. A few hours after the discovery, Palestinian militants fired one rocket from Gaza towards Israel. The rocket was intercepted by the IDF's Iron Dome air-defence system, and no injuries or damage were reported. The Israeli Air Force responded by striking an underground structure in an agricultural field in Gaza. No injuries were reported.

In total, five rockets were fired by militants in Gaza towards Israel during the reporting period. The IDF fired a total of 13 missiles into Gaza in retaliation.

While calm in Gaza has largely held, the arrangements and commitments from all parties must be reinforced if they are to be sustained.

Turning to the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, two Palestinians, including one child, were killed and 65 were injured in clashes and other incidents. Seven Israelis, including two soldiers and one woman, were injured during the reporting period.

On 4 October, Israeli forces shot and injured a 16-year-old Palestinian with a live bullet during clashes in Beit Ummar village, north of Hebron. On the same day, a 15-year-old Palestinian boy was seriously injured in an incident in Hizma, near East Jerusalem. Also on that day, a Palestinian armed with a knife attempted to stab an Israeli security forces officer near Hebron. The attacker was arrested and no injuries were reported.

On 5 October, Israeli security forces shot and killed a Palestinian man and injured two others at a checkpoint south-east of Tulkarm while they were reportedly throwing Molotov cocktails at passing vehicles.

On 25 October, a 17-year-old Palestinian youth died during an encounter with the Israeli security forces near the West Bank village of Turmusaya, near Nablus. There are conflicting claims about the circumstances and cause of death. I urge a prompt and independent investigation into the events that led to the boy's death.

Settlers perpetrated 34 attacks against Palestinians, resulting in 30 injuries and damage to property. Palestinians carried out 29 attacks against Israeli settlers and other civilians in the West Bank, resulting in five injuries and damage to property.

The olive harvest is a key economic, social and cultural event, but each year the ability of Palestinians to harvest is compromised due to access restrictions, attacks and intimidation. Since the harvest season began, on 7 October, 23 farmers have been injured, over 1,000 olive trees have been burnt or otherwise damaged and several tons of produce have been stolen — in 19 separate incidents. Israeli authorities must ensure the easy access of farmers to their land and must protect all farmers and their property from attacks.

I am also deeply concerned about the deteriorating health condition of Maher Al-Akhras, a Palestinian detainee who has been on a hunger strike for over 90 days in protest of his administrative detention. On 12 October, Al-Akhras rejected an offer by the Israeli authorities, whereby he would be released on 26 November, the original end date of his detention order, only in return for immediately ending his hunger strike. To date, there has been no agreement to end the standoff. Let me reiterate that all persons held in administrative detention should be promptly charged and tried in a court of law or released without delay.

On the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), I want to acknowledge the efforts made by civil society and the Palestinian Government, in partnership with the United Nations, on advancing the women and peace and security agenda despite the challenging political and humanitarian context. This month, the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Palestine completed the development of its second-generation national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

On 18 October, at a ceremony in Manama, Israel and Bahrain established formal diplomatic relations, signing eight bilateral agreements, including a joint communiqué on the establishment of diplomatic, peaceful and friendly relations. The document affirms that the two parties will continue their efforts to achieve a just, comprehensive and enduring resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

On 20 October, the first official delegation from the United Arab Emirates visited Israel. The delegation signed four bilateral agreements with Israeli counterparts, including an agreement on mutual visa exemptions for Israeli and Emirati nationals.

On 23 October, the leaders of the United States, Israel and the Republic of the Sudan announced that the Governments of Israel and the Sudan had agreed to end the state of belligerence between their countries and to normalize relations. I join the Secretary-General in expressing hope that this agreement will further cooperation, enhance economic and trade relations and bring about new opportunities to advance peace and economic prosperity in the wider Horn of Africa and Middle East regions.

I am concerned about statements made by senior Palestinian officials saying that Muslims entering the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the basis of the recent normalization agreements are not welcome and warning of dangerous consequences for such visits. I note the delicate balance of the status quo at the holy compound. Any form of politicization that may increase the risk of an escalation within the sanctity of its grounds must be rejected.

In Lebanon, Prime Minister-designate Mustapha Adib stepped down from his functions on 26 September, having been unable to form a Government. Subsequently, former Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri was designated by the President to form a Government. The one-year anniversary of the October 2019 popular protests was marked by peaceful demonstrations across the country.

On 14 October, representatives from the Governments of Israel, Lebanon and the United States met at United Nations premises in Naqoura, south Lebanon, to launch discussions aimed at reaching consensus on the delineation of the Israel-Lebanon maritime boundary. The negotiations were mediated and facilitated by the United States and hosted by the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon.

In follow-up to the Beirut port explosion of 4 August, on 27 September the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) deployed an engineering unit to Beirut to assist with the clearance of debris and reconstruction, in coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces. The situation in the UNIFIL area of operations, including along the Blue Line, remained generally stable.

On the Golan, while generally calm, the situation remained volatile, with continued violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. On 20 October, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) observed heavy explosions in the vicinity of Al-Qunaytirah, in the area of separation. Subsequently, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that they had carried out a precision strike against military infrastructure in the area. UNDOF continues to liaise with both parties to remind them of their obligation to respect the terms of the agreement and prevent an escalation of the situation.

In conclusion, let me say that, if the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that the virus feeds on instability and expands absent a coherent, coordinated approach to contain it. The United Nations will continue to advocate for increased cooperation in response to the health emergency, including by urging the parties to work together to mitigate risk, save lives and avoid unilateral actions that undermine those efforts.

At the same time, the pandemic has heightened the urgency of exploring all avenues to make progress towards resolving the conflict and ending the occupation, in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements, in pursuit of achieving the vision of two States. Palestinian President Abbas has called for an international conference to restart the peace process with the specific goal of two States — Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestinian State — within secure and recognized borders, based on the 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

We have spoken often in the Council of the need to act, of the urgency to act, to prevent the collapse of the two-State paradigm and to give hope to the Palestinian people, particularly the youth. Now, a quarter century after Oslo, their right to statehood can be achieved through peaceful negotiations. That is something young Israelis want too. No one wants war and conflict. But, if leaders are unable to deliver on the hope for peace, that will only encourage radicals and extremists.

I sincerely hope that new avenues of cooperation to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace will emerge. The normalization agreements between Israel and three Arab States must help create such opportunities. As we have seen in statements from Amman to Cairo, from international partners and the League of Arab States, the commitment to the two-State solution, in line with United Nations resolutions and international law, continues to be affirmed by broad regional and international consensus.

Annex 2**Statement by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Vershinin**

[Original: Russian]

As Security Council President, Russia convened today's meeting in view of the international community's important role in devising consolidated approaches to settle regional crises. The long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict lies at the epicentre of the upheavals in the Middle East. This problem has remained a source of international and regional discord for more than seven decades, while providing an ideological rationale for terrorist and extremist groups around the world. Absent a settlement, the conflict has brought unspeakable suffering to the people of Palestine and Israel and to the Arab States and the numerous Palestinian diasporas located there, including people living in Palestinian camps.

This state of affairs resulted from attempts to reverse the situation single-handedly, without collective or coordinated efforts, reaching a point where unilateral initiatives have not only ignored but have undermined the international legal framework for the Israeli-Palestinian settlement, as approved by the United Nations and set forth in Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. That has led to a new impasse that threatens to undermine stability in the region.

While maintaining constructive partnership ties with all the countries in the region, Russia views the improvement of Arab-Israeli relations to be a positive development. At the end of the day, achieving a comprehensive and just settlement in the Middle East remains an integral part of Russia's policy in the region.

At the same time, as the Arab States and Israel normalize their relations, the Palestinian question should not be sidelined. This problem will not go away. We hold the time-tested view that all-round stability in the Middle East, by definition, is unattainable without a lasting solution to the Palestinian issue. The leadership of all Arab States shares this view.

We must focus on facilitating the resumption of talks between Israel and the Palestinians without delay. It is important that the political process be rooted in international resolutions and the existing agreements and understandings between the parties.

The purpose of today's meeting, as we see it, consists of reaffirming the international legal framework for the Israeli-Palestinian settlement, primarily the two-State solution, with a Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security. However, we should not forget others final-status issues, like refugees, water resources and the status of the holy sites of the three world religions in Jerusalem. We also take into consideration the fact that the Arab countries remain committed to their well-known initiative.

Still, the parties should strictly abide by the obligations they have assumed — to renounce unilateral steps in resolving final-status issues, to cease settlement activity and the demolition of Palestinian buildings, to eliminate from the agenda all plans for annexation, to stop the violence and to work together to fight terrorism.

Of course, much will depend on the progress and outcome of intra-Palestinian dialogue. Russia and its Egyptian partners are helping Palestinian organizations unite under the Palestinian Liberation Organization platform. That is a crucial condition for the attainment of the Palestinians' national aspirations, based on the United Nations-approved proposals of the Middle East Quartet of intermediaries.

We believe that the Quartet should act with more urgency. This is a unique mechanism for mediation that was approved in Council resolutions. It can — and must — play the role assigned to it in developing direct Palestinian-Israeli talks.

Russia has proposed that the first stage of those talks begin without any preconditions, so the sides can come to an agreement through a bilateral dialogue without external pressure. History shows that a lasting settlement of any conflict is possible only when the protagonists hold talks on a mutually acceptable platform. For our part, we will continue working towards that objective with all the interested regional parties, at the Security Council and within the framework of the Middle East Quartet of international intermediaries. We are resolved to working closely with our colleagues in this format: the United Nations, the United States and the European Union. We also welcome parties in the region to join in those efforts.

We noted that, in his September address to the General Assembly (see A/75/PV.10), Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas reaffirmed his openness to Quartet-led talks with Israel. Another instrument of this kind is the Moscow conference on the Middle East. International consensus on this issue has been enshrined in resolution 1850 (2008) and in decisions of the Quartet. The Russian initiative on holding a Palestinian-Israeli summit meeting in Moscow also remains relevant.

Immediate attention should be given to the socioeconomic developments in the occupied Palestinian territory, as well as to the grave humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, which has been further complicated by the coronavirus pandemic. In that context, we call on the international community to make use of its donor potential to help people in the Gaza Strip. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) plays a key role in that regard, and we urge donor countries to support its activities.

In October 2021, we will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Madrid Middle East Peace Conference. The Conference defined a Middle East settlement that must be comprehensive, cover all negotiation tracks and take into account decisions and principles based on international law. We believe that the Madrid legacy remains relevant.

Annex 3**Statement by the Deputy Foreign Minister of Viet Nam, Dang Minh Khoi**

I thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting, and I thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his briefing.

Viet Nam remains deeply concerned about the overall situation in Gaza and other occupied Palestinian territories, but most importantly the humanitarian conditions in those areas amid an ongoing, complicated pandemic ravaging the region. In Gaza, following the collapse of all productive sectors, basic social services and infrastructure, 53 per cent of the population is living in poverty. Movement restrictions associated with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) have further increased vulnerabilities.

In our part of the world, Viet Nam and other countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations with strong Governments and general stability are working hard to contain COVID-19, with encouraging, yet modest results. It is therefore hard to imagine the additional challenges faced by the Palestinian people, who lack adequate financial and medical resources and basic facilities and live with constant instability and fear in these difficult times.

While the primary responsibility lies with the Palestinian Authority, we call on the international community to direct its support and assistance in all forms and through all channels to help Palestinians overcome this multifaceted crisis. Support needs to be effective, well-coordinated and people-centred, with priority given to the delivery of humanitarian assistance to vulnerable groups. Enhanced assistance for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, an agency with a long history of experience working in the region, is important to help it fulfil its mandate of providing relief for the Palestinian people.

And yet the pandemic does not seem to curb hostilities. Violence is still rampant, adding to the chaos that reigns in the occupied territories. We are alarmed by the security situation in Gaza and have grave concerns about the killing of innocent civilians, especially children and women. In the West Bank, house demolitions disrupt the lives of ordinary Palestinian people.

We therefore continue to urge all parties to exercise restraint, de-escalate tension, stop all acts of violence and take the interests of innocent civilians to heart. Viet Nam is of the strong opinion that peace and stability are preconditions for all development. Progress in the political process, such as preparations for the upcoming Palestinian elections, cannot be sustained without stability and a strong commitment to peace by all parties.

Viet Nam does not support unilateral acts that complicate the current situation in the occupied West Bank, in particular the expansion of Israeli settlements in that area. Those actions run counter to international law and agreements recently reached between Israel and other countries in the region.

Viet Nam supports all efforts and initiatives that seek to enhance regional peace, security and stability, including the proposal of Palestinian President Abbas to convene an international peace conference early next year with all the parties concerned. We believe that a comprehensive, just and sustainable solution to the Palestinian question can be reached only on the basis of international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the United Nations.

In conclusion, Viet Nam would like to reaffirm our solidarity with the Palestinian people and our consistent support for their just struggle to affirm their

inalienable rights. We also express our firm support for a two-State solution — the establishment of an independent State of Palestine that coexists in peace with the State of Israel along the pre-1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Annex 4**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, Karen Van Vlierberge**

[Original: French]

I thank Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov for his detailed briefing.

Belgium aligns itself with the statement submitted on behalf of the European Union and its member States (annex 29).

My first point concerns the Israeli settlement policy, which is illegal under international law. This month, the Higher Planning Council of the Israeli Civil Administration met for the first time since February. The Council announced a significant expansion of more than 5,000 housing units in settlements in the West Bank, including more than 1,600 units in areas in and around Jerusalem. We are particularly concerned about those developments, which compromise the viability and territorial contiguity of a future Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as the future capital of both Israel and Palestine. We urge the Israeli Government to reverse those decisions and put an end to its settlement policy, including in East Jerusalem and sensitive areas such as Har Homa, Givat Hamatos and Area E-1.

Despite the current coronavirus disease pandemic and its significant humanitarian impact on already fragile communities, we note a worrisome increase in demolitions and confiscations, including of humanitarian structures financed by Belgium and the European Union. We are very closely following the situation of the school in Ras Al-Tin and the villages of Umm Al-Kheir and Khirbet Al-Majaz, whose populations are threatened with eviction and the demolition of their property. The forced displacement of those populations would constitute a clear violation of Israel's humanitarian obligations as an occupying Power.

We are deeply concerned about the increased tension and violence between Israeli settlers and Palestinians resulting from that settlement policy. We condemn any use of violence. We call for combating impunity for the perpetrators of such violence, including through effective prosecution. At this time of the year, the annual olive picking campaign is taking place — a key economic activity for Palestinians. We call on Israel to assume its responsibilities and ensure that the harvest takes place without incident and that workers have safe and unhindered access to the olive groves.

These developments demonstrate that, despite the suspension of plans to formalize the annexation of parts of the occupied Palestinian territory, the de facto annexation continues unabated. That undermines the confidence that the parties need more than ever to resume a credible dialogue.

My second point, therefore, concerns the need to restore that confidence. That implies, first of all, that all parties put an end to unilateral acts. But that also implies restoring cooperation, in line with existing agreements and in full respect of international law. We share the concern expressed by the Special Coordinator regarding the budgetary situation of the Palestinian Authority, as well as the impact on the Palestinian population of the suspension of civil and security coordination with Israel. We therefore call on the Palestinian Authority to resume fiscal, civil and security coordination with Israel.

In the context of a resumption of dialogue, it is all the more important that all Palestinian factions invest, with a sense of compromise, in the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under a single legitimate and democratic authority. We strongly

encourage the holding of democratic elections in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem and Gaza.

My third point is that Belgium, like its European partners, remains committed to a negotiated and viable two-State solution based on agreed parameters and international law. That means an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable Palestinian State living in peace alongside Israel. We encourage all international and multilateral efforts to resume dialogue provided they are fully consistent with international law and the agreed parameters and take into account the legitimate aspirations of both parties. In that regard, we underline the role of the Middle East Quartet and the Secretary-General.

We welcome the announcements — by the Governments of the United States, Israel and the Sudan — of the normalization of relations between Israel and the Sudan. We hope that those developments will create a new regional dynamic that will contribute to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of the two-State solution.

I would like to express Belgium's support for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the occupied Palestinian territory. We are deeply concerned about the non-renewal of visas for the Office's international staff. We very much hope that this situation will soon be resolved, given the indispensable role that the Office plays on the ground. Finally, I wish to support the appeal made by the Special Rapporteur on the administrative detention of Mr. Al-Akhras. Administrative detention must remain an exceptional measure that is applied for a limited period of time and must take into consideration various guarantees, such as the right to mount a defence and the right to a fair trial within a reasonable time frame.

Annex 5**Statement by the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Zhang Jun**

[Original: English and Chinese]

I thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his briefing. I also welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Observer State of Palestine and the representative of Israel to this meeting.

The Palestinian issue is the root cause of turbulence in the Middle East and must be put at the centre of the international agenda. Last month, during the general debate of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, as well as during this month's deliberations of the Fourth Committee, many countries expressed their views on the Middle East situation and the Palestinian issue. The Palestinian leadership has also put forward new initiatives. It is worthwhile to earnestly study those initiatives and take corresponding action.

There have been recent changes in the Middle East, including with regard to the Palestinian issue. China is pleased to see that measures are being taken to ease tensions in the Middle East and to promote regional peace and stability. At the same time, we must play close attention to the recent escalation in the Gaza Strip, to new settlement construction plans still under way and to the worsening humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. In that regard, I would like to emphasize the following points.

First, we must stick to the right path of the two-State solution, which is the bottom line for international fairness and justice. We should not turn back the wheels of history. International consensus is embodied in the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative, which provide important parameters for resolving the Palestinian issue and must be observed and implemented.

The two sides should pursue peace talks as a strategic choice and find an expeditious resolution to the occupied Palestinian territories based on relevant United Nations resolutions. In addition, they must demarcate final boundaries through peaceful negotiations and refrain from taking actions that may intensify conflict, in particular by abandoning annexation plans. We call on all relevant parties to effectively abide by the agreement reached at the end of August, cease violence and avoid escalation in the Gaza Strip. The settlement issue is one of the core aspects of final-status negotiations on the question of Palestine. China agrees with the statement made by Special Coordinator Mladenov on 15 October — that settlement construction violates international law and weakens the prospect for the realization of the two-State solution.

Secondly, we must steadily advance the peace process. What is lacking in attempts to resolve the Palestinian issue is not ambitious plans or lengthy documents, but the courage to deliver on promises and the conscience to uphold justice. The international community, and countries with influence vis-à-vis Palestine and Israel in particular, should be objective and fair. They should act based on the fundamental interests of the Palestinian people and the countries of the region. They should promote peace talks and sincerely endeavour to advance the Middle East peace process.

Any proposed solution to the Palestinian issue should heed the opinion of the parties concerned, Palestine in particular, and the voice of the countries and organizations of the region, and should be reached through balanced dialogue and

negotiation between the parties concerned. In order to avoid long-term negative consequences, efforts should be made to avoid the imposition of a solution.

In his statement to the general debate of the General Assembly (see A/75/PV.10), President Abbas called for an international conference, to be held at the beginning of next year, with the participation of all relevant parties, in order to discuss a genuine peace process. China supports that call and hopes that the international community will consider it and that all parties will work together to create favourable conditions for the settlement of the Palestinian issue. We are pleased to see intra-Palestinian reconciliation and progress in the political process. We hope that the relevant countries of the region will continue to play a constructive role.

Thirdly, we must vigorously improve the economic and humanitarian situation. The coronavirus disease pandemic has exacerbated the already fragile economic, public health and humanitarian situation in Palestine. The international community should intensify its efforts to support Palestine in developing its economy, improving the livelihoods of its people and countering the pandemic in order to promote peace and stability with development. We encourage the two sides to resolve the tax withholding issue through negotiation. We call on the relevant party to completely lift the Gaza blockade in order to ensure access that all those in need in the occupied territories have access to basic services and humanitarian aid. In addition, we call for the effective implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). The demolition of Palestinian houses, the destruction of their property and the violence against innocent civilians must stop.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) provides educational and health-care services to more than 5 million Palestinian refugees and has made a significant contribution to the improvement of their humanitarian situation in Palestine. The international community should firmly support UNRWA and oppose the use of cutting off aid as a tool to exert pressure.

China has always supported the Palestinian people's aspiration to establish a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian State based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and has always supported the legitimate Palestinian demands and all efforts to settle the Palestinian issue.

Since the beginning of the year, China has sent Palestine several batches of supplies, as well as medical experts to help fight the pandemic. We have also donated to UNRWA and, through the Agency, provided personal protective equipment to Palestine and Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Shipments of such supplies are being sent to UNRWA's medical and health-care institutions to refugees within and outside the territory of Palestine.

As a sincere friend of the Palestinian people, China will continue to be guided by President Xi Jinping's four-point proposal on the settlement of the Palestinian issue, and will make positive contributions to the expeditious realization of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian issue.

Annex 6

Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations

We thank Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov for his briefing.

As always, we would like to begin by reiterating our commitment to taking the necessary steps to build sustainable peace in the Middle East and to sending a message of solidarity with the people affected by so many years of conflict and mistrust between warring parties.

It is precisely due to the protracted nature of the conflict that the coronavirus disease pandemic has a very different manifestation in contexts such as Syria, Yemen, Lebanon or Gaza. At this juncture, it is necessary to avoid any obstacle to achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

It is not enough to come here and express our views; that does not absolve us from the central responsibility entrusted to the Security Council for the maintenance of world peace and security, the achievement of which requires firm and effective action to complement our position.

That said, we strongly support ongoing efforts to create conditions conducive to peace, while highlighting the most recent normalization agreements between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, mediated by the United States. By deepening regional cooperation and dialogue, this positive transformation could well increase stability, prosperity and security in the region. We applaud that. At the same time, we encourage all parties to immediately cease all actions that hamper peace and to build a prosperous and just future for the peoples of the Middle East.

With regard to the Israeli-Palestinian situation, we support the initiative to hold an international peace conference in early 2021, the format of which must be discussed and agreed without delay, following an approach that favours concrete and inclusive action. We recommend that such a dialogue have — as its starting point — mutual respect, international law, United Nations resolutions and the face-to-face participation of both Israel and Palestine so as to address the aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace.

The complex humanitarian situation in Gaza remains critical and is exacerbated by an alarming environmental situation, with limited access to drinking water and the corresponding adverse impact on health, food security and development, in addition to widespread insecurity, an electricity crisis and a lack of opportunities.

Meeting the deep needs of the Palestinian population and working to pave the path for development in order to alleviate them is therefore an essential aspect to be addressed in the peace talks.

In addition, we commend the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to help nearly 2 million refugees, and call on donors to increase their contributions to enable UNRWA to meet the growing needs of the population.

Turning to Lebanon, the economic situation, compounded by the coronavirus disease pandemic, continues to deteriorate. Much remains to be done to strengthen governance and institutional reforms in Lebanon. Our solidarity is more important than ever.

As for the Golan Heights, although generally calm, the situation remains volatile, with continued violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement.

We therefore urge the parties to exercise maximum restraint and not to violate the ceasefire or the area of separation in order to prevent escalation.

In conclusion, with a view to achieving a negotiated peace between Israel and Palestine, the Dominican Republic lends its impartial support to real and sustainable solutions on the basis of international consensus that the only way forward is for Palestinians and Israelis to negotiate a two-State solution.

Annex 7**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson**

I would like to thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his briefing.

First, I would like to state that Estonia aligns itself with the joint statement submitted on behalf of the European Union (annex 29).

Estonia welcomes the signing of the agreements between the United Arab Emirates and Israel and between the Kingdom of Bahrain and Israel, as well as the recent announcement of the agreement between Israel and the Sudan. These are positive steps towards achieving peace and stability in the whole region. We acknowledge the constructive role that the United States has played in that regard. We encourage regional actors to embrace that spirit of compromise and continue to implement confidence-building measures to contribute to the long-term stability of the region.

We believe that these historic developments can also give momentum to efforts to find a comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel's commitment to suspend the plan to extend its sovereignty over parts of the West Bank is a positive step.

We urge both sides to re-engage in meaningful negotiations on all final-status issues in order to achieve a just and lasting peace. It is also important that all regional and international players, including the Middle East Quartet, continue efforts towards these negotiations.

Our position regarding the Middle East conflict remains the same. A two-State solution and lasting peace can be achieved only through direct negotiations that take into account the legitimate aspirations of both parties and Israeli security concerns.

In the light of the recent developments, we also urge Israelis and Palestinians to take further steps to build confidence, especially in the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic. We call upon the Palestinian Authority to resume cooperation with Israel based on previous agreements, and would like to wish the chief Palestinian negotiator, Mr. Saeb Erekat, a speedy recovery.

We note positively that the Palestinian factions have reached consensus on holding elections. We hope that will soon translate into setting a date for said elections throughout the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as a commitment by all Palestinian factions to democratic principles.

We call on all parties to refrain from any unilateral steps that might undermine the viability of the two-State solution. We call upon Israel to stop expanding settlements and end demolitions in the occupied Palestinian territories, including in East Jerusalem.

We also condemn all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror and acts of provocation, incitement and destruction. The continued firing of rockets into Israel is not acceptable.

In conclusion, I would like to once again urge both the Israelis and the Palestinians to generate positive regional dynamics, build trust and commitment to peace and re-engage in meaningful negotiations.

Annex 8**Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: English and French]

I thank the Special Coordinator for his briefing. I welcome Minister Al-Malki, as well as the Russian and Vietnamese Deputy Ministers and the Tunisian Secretary of State.

We recall every month that the parameters for the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are well-known: two States, living in peace and security, within secure and recognized borders on the basis of the 1967 lines, both with Jerusalem as their capital. This is not an ideological position disconnected from reality and belonging to a bygone past. On the contrary, it is the only realistic solution to ensure the stability of the region and, in particular, the security of Israel, on which France will never compromise, and the Palestinians' inalienable right to self-determination. What is at stake is the credibility of the Security Council, which has endorsed those parameters and is the guarantor of international law.

Along with its European partners, France has welcomed the normalization agreements between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, and welcomes the announcement of an agreement with the Sudan. France hopes that they can contribute to the stability of the region. The decision taken in that regard by the Israeli authorities to suspend their annexation plans is a positive step. France calls on Israel to make it a definitive measure.

France is concerned about the current dynamics of de facto annexation of the occupied territories. In that regard, we condemn the decision of the Israeli authorities to launch plans for the construction of more than 4,900 housing units in the West Bank settlements. The expansion of the settlements is a flagrant violation of international law and constitutes an obstacle to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, as set out in resolution 2334 (2016). That decision is compounded by the launch of the bidding process for the construction of new units in Givat Hamatos, scheduled for 2 November. The record rates of demolition of Palestinian structures, including in East Jerusalem, are also worrisome. These demolitions must stop. That is what we reaffirmed with Germany, Spain, Italy and the United Kingdom on 16 October.

We must work to recreate a positive dynamic to enable the parties to resume dialogue. In conjunction with its European and Arab partners, France is ready to support a gradual resumption of talks based on concrete and realistic commitments on both sides. France continues to coordinate closely with Germany, Egypt and Jordan on this issue, in line with the Amman meeting of 24 September.

France will also support any initiative that is in line with the agreed parameters and international law. In that regard, we welcome Minister Al-Malki's detailed proposal to organize an international conference and invite him to do so with the help of all stakeholders.

We wish to take advantage of the presence of Mr. Al-Malki today to encourage him to continue the initial efforts in the area of inter-Palestinian reconciliation. We welcome the commitment of President Abbas to hold general elections in the Palestinian territories. We call on the Palestinian Authority to hold these elections without further delay in order to meet democratic demands and promote peace. France and the European Union are ready to support him in that endeavour.

Finally, we reiterate our appeal to all Member States, especially our partners in the Gulf, to finance the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which is all the more essential in times of the coronavirus disease pandemic. France has doubled its contribution to the Agency since 2017 and will continue to support it in these difficult times. It will also continue to support civil society organizations and to call for respect for international humanitarian law and human rights.

France calls on the Council to join efforts to relaunch a political process that has been at a standstill since 2014. That is our responsibility as guarantors of international peace and security.

Annex 9**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, Christoph Heusgen**

First, I would like to welcome the signing of normalization agreements between Israel, on the one side, and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and the Sudan, on the other. These developments are an important step towards more stability and peaceful relations between Israel and the Arab world. As the Israeli Ambassador said today, these developments offer new opportunities for further agreements. From our perspective, they also provide unique momentum to stimulate the resumption of cooperation and peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

We remain convinced that sustainable peace, security and stability in the Middle East can be reached only through a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and internationally agreed parameters. Just because international law and Security Council resolutions are well-established, it does not mean that they are less important or less relevant.

This conflict can — and must — be resolved once and for all, not just managed; otherwise, we will see only a continuation of enmity, violence and bloodshed, as evidenced by the recent missile attacks from Gaza against Israel. Let me reiterate Germany's condemnation of all attacks and threats against Israel by Hamas and other terrorist groups, including the repeated firing of rockets from Gaza into Israel. I regret that the Palestinian Foreign Minister has not criticized that, nor said anything about hate speech against Israel, who has the right to defend itself against such acts in a proportional manner.

We are deeply concerned about the most recent decision taken by the Israeli authorities to advance and grant permits for the construction of more than 4,900 settlement building units in the occupied West Bank. That is a counterproductive move. Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories are illegal under international law. They severely undermine prospects for ending the occupation and for a viable and contiguous Palestinian State within the framework of a negotiated two-State solution. I very much regret that the Israeli Permanent Representative did not mention anything about that regrettable illegal development. As we have emphasized directly to the Government of Israel, that step also undermines efforts to rebuild trust between Israelis and Palestinians in order to resume dialogue.

We call on Israel to immediately halt all settlement construction, including in East Jerusalem and sensitive areas such as Har Homa, Givat Hamatos and Area E-1, as well as all confiscations, evictions and demolitions of Palestinian structures in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. We trust that Israeli annexation plans are truly and permanently suspended and call upon Israel to end the expansion of settlements. We emphasize that we will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, unless agreed to between the parties.

Germany remains committed to a negotiated two-State solution, with two sovereign, democratic and independent States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side in peace, within secure and recognized borders, on the basis of the 4 June 1967 lines. That is the only viable path to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis for a life of peace, dignity and equal rights. We call on both sides to refrain from unilateral actions, recommit to their signed agreements, restore cooperation and resume credible dialogue. We are convinced that confidence-building measures on both sides would provide a path towards a credible dialogue and, eventually, towards serious, meaningful and effective talks on all final-status issues.

Together with Egypt, France and Jordan, we will continue our efforts, and we offer our active support and good offices in facilitating a path back to cooperation, credible dialogue and a negotiated, peaceful settlement. Serious, meaningful and effective negotiations must be based on international law and agreed parameters, and either be conducted directly between the parties or under an international umbrella, such as the Middle East Quartet. In that regard, the Palestinian proposal to convene an international conference is worth exploring. We invite Special Coordinator Mladenov to consult with all relevant parties and to inform the Council about the feasibility of such a conference.

We also call on both sides to fully implement resolution 2334 (2016), with all its provisions.

We welcome the agreement among Palestinian factions to hold parliamentary and presidential elections in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and Gaza. We hope that such elections take place soon. We offer our support and call on Israel to enable the holding of such elections in East Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank.

In conclusion, I would like to commend the Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem for treating the Secretary General of the Palestinian Liberation Organization Executive Committee following a life-threatening coronavirus disease infection. We wish Mr. Erekat a full and speedy recovery. We are grateful to Hadassah for living up to its declared mission to “extend a hand to all, without regard for race, religion or ethnic origin” — a spirit that is so sorely needed in the Middle East and, indeed, in the whole world.

Annex 10**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations, Dian Triansyah Djani**

I warmly welcome His Excellency Mr. Sergey Vershinin, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Russia, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia and His Excellency Mr. Riad Al-Malki, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Observer State of Palestine, to the meeting.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov for his briefing on the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. We continue to hear increasingly grim reports from the ground.

It is regrettable that another act of bad faith has been committed by Israel. As we learned recently, on 14 and 15 October, the Israeli authorities approved the construction of another 5,000 settlement units in the occupied Palestinian territory. That development is not surprising or new. This creeping annexation is testament that Israel's annexation plan is alive and well.

Collective efforts to realize a two-State solution based on pre-1967 borders cannot be achieved when international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions are repeatedly violated and ignored by Israel. Indonesia condemns this latest flagrant violation of international law, and once again demands that Israel immediately cease all of its illegal settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

On that note, I would like to convey three pertinent points.

First, we call for accountability and an end to impunity. The expansion of illegal settlements clearly violates Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2334 (2016). Israel's continued violations derive from decades of unchecked accountability and systemic impunity. This has to stop. We, the international community, must act together to end impunity and to hold Israel accountable.

Secondly, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive and inclusive solution. A unilateral approach to finding a solution for the Israel-Palestine conflict is not only unjust but unsustainable. A comprehensive and inclusive solution is needed. Indonesia urges the international community to focus all of its effort on restarting a credible multilateral process based on United Nations resolutions, international law and other relevant internationally agreed parameters. The process should also, first and foremost, involve direct engagement between the two conflicting parties — Israel and Palestine.

I would like to reiterate and echo President Abbas' call for the Secretary-General to convene an international conference as part of a multilateral approach to the peace process, with the participation of the Middle East Quartet and all relevant parties. In addition, we would like to extend our support for intra-Palestinian unity talks as an essential step towards internal reconciliation and a unified Palestine.

Thirdly, we note the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, which continues to worsen due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, with more than 60,000 positive cases and 492 deaths, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The huge spike represents a significant burden and exacerbates an already difficult and challenging situation, particularly for women, children and refugees. In October alone, OCHA reported that more than 6,000 additional Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory had tested positive for COVID-19, resulting in 90 more deaths.

As such, the role of United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), is more urgent than ever. The international community should remain committed to supporting and ensuring predictable funding and political backing in order for UNRWA to effectively carry out its mandate.

Today we are commemorating the seventy-fifth year of the Charter of the United Nations, where we are recommitting to the spirit and letter of the Charter. We heard the beautiful poem, entitled “Inheritance”, by Ms. Eleanor Wikstrom, Youth Poet Laureate.

If the youth of the world ask us what we have inherited on this issue of Palestine, the answer would be that the United Nations inherit the despair and suffering of the Palestinian people. We inherit stories of conflict, violence and violations of human rights by Israel in the Palestinian territory. We inherit the non-implementation and non-fulfilment of United Nations and Security Council resolutions on the issue of Palestine.

The question of Palestine requires a just solution. We, as the Security Council, have a solemn duty to resolve it. Indonesia remains steadfast and committed to stand with the Palestinian people to achieve their independence and sovereignty.

Annex 11

Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Niger to the United Nations

[Original: French]

I would like to thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov for his detailed briefing on the situation in the Middle East.

Amid the continuing normalization of relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours and the hope it inspires, my delegation remains concerned about recent developments in the Middle East, particularly with the decision of the Israeli authorities to continue building new housing in the settlements of the occupied West Bank, in addition to the forced evictions and the demolition of Palestinian structures.

The Niger deplors those events, which come less than a month after the signing of normalization agreements between Israel and two Arab countries in the Gulf, opening up a promising path for the resumption of dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians.

In view of the efforts made for so many years to bring the parties closer together, and in the light of the positive developments since the 15 September agreements, the Israeli authorities' decision is likely to sorely test confidence between the parties and bog down the peace process.

That is why we call on Israel to respect the principles of international law in the occupied territories and to refrain from any measure to the contrary, which could undermine the prospect of a resumption of peace talks with a view to reaching a negotiated two-State solution, as endorsed by the international community.

It is more necessary than ever for the international community, the members of the Middle East Quartet and, in particular, the Security Council, to spare no effort to bring Israel and Palestine closer together and lead them towards the negotiating table for the settlement of the conflict in a way that satisfies the legitimate aspirations for the creation of a viable State for one and security for the other. The abandonment of that path would have repercussions for the entire region and for international peace and security.

The spirit of restraint and receptiveness of the Israeli authorities to the various appeals from the international community, as well as the great political will shown by President Mahmoud Abbas before the General Assembly, are assets we must avail ourselves of at every opportunity in order to bring the parties back to dialogue.

The humanitarian situation in the region remains worrisome, particularly with the spread of the coronavirus disease pandemic, which spares neither Israelis nor Palestinians. The pandemic has exacerbated an already complex health situation, with a lack of adequate medical equipment and medicine, as well as a disastrous economic situation induced by the continuing unsustainable blockade on the Gaza Strip, which increases the vulnerability of the Palestinian population.

That is why the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East requires additional support to enable it to continue its useful activities on the ground.

It is also incumbent on Israel, as the occupying Power, to assume its responsibilities under international humanitarian law in the administration of the territories under its control.

In conclusion, the Niger commends the tireless efforts of Nickolay Mladenov and reaffirms its full support for the efforts of the international community to bring about a positive outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Annex 12**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Inga Rhonda King**

I would like to thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing on developments and trends on the ground. We also welcome the participation of His Excellency Mr. Riad Al-Malki, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Observer State of Palestine, and our colleague, Ambassador Gilad Erdan, Permanent Representative of Israel.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains steadfast in our view that the only way to achieve lasting peace is on the basis of agreed and long-standing international parameters, the relevant United Nations resolutions and a negotiated two-State solution that recognizes the legitimate aspirations and security needs of both Palestinians and Israelis. Both Israel and Palestine must make sincere efforts to build mutual trust for the progress of direct negotiations and to not undermine the peace process.

This year marks 53 years of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. At this time, the international community must reaffirm our collective support for a two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders and spare no efforts to achieve a viable solution to the conflict. We therefore welcome President Abbas' call for an international conference in early 2021 to resume peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians. The time has come for the international community to meet our collective responsibility under international law to bring an end to the occupation of the Palestinian State.

On 14 and 15 October, the Israeli Government approved a plan to build 5,000 settlement units in the West Bank. Those settlements, as well as the acquisition of Palestinian territory by force, are illegal. We denounce those illegal and provocative actions and call for full respect of, and adherence to, the Charter of the United Nations, international law, long-standing international consensus and the relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly resolution 2334 (2016).

Turning to Gaza, we condemn the illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip by Israel and call on the Israeli Government to immediately lift the siege of the Gaza Strip and allow the free movement of people. It is time to fully end the occupation that began in 1967 and resolve all final-status issues on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and subsequent resolutions on this item. We also call on Member States to increase funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, as it continues to provide assistance and protection to millions of Palestinian refugees with limited resources.

In conclusion, we sincerely hope that a two-State solution, with Israel and a Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security, will be realized in the near future, and that this will lead to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Annex 13**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Tunisia to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, I would like to thank the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Vershinin, for presiding over this meeting. I am also grateful to the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, for his valuable briefing.

As a matter of principle, Tunisia has consistently supported the just cause of Palestine and the inalienable and integral rights of the Palestinian people. Accordingly, Tunisia has called for intensified efforts at the international level to revive the peace process and launch genuine, credible negotiations between the two parties to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, within a specific time frame, leading to a just and comprehensive peace that would bring about an end to the occupation and enable the Palestinian people to enjoy all its legitimate rights and establish its independent State on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The peace process has been at a standstill, particularly in recent years, while the Israeli occupation's policies and acts of aggression against the Palestinian people have continued and escalated, exacerbating the atmosphere of despair, hardship, tension and volatility in the region. We therefore wish to emphasize once again that the international community, particularly the Security Council and the Middle East Quartet, must fulfil its role by salvaging the two-State solution and restarting negotiations on the basis of the internationally agreed terms of reference. We also emphasize that the Security Council must implement the relevant resolutions, particularly resolution 2334 (2016), and prevail on Israel, the occupying Power, to withdraw from all occupied Arab territories and comply with the internationally recognized resolutions.

A just and comprehensive peace is the best and only way to restore security and stability in the region. Today we have a genuine opportunity to move forward towards that noble goal through the proposal of the Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, to convene a conference of plenipotentiaries, with the participation of the stakeholders, with a view to embarking upon a peace process grounded in international law, the resolutions of the United Nations and the relevant terms of reference.

We hope that the Secretary-General, the Quartet, the Security Council and all international and regional stakeholders will coalesce to lay the groundwork for the initiative. Tunisia stands ready to contribute to any constructive efforts geared at bringing an end to the occupation and achieving security and stability for all the peoples of the region.

National reconciliation has an important part to play in strengthening Palestinian unity and bolstering the two-State solution. Tunisia once again welcomes the positive steps taken by all Palestinian factions towards that goal and welcomes the consensus that Palestinian legislative and presidential elections can be held in the next few months. We urge the international community to press Israel, the occupying Power, to allow the Palestinian general elections to be held in East Jerusalem.

On listening to the briefing of the Special Coordinator, we were deeply concerned to hear that the occupation authorities have continued to enact settlement policies, demolish homes and target civilians. Such conduct is a grave violation of the

principles of international law and a flagrant act of defiance towards the authority of the Security Council, given the absence of any form of accountability.

Tunisia condemns those practices, reiterates its rejection of Israeli annexation plans and insists that such plans must be definitively abandoned. We call for protection to be granted to Palestinian civilians, and for an end to the illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip and to all forms of collective punishment, particularly in view of the urgent and alarming challenges resulting from the coronavirus disease pandemic.

Given the ongoing suffering in the Palestinian territories and in refugee camps, Tunisia reiterates its absolute support for the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which plays a vital role in alleviating the plight of refugees and supporting stability in the region. Tunisia urges all regional and international actors to step up the humanitarian response in the occupied Palestinian territory and help the Palestinian Authority tackle the effects of the pandemic and the economic repercussions of the occupation.

Lastly, Tunisia remains committed to peace as a strategic goal and is ready to support any initiative aimed at shoring up peace based on the agreed parameters, including the Arab Peace Initiative, in order to uphold peace, security and the principles of justice and peaceful coexistence among the peoples of the region. We believe that the participation of the Palestinian side is a prerequisite for any initiative to resolve the conflict and find a fair and lasting solution to the it.

Annex 14**Statement by the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations, Jerry Matjila**

We express our appreciation to Deputy Minister Vershinin for presiding over today's meeting.

Allow me to take this opportunity to welcome to the Security Council the Foreign Minister of the State of Palestine, Mr. Riad Al-Malki, and thank him for his participation today. I would also like to thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his frank and useful update on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. South Africa welcomes his Office's concerted efforts aimed at resolving the long-standing conflict that arises out of the occupation of Palestinian territories, and we urge him to continue those efforts so that the United Nations may, as the representative of the international community, play a key role in finding a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli matter.

We took note of the remarks by the new Israeli Permanent Representative to the United Nations and the recent events in the Middle East between Israel and United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and the Sudan, three members of the League of Arab States. We had hoped that those events would lead to less suffering of Palestinians in prisons, or in exile or internally displaced from their homes.

As we heard from Special Coordinator Mladenov today, Israel continues its illegal settlement expansion, in blatant violation of resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly and international law. Earlier this month saw Israeli authorities announcing the advancement of over 5,000 new housing units in the occupied West Bank, making 2020 the year of the greatest settlement expansion since 2012, with over 12,000 units being advanced.

While recent bilateral agreements have shown Israel to have agreed to suspend its annexation plans, this continued and increasing settlement activity contradicts those agreements and calls into question the benefits they offer for peace, as they have not eased the occupation. In fact, those agreements appear to coincide with increased illegal settlement activity and destruction of Palestinian agricultural land. While formal annexation may have been suspended, de facto annexation continues through those illegal practices.

Those newly forged relations and ostensibly transactional agreements have done nothing to improve the lives of Palestinians, who continue to be denied their basic human and civil rights while living under illegal military occupation. As evidenced by the increase in settlement activity, we can see that Israel has no intention of halting its de facto annexation efforts.

South Africa reiterates that settlements are illegal under international law and directly contravene resolution 2334 (2016). These violations and inhumane actions by Israel serve only to undermine any prospects for peace and jeopardize a permanent and sustainable resolution to the conflict.

We often ask ourselves, and now we ask our fellow Council members, why resolutions on certain issues are dealt with in a completely different manner than other issues and resolutions on the Council's agenda. We see this with the matter of Palestine, and we are also seeing it this week with Western Sahara.

Israel continues to violate Security Council resolutions and international law. Why, then, has there been no action to hold Israel accountable for those illegal actions? If this were occurring with almost any other issue on the Council's agenda, we would not have hesitated to take action. Surely these double standards,

in a body whose responsibility is to maintain international peace and security, is not acceptable. It is the responsibility of the Security Council to remain impartial, as partiality and bias undermine and discredit the role of the Council and of the United Nations as a whole.

From 1991 to 2007, there were a number of international conferences on the question of Palestine. We had the Madrid Conference in 1991, which led to the Oslo Accords in 1993, and which saw the first face-to-face agreement between leaders of the Israeli authorities and the Palestinian Liberation Organization. The Annapolis Conference in 2007 saw the parties committing to the road map for peace. Each of those meetings was an important milestone in the Israel-Palestine peace process. The initiatives by the Arab League and the Russian Federation have also played vital roles in the peace process.

South Africa therefore fully supports President Abbas' call for an international conference, with the participation of all parties concerned, for discussions on a genuine peace process, including the resolution of all final-status issues. We urge the Council to heed the Secretary-General's call for a collective and fresh push for peace and reconciliation in the Middle East region. South Africa will continue to work with all like-minded countries to support international efforts aimed at the establishment of a viable Palestinian State existing side by side in peace with Israel within internationally recognized borders, based on those existing on 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with all the relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and internationally agreed parameters.

As South Africa's Minister for International Relations and Cooperation, Mrs. Naledi Pandor stated at last week's debate on the situation in the Gulf region, sustainable peace and stability in the Gulf and the wider Middle East region requires an end to its core peace and security challenge, namely, the occupation of Palestine (S/2020/1037, annex 7). In order to resolve this, any initiative to end the conflict and bring an end to Israeli occupation must take into account the needs and aspirations of the Palestinian people. No peace plan or initiative can have any merit or succeed if all parties to the conflict are not included in such talks from the very beginning as equal partners.

South Africa is encouraged by the Palestinians' efforts at unity, including efforts to agree on the dates for holding elections.

In conclusion, South Africa is deeply concerned about recent media reports that Israel is refusing to renew visas for officials working for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. That has resulted in 9 of 12 officials conducting critical work and reporting in the occupied Palestinian territory having to abandon their posts and leave the country. We therefore call on Israel to uphold its obligations as a responsible State Member of the United Nations to ensure that the Organization and all of its various agencies, bodies and partners are able to continue their vital work in the occupied Palestinian territory.

As it has demonstrated over the years, and based on its own history and recent past, South Africa is ready to assist parties in resolving this long-standing, indeed decades-old, question. Its resolution will transform the Middle East into a zone of peace and unprecedented economic development.

Annex 15**Statement by the Chargé d'affaires of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Jonathan Allen**

I thank United Nations Special Coordinator Mladenov for his briefing.

The United Kingdom has continued to support the progress made on normalizing relations between Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates and Israel. We hope others will follow suit for the benefit of the whole region, and we therefore welcome Friday's statement from the Governments of the Sudan, Israel and the United States of America on the normalization of relations between Israel and the Sudan. As United Kingdom Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has said, "this step is a boost for the democratic transition in the Sudan and peace in the region".

Last month, I stated that such agreements represent a profound shift in the region, a shift that must now proceed in parallel with steps to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is much to be done to rebuild trust. The suspension of the threat of annexation was the first step on this road. It must now become permanent. It is vital that the Palestinian Authority resumes cooperation with Israel and that the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships come together in dialogue to pursue the path of peace. That is the consistent message of my Foreign Secretary.

To rebuild trust, we must see an end to the detrimental action on the ground. We are particularly concerned by the announcement on 15 October of nearly 5,000 settlement units, many deep in the West Bank. The expansion of settlements violates international law and is a counterproductive step in the light of the positive developments between Israel and its neighbours of which I have spoken. Alongside European partners, the United Kingdom has made clear our strong opposition to this latest settlement advancement.

The United Kingdom also remains concerned about demolitions of Palestinian buildings and evictions of Palestinians from their homes across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Demolitions and evictions in 2020 have proceeded at a concerning pace. The United Kingdom is seriously concerned by the possible demolition by Israeli authorities of a Palestinian school funded by the international community in Ras Al-Tin. The right to education is basic and essential to having a strong and thriving Palestinian education system that will provide opportunities for the next generation. We call on Israel to halt such actions.

The United Kingdom has expressed our concern at the increase in settler violence, the destruction of olive trees and the stealing of projects coinciding with the Palestinian olive harvest. As the occupying Power, the Israeli security forces must provide appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

In Gaza, while relative calm has resumed, the Israeli Defense Force's discovery on 22 October of a tunnel penetrating dozens of yards into Israeli territory is of great concern. There have also been further rocket launches this month and a return to launching improvised explosive device balloons by Gaza's militant groups. The United Kingdom condemns such indiscriminate attacks against Israeli civilians. We continue to call upon Hamas and other terrorist groups to permanently end their incitement and rocket fire against Israel. These negative actions must stop. We urge the parties instead to pursue confidence-building measures to build the foundations of future final status discussions. The Palestinian Authority must resume cooperation with Israel. We urge progress on economic issues and the facilitation of trade. Settlements, demolitions and evictions must stop. Rocket fire and incitement will not be tolerated.

The United Kingdom remains committed to taking forward progress on efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We continue to support a two-State solution based on 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as a shared capital. We restate our support for regional and international efforts aimed at facilitating a peace process. Ultimately, there is no substitute for direct talks between the Palestinians and Israel, which is the only way to reach a sustainable peace.

Annex 16**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Kelly Craft**

I thank the Deputy Foreign Minister and the Russian delegation for convening today's meeting. I thank Special Coordinator Mladenov, as always, for his briefing. He has provided us with a very informative report, and we applaud him and his team's efforts aimed at keeping the Security Council fully briefed. I would also like to take a moment at the outset to wish Mr. Saeb Erekat, politician, lead Palestinian negotiator and an architect of the Oslo Accords, a speedy recovery from the coronavirus disease.

Once again, we find ourselves in the Council debating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and States Members of the United Nations will read out statements packed with the same rhetorical fodder of hundreds of statements before them. It is time to stop this unproductive practice. Jews and Arabs are Abraham's children, share Middle Eastern ancestry, culture and history, and deserve a future of peace as the cousins they are.

As the Council is aware, just a few weeks ago, the United States co-hosted an informal dialogue with the Security Council to discuss the historic Abraham accords. Senior Emirati and Bahraini officials joined Senior Adviser Jared Kushner to provide more details on these arrangements and to showcase what is possible when leaders make courageous and bold decisions that advance the cause of peace.

As the discussion highlighted, opening direct ties between these three dynamic societies and advanced economies has incredible potential to transform the region. Normalization will spur economic growth, enhance technological innovation, foster interfaith dialogue and forge closer people-to-people relations. And just last week, President Trump announced another historic breakthrough, with the Sudan also agreeing to normalize relations with Israel. For years, the Sudan harboured the very terrorists — Al-Qaeda affiliates, Hizbullah and Hamas — who threaten people around the world and wanted to destroy Israel, but whose leaders, today, have announced a peace agreement. The conversation in the region is changing. As the President said, a new chapter is beginning.

The simple truth is that each month the Council repeats decades-old approaches to this conflict that go nowhere. Many States Members of the United Nations are trapped in stale policies and narratives that will always fail to bring peace. President Trump's bold diplomacy and rejection of failed conventional attitudes lies at the heart of the successful Abraham accords. His willingness to approach things differently led to a historic breakthrough — the most significant step towards peace in the Middle East in more than 25 years.

It is this same creative, realistic and fresh thinking that led to the President's Vision for Peace. We encourage our regional partners and the members of this body to thoughtfully consider the United States Vision for Peace and to play a constructive role in encouraging direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians on the basis of the Vision. Unlike past efforts, the Vision is detailed, realistic and implementable. We put an immense amount of thought and consideration into drafting the Vision for Peace. Agreements are about details, and this plan has details. One can like them or one can dislike them and offer alternatives, but deals are made based on the details. This is why we have encouraged the Palestinians to offer their position by utilizing the Vision and bringing their perspectives to the negotiating table. The table has been set for two, and peace is within reach. Simply rejecting the Vision out of hand does nothing to help the Palestinian people or advance the cause of peace, and neither does holding more conferences or summits that are only

designed to rehash the same old tired points. We have been getting together to talk for 25 years; I think now is the time for action.

We have heard many members of this body talk about the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative as a basis for negotiations. The Arab Peace Initiative was historic in its time, but it dates back to 2002, and it just does not provide the kind of detail we need to reach peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis. What we need today is progress, and this is what a peace deal based on the Vision for Peace would deliver. A deal would bring much needed economic support and investment to the Palestinian people. It would open up a whole new world of opportunities.

Within the United Nations, the United States continues to oppose the annual barrage of more than a dozen perennial resolutions biased against Israel — resolutions in which the text barely changes from year to year — a fact that underlines how habitual United Nations attitudes towards Israel and the Palestinians have become. This one-sided approach surfaces far too frequently in these resolutions and serves only to undermine trust between parties and fails to create the kind of positive international environment that we need to achieve peace. It is for this reason that we are urging both parties and regional partners to be creative and embrace the innovative approach that the Vision for Peace presents. If the international community continues to operate under the same assumptions and simply repeats the same old talking points, the unique opportunity we now have will be missed.

In President Abbas' address to during the general debate at the opening of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly (see A/75/PV.10), he called for an international conference to launch discussions, and I have heard several of my fellow Council members endorse this idea. We have no objection to meeting with international partners to discuss the issue, but I have to ask: how is this different than every other meeting convened on this issue over the past 60 years? I have also heard some liken the idea for a conference to the 1991 Madrid Conference. And, while Madrid brought everyone around to the table, it took bold leadership and difficult decisions from the leaders on both sides — behind closed doors — to actually move the ball forward in any meaningful way. We cannot keep doing what we have been doing and expect things to change; in doing so, we are failing the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

For the first time in 25 years, the United States has demonstrated that a different approach to the situation in the Middle East can yield results. Today, because of American leadership, Israel is closer to its Arab neighbours than ever before, and its direct neighbours — the Palestinians — should take advantage of this positive momentum. History will judge how the Security Council responds to this historic moment: it can either shrink from the challenge or rise to the occasion. We encourage members of the Security Council to embrace the opportunities presented by the Abraham Accords and encourage the Council's support for the Vision for Peace. If what the international community seeks is peace, security and stability for the Middle East and its peoples, then I urge it to join us in supporting these historic breakthroughs.

Our task in the Security Council, as laid out 75 years ago, is to support peace, security and stability, including in the Middle East. This takes courage. Let us join together in supporting these historic breakthroughs, the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, and their desire for peace and a better future.

Annex 17**Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, Riad Al-Malki**

At the outset, I wish to thank the Russian delegation for presiding over this meeting and for the leadership role that Russia has played in pursuit of peace in the Middle East. Let me also thank my brother Mr. Mohamed Ali Nafti for participating in today's meeting, and to welcome Mr. Dang Minh Khoi. I also want to thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing.

It is time to drop the old talking points. It is ridiculous to claim that the Palestinians "never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity", when in fact the Palestinian Liberation Organization signed an agreement with Israel just months after the start of the first-ever negotiations between the two sides, despite all the shortcomings of those accords, which history has proven. It is preposterous to consider that Israel's right to security could justify its occupation and oppression of an entire nation for decades, or denying us our right to self-determination and to a sovereign and independent State, or negating our own right to security.

It is absurd to claim that it is the Palestinian side that does not want negotiations, when Israel is the one trying to illegally pre-empt the negotiations on all final-status issues on the ground every single day. It is ludicrous to claim that the obstacle to peace is Palestinian intransigence, when our positions are actually aligned with the international consensus and the resolutions of the Security Council, while Israeli positions and policies are flagrantly in breach of international law and United Nations resolutions.

By 1999, the parties had identified final-status issues that should be negotiated based on internationally agreed terms of reference and parameters. Here is Netanyahu's stance on these issues: Jerusalem, including occupied East Jerusalem, shall be Israeli; illegal settlements shall remain in place; refugees shall remain refugees; Israel shall continue to control our borders; and Israel shall control all of the Jordan Valley, and with it most of our natural resources. These positions are contemptuous and unlawful, and they translate into a simple truth: Israel does not want to end its illegal occupation; it wants to make it permanent. Why are we the ones who are labelled "intransigent"?

It is time to abandon the failed recipes of the past. We cannot allow Israeli unilateralism to prevail while the world continues to call for bilateral negotiations. It is no longer enough to call on the parties to negotiate. This call must be accompanied by measures to incentivize respect for obligations and to dissuade the adoption of illegal unilateral actions.

It is no longer enough to say settlements are illegal. One must ensure accountability, distinction and non-assistance. It is no longer enough to speak of a two-State solution. It must be accompanied with the recognition of the State of Palestine and support for its sovereignty over the territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem.

We could have tried to find answers to Israel's violence through violence, to be heard and considered relevant. We did not. We could have adopted disruptive behaviour, since constructive behaviour is underrated these days. We did not. We could have contributed to transforming this political conflict into a religious one, fuelling it so we were not the only ones to feel its flames. We did not. If we have been punished while making such choices while Israel, on the other hand, is rewarded, what is being encouraged, peace or violence?

Despite decades of oppressive Israeli policies and measures aimed at bringing us to our knees politically and financially, President Abbas, in his message to the General Assembly (see A/75/PV.10), called on the Secretary-General, as he has done before the Security Council in the past, to undertake, in cooperation with the Security Council and the Quartet mandated by this body to advance peace, preparations to convene an international conference with the participation of all concerned parties early next year, in order to engage in a genuine peace process, based on international law, United Nations resolutions and the relevant terms of reference. This call is the ultimate demonstration of our commitment to peace and to a path based on inclusion not exclusion, legality not illegality, negotiations not diktats, and multilateralism not unilateralism. I know many countries represented in the Council have already expressed support for President Abbas' initiative, and we look forward to continuing to work with everyone to see it materialize, including through meetings of the Security Council such as today's, which is being held under the presidency of the Russian Federation.

Only under pressure did Israel decide to freeze its plans for formal annexation of areas beyond occupied East Jerusalem. However, it has not renounced its decades-long policy aimed at controlling the amount of Palestinian land with the least number of Palestinians — in other words, maximum Palestinian geography with minimum Palestinian demography. Its de facto annexation continues with the advancement in recent days of 5,000 settlement units deep into the West Bank, including in and around occupied East Jerusalem. The international community must act to salvage peace, or we will all bear the consequences.

As long as Israel does not bear the cost of occupation, but instead continues to reap its benefits, it will never negotiate in good faith. The international community must address the shortcomings of the past by linking its relations with the parties to their respect of their obligations under international law and the peace process, by helping them reach an agreement and implementing it and by enforcing a binding time frame.

The international peace conference can generate the momentum necessary and mobilize the international community at large to help the parties negotiate a peace agreement that will forever change our region. Anything else is volatile — and futile. Two thirds of our people were forced into exile, and we did not surrender. Tens of thousands were killed, and we did not surrender. Hundreds of thousands were displaced, and we did not surrender. The equivalent of half of our male population — over 800,000 Palestinians — has been arrested, and we have not surrendered. What makes anyone think we would surrender now?

Israel often wonders why we enjoy such international solidarity. It is because former colonial Powers and liberation movements alike know these colonial policies well: violence, subjugation, intimidation, mass arbitrary imprisonment, discrimination, humiliation, fragmentation of land, confinement of the occupied people, expansion of illegal settlements and exploitation. They cannot support such actions. History has taught them better.

International consensus, the mandate and role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the Palestinian people's resilience have all been sorely tested, and yet they prevail. It is now time to take the initiative. There is not a people too many in the Middle East, but there is an independent State missing. The Middle East equation cannot be solved by denying this fundamental factor.

This conflict cannot be ended without freedom for the Palestinian people. Our freedom will never be compatible with Israeli soldiers in our streets, Israeli

drones in our skies and Israeli control over our borders. Ask Maher Al-Akhras, who has been risking his life in a hunger strike for over 90 days in order to denounce the most arbitrary form of detention, the so-called administrative detention. Ask Amer Snobar, who, barely 18, was beaten to death yesterday by Israeli soldiers who had apprehended him and kept hitting him on his head and neck with the butt of their rifles until he could no longer breathe. Ask the mother of the child killed on his way to school, the athlete whose leg was amputated after a sniper acted as if he were playing a video game, the owner of a house built through years of sweat and destroyed in an instant, and the farmer whose crops were burned by settlers. All of them will say: “we will not coexist with occupation”. We want to end occupation so we can coexist, so we can know justice, so we can be free and so our region can know true peace and security.

Annex 18**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, Gilad Erdan**

It is an honour to speak before the Security Council for the first time since assuming my role as the Permanent Representative of the State of Israel to the United Nations. I come to this position after nearly two decades in the Israeli Knesset and Government. I have served on Israel's security cabinet and in several ministerial positions dealing with such issues as counter-terrorism and the ongoing attempts to delegitimize my country.

I believe that the United Nations as a whole and the Security Council in particular can be a force for good in the world, especially today, when the world is facing harrowing health and economic challenges. In my view, the Council should serve as a model for how nations can set aside their differences and unite to tackle international problems and promote peace and security.

In the two months since I arrived in New York, I have witnessed a jarring dissonance between what the Council chooses to focus on and what is actually happening in the Middle East. During this short period of time, I witnessed the Council ignoring opportunities to promote peace while simultaneously choosing not to act in the face of grave threats.

I was told by many that the Council holds an institutional bias against Israel. Despite these criticisms, I want to keep an open mind. I want to prove wrong all those who tell me that the Security Council is a lost cause. Nevertheless, I have a few considerations I would like to pose to the Council in order to better understand its priorities in the Middle East.

In a debate entitled "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question," one would expect the Council to focus on the most important issues facing the Middle East. However, once a month, for 20 years — which amounts to hundreds of debates — Council members have routinely overlooked critical issues and focused only on the "Palestinian question".

Today's debate is a perfect example. Should we not be discussing the momentum of peace between four countries in a turbulent region? As the United Nations organ entrusted with developing friendly relations among nations, surely the Council should discuss the Abraham Accords and the most recent peace agreement between Israel and the Sudan. Yet the only debate the Security Council held on the historic peace agreements between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain was an informal one.

To understand how significant these agreements are, consider that it was in Khartoum in 1967 that the Arab League adopted the Khartoum Resolution and the infamous "Three Nos": No peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel and no negotiations with Israel. On Friday, the Sudan replaced three "no's" with three "yeses": Yes to peace with Israel, yes to a new Middle East and yes to a brighter future for our children. Some 53 years ago, the Sudan symbolized the Arab world's refusal to accept the Jewish State's legitimacy. Today it symbolizes the Arab world's growing acceptance of the Jewish State.

I look forward to hearing Council members' insights on this unprecedented paradigm shift and how we can build on these agreements. Perhaps we could discuss today how the Abraham accords and the new Israeli-Sudanese alliance present new opportunities for dialogue and prosperity and how these agreements will enhance cooperation in the fields of security, sustainability, technology, innovation, health and more. These accords are an important milestone that will serve to advance further

agreements with other Arab and Muslim countries. They disprove preconceived notions of peacemaking in the Middle East and represent a new pragmatic approach that is not held hostage by unrealistic demands from one side.

Maybe that is exactly why the Palestinian leadership opposes them. Instead of viewing the accords as a new opportunity to kick-start negotiations, the Palestinians have attacked the Emiratis, the Bahrainis and the Sudanese, calling their decision to have relations with Israel a “betrayal” and a “stab in the back”. It should be clear to Foreign Minister Al-Malki that everyone can now see that the Palestinians will lash out against any country that seeks peace in the region, even its fellow members of the Arab League. The fact that the Palestinians attack those who make peace with Israel, demonstrates that, for years, the Council has been applying pressure on the wrong side.

It is not surprising that the Palestinians refuse to see the agreements as an opportunity for peace. President Abbas has refused every peace offer made by the State of Israel. Actually, to be more precise, he has refused every offer that he has bothered to respond to. Former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is still waiting for a response to the generous offer he made in 2008.

Instead, the Palestinian representative calls here for a peace conference. Do not be fooled by this; it is only another distraction. Abbas knows a conference will not bring peace. The only way to achieve real peace is through direct, bilateral negotiations. Prime Minister Netanyahu has invited President Abbas to Jerusalem many times. He has even offered to go to Ramallah, but Abbas continues to waste time calling for another useless conference. The Security Council should instead call on the Palestinians to begin negotiations based on the American Vision for Peace, which is a good starting point for realistic, sustainable peace. In a debate entitled “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, should not a new era of peace that has a huge impact on the region be discussed?

In addition to discussing opportunities for peace, the Council must also discuss the destabilizing forces in the region, namely, Iran. It is surprising, but I actually want to thank that country. Indeed, I want to thank the regime for the role it has played in bringing the moderate forces in the region closer together. Ironically, Iran’s extreme and murderous ways have contributed to the signing of these historic agreements.

Nevertheless, Iran and its terrorist proxies remain the biggest threats to peace and security in the region. Its stated aim of using violence to create Shia hegemony in the region should top the agenda in all debates on the Middle East. Iran’s ongoing aggression threatens to take many more innocent lives — of Muslims, Jews and Christians — than it already has. Opposing Iran’s nuclear ambitions while allowing it to buy and sell other lethal weapons puts the entire region in grave danger. The fact that almost every member of the Security Council was willing to let the arms embargo expire calls into question this body’s commitment to international peace and security. The sanctions on Iran, which were reinitiated by the United States-triggered snapback, remain in full effect. We fully support the American initiatives in this regard.

Iran is also one of the biggest human rights violators in the world. One example is its excessive and illegal use of executions. During President Rouhani’s tenure, Iran has executed over 4,300 people, including minors, women, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, journalists and anti-Government protesters. Should this not be discussed in a debate on the situation in the Middle East?

The Security Council must unite in establishing a maximum pressure campaign against Iran. It must prevent the regime in Tehran from continuing to develop its nuclear capabilities, obtain advanced weapons and violate human rights.

For Israel and other Arab countries, this is an existential threat. One day many more countries will realize Iran threatens them too. Let us hope it is not too late.

When discussing security in the Middle East, there is another Iran-related threat that is barely discussed by the Council. It has been nearly a month since Prime Minister Netanyahu revealed new intelligence about a Hizbullah arms depot embedded in Beirut's Janah neighbourhood. The terrible explosion last August at the city's port killed some 200 people and injured thousands. This has not stopped Hizbullah from putting Lebanese lives at the risk of another, similar disaster.

This is not the first time that Hizbullah has used Lebanese civilians as human shields. Hizbullah acts in complete disregard of human life and of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). If the Council truly cared about the future of the Middle East, how is it possible that all Council members have not designated Hezbollah in its entirety as a terrorist organization? Should this question not be discussed in a debate on the situation in the Middle East?

Of course, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is also an important issue and should be a part of the debate. Yet while discussing it every month for the last 20 years, key elements have been neglected. If you are looking for the real obstacle to peace, Mr. President, look at the Palestinian's long record of incitement and hate. Palestinian Authority textbooks incite violence and promote terrorism and antisemitism. Through its pay-to-slay programme, the Palestinian Authority rewards terror attacks against Israeli civilians. Maybe part of the answer to the Palestinian question can be found in that fact alone. The Palestinian Authority spends hundreds of millions of dollars a year on its pay-to-slay programme. Just think how that money could have been spent this year fighting the coronavirus disease.

The United Nations regularly produces distorted one-sided reports about alleged Israeli violations of Palestinian rights. Perhaps a discussion should be held about the Palestinian Authority's violation of its own people's rights, including the basic right to choose their leaders. It is well known that Israel has held more elections in a year than the Palestinian Authority has held in the last 15.

For decades, many in the international community have fixated on a single solution to the conflict. They vote for the same anti-Israel resolutions, recycle old talking points and ignore issues that are crucial for ending the conflict. They also ignore the fact that this approach has only emboldened Palestinian rejectionism. Perhaps Council members are too accustomed to the ritual of these debates to see that they have been completely ineffective in answering the Palestinian question. We all know what Einstein said about trying the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

While the Council's talking points have not changed for decades, the Middle East has. Three historic agreements considered impossible to achieve were reached in just two months. The Security Council should embrace the accords and use them as a catalyst to promote peace and security in the region. It can facilitate the next round of agreements.

I am committed to proving wrong all those who say that the Security Council is a lost cause. However, ignoring the most pressing issues in the Middle East and expressing bias when discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, makes that hard to do. The Council must recommit itself to pursuing peace and security, and not let politics dictate its actions in the Middle East. I remain optimistic that the Security Council can fulfil its mandate and I look forward to working with its members in that noble pursuit.

Annex 19

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the 120 States members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

I would like to congratulate Russia on its successful presidency of the Security Council this month and express our thanks for the opportunity for the Non-Aligned Movement to present its position on the question of Palestine — an issue that has historically been one of vital concern and importance to the Movement.

During the Online Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, held on 9 October on the theme “Bandung+65: More Relevant, United and Effective NAM against Emerging Global Challenges, including COVID-19”, the Ministers adopted a political declaration that stressed that a just, lasting solution to the question of Palestine in all its aspects must remain both a priority on the Movement’s agenda and a permanent responsibility of the United Nations, until it is satisfactorily resolved in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. The States members of the Movement therefore seize this opportunity to reaffirm once again 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, using tools of multilateral diplomacy for the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The Security Council has a clear responsibility in ensuring 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 legally binding on all States Members of the United Nations. The question of Palestine cannot be an exception. We therefore remain deeply concerned that this body has for too long been unable to fulfil its mandate on this important question owing to the use of the veto by a permanent member of the Council. NAM members call upon the Security Council to overcome its paralysis and fulfil its Charter duties with respect to the question of Palestine, thereby restoring credibility to this body and upholding its obligations in the achievement of a just and peaceful solution to this protracted conflict and tragic injustice.

The Non-Aligned Movement continues to believe that resolution 2334 (2016), which reaffirmed the Security Council’s many relevant resolutions on the matter, provides the only viable path to peace, setting forth the essential requirements and parameters for the achievement of a just outcome on the basis of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, in accordance with the long-standing terms of reference of 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 Palestinian people’s inalienable rights, including to self-determination and an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Accordingly, we call for the full respect of resolution 2334 (2016) and for the effective implementation of its provisions and obligations, particularly by the occupying Power, including its obligations as a State to respect distinction, which is a matter central to accountability.

We also underscore the need for the intensification of international efforts aimed at bringing an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and at achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive solution, which is also called for under resolution

2334 (2016). Similarly, the States members of the NAM continue to call for the full respect and implementation of all other relevant resolutions, including with regard to the complete cessation of all Israeli settlement activities and with regard to the status of the occupied East Jerusalem, for resolving these issues would create the conditions necessary for bringing an end to the occupation, justly resolving the conflict in all its aspects, and making Palestinian-Israeli peace and security a reality, for the benefit of both peoples, for the region and for 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, 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 to further pursue its illegal policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. Actions that violate resolutions of the Security Council and the historic status quo of Jerusalem and its holy sites are provocative and dangerous, destroy the prospects for peace and should not be supported or celebrated by any country. Threats of annexation by Israeli officials must be condemned unequivocally, and any measures taken in this regard must be rejected forthwith as null and void and without any legal effect and must be met with firm measures of accountability for such grave breaches, including by lawful countermeasures.

In relation to the Gaza Strip, the situation remains of great concern to the Movement, in particular 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 more than 2 million Palestinian children, women and men in Gaza. This crisis must be comprehensively addressed, in accordance with international law, including humanitarian and human rights law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, and in the context of the overall situation of the continuation of the illegitimate, belligerent, Israeli foreign occupation since 1967 of the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and in the context of the unequivocal calls for an end to such occupation.

In the absence of a solution, the States members of the NAM reiterate their call for the continued provision of needed humanitarian and socioeconomic assistance to the Palestinian people, including Palestinian refugees. The 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 and calls for full support for the renewal of the Agency's mandate to ensure the continuity of its vital programmes and its contribution to regional stability. In the light of the continuing financial shortfalls, we urge the international community to provide UNRWA with the necessary funding to ensure the continuity of its indispensable operations.

As Israel has clearly abdicated its obligations as the occupying Power to protect the Palestinian civilian population, as prescribed by the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, we also reiterate our long-standing call for international protection for the Palestinian people. This is urgent for alleviating the dire state of insecurity of the occupied population and for preventing more losses of innocent human lives. Failure to do so can lead only to further escalations and the tragic deaths of civilians.

In this regard, 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 only fosters greater 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 by the Security Council, to ensure a cessation of and accountability for the violations that are being systematically committed by Israel against the Palestinian civilian population under its occupation. We reiterate that Israel must comply with its duties and responsibilities under international law. Should it continue its blatant contempt of the Security Council and of its international legal obligations, it must be held to account.

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

In conclusion, we take this opportunity to reiterate our call for the international community to act collectively and responsibly to uphold international law and to exert and intensify all necessary efforts in support of the just 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 for 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.

Annex 20**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Bahrain to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, I would like to thank the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Vershinin, and the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation for convening today's important debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I would also like to thank the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, for his valuable briefing.

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain said in his statement to the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session that, in past decades, the United Nations had helped to consolidate international cooperation and preserve world peace for the good of all humankind. His Majesty emphasized that the Kingdom of Bahrain is committed to its international obligations related to maintaining the strength and stability of the international order and continuing to play its role in achieving universal peace.

As we mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and its goals of achieving peace, the Kingdom of Bahrain affirms its support for all international efforts to promote a culture of peace as an urgent need for humankind in order to foster the values of openness, moderation and tolerance. It is important for the international community to develop a comprehensive vision to address security, political, economic and health challenges. The improvement of the humanitarian situation starts with the establishment of peace and the conditions for security and stability for all.

The Kingdom of Bahrain also stresses the importance of resolving disputes and differences through constructive dialogue and peaceful means based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, thereby helping to eliminate the causes of tension, which hinder development efforts worldwide.

The international community must work on the basis of integrated policies and with more effectiveness in the fight against the challenges facing the region, particularly the ongoing efforts to address the coronavirus disease pandemic. To that end, solidarity, putting aside differences, strengthening areas of humanitarian assistance and improving future preparedness to prevent global crises are essential.

In accordance with its consistent policy of promoting a culture of peace, coexistence, tolerance, understanding, acceptance of others and respect for neighbouring countries, the Kingdom of Bahrain signed a declaration of peace with Israel, under the auspices of the United States of America, in a historic step towards peace in the Middle East — a courageous and extraordinary move to improve security and stability in the region. The Kingdom of Bahrain also signed a joint communiqué with the State of Israel on the establishment of diplomatic relations, in addition to memorandums of understanding in a number of areas. In those memorandums, fruitful bilateral cooperation is established between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the State of Israel with a view to strengthening the foundations of peace in the region and moving the peace process in a more positive direction.

We also affirm the long-standing position of the Kingdom of Bahrain regarding the need to intensify efforts to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in accordance with the two-State solution, which is the best way of achieving a just and comprehensive peace resulting in the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East

Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of the internationally recognized resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

We welcome the signing by the United Arab Emirates of a peace treaty with Israel, a treaty in which broad prospects for a comprehensive and just peace in the region are opened up.

We also welcome the announcement of an agreement to establish relations between the Republic of the Sudan and the State of Israel under the auspices of the United States, as another historic step on the road to peace, stability and prosperity in the Middle East.

The Middle East region faces profound and complex challenges that have the potential to change it for years to come, especially as some countries are pursuing hostile, destructive policies that jeopardize regional and international security and stability. In that connection, the Kingdom of Bahrain condemns the repeated attacks on vital installations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by Iranian-backed Houthi militias, and supports all the efforts and policies of Saudi Arabia to maintain its security, stability and territorial integrity.

The Kingdom of Bahrain also supports all the tireless efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to reach a lasting political solution that preserves the security and stability of the Republic of Yemen in accordance with the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and the related Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of the Comprehensive National Dialogue and resolution 2216 (2015). The Kingdom of Bahrain fully supports the sincere efforts and continued strategic role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in protecting the region's security and stability.

The Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the signing of a permanent ceasefire agreement throughout the State of Libya. The agreement, concluded at the United Nations Office at Geneva between the Government of National Accord and the Libyan National Army, is an important achievement and a necessary step that will contribute to the security and stability of the State of Libya. The Kingdom of Bahrain commends all the efforts that culminated in the agreement and hopes that all the States and parties involved will keep working to ensure the stability and territorial integrity of Libya and achieve the aspirations of its people for development, prosperity, the elimination of terrorist organizations and an end to foreign intervention in their affairs.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates its long-standing position regarding the need to foster a culture of peace and preventive diplomacy in order to prevent conflict and promote the values of tolerance and coexistence so as to achieve security and prosperity for the peoples of the world.

Annex 21**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, Rabab Fatima**

I would like to commend the Russian Federation presidency of the Security Council for its successful stewardship of the work of the Council in October. I would also like to thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, for his comprehensive briefing on, and continued commitment, to peace in the Middle East, including Palestine.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement submitted by the United Arab Emirates on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (annex 48).

While the entire world is overburdened with the challenges of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the people of Palestine under occupation face not only the challenge of the virus but an even bigger crisis due to the ongoing and escalating illegal policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power. Israel continues to exploit the pandemic, aggressively advancing its settlement colonization and annexation schemes, entrenching its 53-year military occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Just a few days ago, on 14 and 15 October, the Israeli Government approved the construction of another 5,000 settlement units in the occupied territory, primarily in areas deep inside the West Bank. We remain deeply troubled by the continuation of such illegal practices by Israel, which are tantamount to grave violations of human rights of the Palestinian people. We call upon the international community to impress upon Israel the necessity of halting its systematic violation of international humanitarian law and human rights principles.

Deplorable humanitarian and socioeconomic conditions in Gaza resulting from Israel's 13-year blockade, which has inflicted severe deprivation and hunger on Gaza's 2 million inhabitants, have been worsened by hyperunemployment and dismal basic services, particularly in the context of the pandemic. Added to this misery, there have been increased incidents of demolition of Palestinian structures, settlement expansion and settler violence in West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. These will further exacerbate the economic and humanitarian impact of the spread of COVID-19 in Gaza and the West Bank.

All the foregoing actions by Israel constitute egregious violations of international law, including the United Nations Charter and the Fourth Geneva Convention. They directly contravene all relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016). Israel must cease demolitions and seizures of Palestinian property and should allow Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, to develop their communities, in line with this resolution.

Our own struggle for independence and the painful experience of enduring the worst form of genocide in 1971 has inspired us to always advocate in favour of the oppressed people of the world. This has been the very premise of Bangladesh's unwavering support for the cause of Palestine.

As a clear manifestation of our unwavering support for the people of Palestine, we fully endorse the calls to ensure the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the rights of self-determination, and the achievement of a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The international community must turn the culture of inaction around and stop allowing impunity. It must prevail upon Israel to end its occupation of Palestinian territory. Bangladesh reiterates that the lack of accountability for Israel's ongoing violations has only encouraged such impunity, which is undermining any potential

to achieve a just and peaceful solution in accordance with the relevant resolutions and other peace initiatives.

We join the international community in condemning these acts and asking Israel to refrain from such actions. We also ask for maintaining the sanctity of Islamic and Christian holy places, particularly the Al-Aqsa Mosque, at all costs.

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, we expect the Security Council to fulfil its Charter obligations by enforcing its resolutions, in particular resolution 2334 (2016). As we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, we must strive to resolve the Palestinian crisis in order to preserve the trust of current and future generations in multilateralism and the Organization.

Annex 22**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations**

Brazil would like to thank the Russian presidency for convening today's quarterly debate on the situation in the Middle East. It would also like to thank the briefer.

The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains relevant to peace and stability in the Middle East. The recent announcement of the normalization of Israel's relations with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and the Sudan is an important step towards improving dialogue and diplomacy in the region. We welcome this historical decision and acknowledge the role of the United States with respect to it.

Building on the momentum generated by the signing of the accords, we encourage the parties to resume negotiations and engage in new and creative diplomatic efforts in order to achieve a just and comprehensive settlement. Brazil reiterates its support for a negotiated two-State solution, with Israelis and Palestinians living side by side in peace and security in two democratic and sovereign States. Strengthening the democratic legitimacy of Palestinian institutions is a key element for achieving a solution based on the existence of two democratic and sovereign States. We therefore commend the Palestinian Authority's commitment to holding parliamentary and presidential elections. We hope they can take place soon.

Brazil welcomes the launching of discussions on the delineation of the Lebanon-Israel maritime boundary following the framework agreement announced on 1 October. Having had the privilege of being commander of the Maritime Task Force of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon for almost 10 years now, Brazil understands the importance of a mutually agreed outcome on this sensitive topic and hopes to see continued progress in this regard.

The conflict in Syria has reached its tenth year and continues unabated, with an increasing toll on human life. The situation is made worse by the spread of the pandemic and its effects on the economic well-being of the most vulnerable populations. Accordingly, the humanitarian exemptions for any sanctions programme in relation to Syria must be closely followed, in order to ensure that they do not undermine access to food and essential health supplies. The protection of civilians, including humanitarian and medical personnel, and compliance with international humanitarian law, must also remain a priority.

Brazil once again underscores its support for the work of Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and encourages the members of the Constitutional Committee to bridge their differences in order to ensure progress on the political track. We remain convinced 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 lasting peace and provide relief for the suffering of the Syrian population.

Brazil remains deeply concerned at the worsening of the humanitarian situation in Yemen, where the threat of famine is once again looming, intensified by locust infestation and the COVID-19 pandemic. The continued clashes around the country are also a cause of great concern, particularly the Houthi offensive on Marib.

Urgent action is also needed with regard to the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, and we join our voices to those calling for the Houthis to facilitate access for experts to conduct an assessment-and-repair mission, in order to prevent a potential environmental disaster from occurring in Yemen and beyond.

We urge all parties to agree on a nationwide ceasefire and to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access, including by keeping the Sana'a airport open for relief flights. We call on all parties to fully implement the Stockholm Agreement and to engage with the Special Envoy Martin Griffiths. We commend the parties, as well as the Special Envoy and the International Committee of the Red Cross, for the recent successful exchange of over 1,000 prisoners of war. We hope that this constructive spirit continues to guide negotiations on the United Nations peace proposals.

Brazil welcomes the resumption of inclusive intra-Libyan talks through the convening of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum in November in Tunisia. Building on months of extensive consultations, the Libya Political Dialogue Forum is a unique opportunity for generating consensus around a unified governance framework for Libyan institutions. We hope that progress on the political track will have an impact on the situation on the ground and help to consolidate a lasting and comprehensive ceasefire. The arms embargo is also an indispensable element to de-escalate the conflict, and we reiterate our call for its full implementation.

We welcome the ceasefire agreement recently signed by the 5+5 Joint Military Commission in Libya, which will bring much-needed respite to the Libyan people. We hope that it can pave the way for the implementation of other confidence-building measures and allow further progress in the peace process.

Brazil reiterates that long-term political stability and economic prosperity are mutually reinforcing and that regional socioeconomic development can be achieved only through the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Safeguarding religious freedom should also be kept a high priority, for minority communities often have to withstand the most violence and persecution of any groups. We stand ready to contribute to any diplomatic effort directed at promoting a more peaceful and prosperous Middle East.

Annex 23**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in today's open debate and to be able to express our solidarity with a region of the world that we know needs multilateral support to finally achieve a sustainable peace that has been desired for so long.

This year, with the multidimensional crisis triggered by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, we have witnessed the urgency for this land to achieve a solution involving two autonomous, sovereign and independent States living in peace within recognized borders, with the decisions and agreements of the United Nations serving as the basis for a direct agreement between the parties. We also believe that this process should be in line with prevention and sustainable peace promoted by the United Nations and focused on people, addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and, particularly in the contexts of global, regional and local crises, of those who have been disproportionately affected, such as women and girls, through strengthening the protection and promotion of human rights, in a manner that is sensitive to gender and to conflict.

In this regard, we recognize the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) as key and emphasize that it is one of the United Nations agencies with the greatest support from the General Assembly for its operational activities, which we understand as a recognition of the Agency's crucial work in the field and its associated impact on international peace and security issues in a geopolitically convulsive, complex and volatile region.

UNRWA plays a key role in health care, education and infrastructure, for the protection of 5.6 million Palestinian refugees. In particular, at present, UNRWA provides vital assistance in the multilateral response to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, despite the fact that the Agency's financial precariousness has worsened and been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. We therefore reiterate our country's support for the work of UNRWA, as we have done in the Fourth Committee, and we hope that its financial sustainability will become a reality through support from the Member States. In today's debate, we highlight the role of civil society, youth and women in the Middle East and underline the importance of their integration for cooperation, capacity-building and support networks at local, regional and international levels.

We reiterate our commitment to international law and the multilateral proposals designed to achieve sustainable peace. Further, as called for by the Secretary-General himself, we support and welcome initiatives that strengthen the work done on behalf of the two-State solution on the understanding that it is our duty as the international community to create the networks that will assist the parties in reaching that objective.

Annex 24**Statement by the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Cheikh Niang**

First, I would like to congratulate the Russian Federation on its professional handling of this month's presidency of the Security Council in the face of current challenges owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

As the United Nations recently marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Charter, the question of Palestine, whose fate is inherently bound to the history and existence of the Organization, tragically remains unresolved. Today, while their territory remains under continuing occupation and millions of Palestinian refugees remain exiled from their homes, the Palestinian people faces ever-increasing new challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the loss of Palestinian lives. Compounded by social distress, economic downturn and concerns about recent developments, including Israel's ongoing annexation threats, the situation put a just and durable solution of the question of Palestine into deep peril.

Since my last statement to the Council in July (S/2020/736, annex 24), the signing of agreements between Israel and the United Arab Emirates on 15 September and between Israel and Bahrain on 18 October, has brought a change in relations in the Middle East. The State of Palestine subsequently rejected these agreements because, while they ostensibly purported to halt Israeli de jure annexation plans of more Palestinian territory, the Palestinian people had been excluded from the process. The threat of annexation and occupation of their territory remains intact, as do the colonization measures that entrench the occupation and facilitate annexation — all in grave breach of international law.

As some States Members of the United Nations and their partners expressed concern about the unilateral character of these agreements, others welcomed the decision by Israel to suspend its planned annexation and called for the permanent halting of annexation plans and measures. The Secretary-General expressed the hope that the agreements could create an opportunity for Israeli and Palestinian leaders to re-engage in meaningful negotiations to realize a two-State solution in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements. Later, at the general debate of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly in September, we heard numerous statements reaffirming support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and freedom, in favour of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders and firmly opposing Israeli annexation.

The Committee calls for the total halt of any annexation plans by Israel, the occupying Power, and supports any initiatives, including a possible international peace conference, as repeatedly called for by Palestinian President Abbas, under the auspices of an expanded Quartet, which would allow for the re-engagement of the parties and the launch of a credible political horizon. The goal of seeing Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security along the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian State remains unchanged; we must redouble our efforts in that direction and prevent that the current health emergency and socioeconomic crisis push this issue to the backburner.

Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov, in his 29 September briefing to the Security Council (see S/PV.8762), stated that the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) had not seen any significant progress. Israel's continued military occupation of Palestinian territory is facilitating illegal settlement activity, which is a situation confirmed by the Special Coordinator's follow-up warning statement of 15 October issued in response to Israel's advancing plans to illegally build nearly 5,000 settlement units in locations deep inside the occupied West Bank. Settlement

construction is illegal under international law, remains one of the major obstacles to peace and must stop.

A spike in expropriations, seizures and demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures was also reported, together with daily violence, including Israeli settler violence, against Palestinian civilians. At the same time, rockets continued to be fired from Gaza into Israel, highlighting a persistent risk of military escalation, which must be prevented at all costs. The arrest and imprisonment of Palestinian civilians, including children, by Israel, as well as the use of administrative detention, also continue and the abuse and neglect of Palestinian prisoners persist. We call on Israel to halt such illegal actions.

The Committee remains concerned by the \$200-million financial shortfall faced by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) at a time when the needs of the 5.6 million Palestine refugees supported by the Agency are increasing due to the global pandemic. We urge donors to provide UNRWA with sufficient and predictable funding for its vital core activities and emergency appeals.

The Committee notes with concern the rising COVID-19 infection rates in the occupied Palestinian territory, as well as in Israel, and urges increased support by the donor community to address the increased needs and vulnerabilities of the population in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza.

The Committee is heartened by the recent steps taken towards Palestinian unity and welcomes plans to hold legislative and presidential elections in the occupied Palestinian territory in the near future.

The 2020 report of the Committee, contained in document A/75/35 and enclosed in a letter of transmittal dated 1 September 2020, provides a list of recommendations to advance efforts aimed at achieving a just solution to the question of Palestine, including actions by the Committee, other intergovernmental bodies, including the Human Rights Council, Member States, regional organizations and United Nations entities, enhanced advocacy and outreach activities with the international community and civil society, and specific support action in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Committee welcomes the Secretary-General's clear position on the question of Palestine, based on international law, countless United Nations resolutions and the pursuit of a just solution, which echoes our own long-held stance on the matter.

Let me conclude by reaffirming the need for our collective show of solidarity with the Palestinian people and their resilience and our commitment to continuing to exert our best efforts towards the achievement of a just, comprehensive and durable solution to their cause. In that regard, the Committee invites all Member States to attend this year's commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 1 December and for all to use that special event to recommit to, and revitalize our collective efforts towards, resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which remains the key to lasting peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

Annex 25**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations, Maritza Chan Valverde**

At the outset, let me express Costa Rica's appreciation to the Russian Federation for organizing this open debate and to Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov for his briefing.

Costa Rica welcomes the signing of the Abraham accords between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and between Israel and Bahrain. We also welcome the recent announcements made by Israel and the Sudan on the normalization of relations and by Hamas and Fatah regarding the agreement to hold legislative and presidential elections in Palestine — the first elections in almost 15 years.

Furthermore, Costa Rica commends Israel and Lebanon for convening their first negotiations in 30 years on non-security issues. In Libya, my delegation recognizes the significance of the permanent ceasefire agreement between the Government of National Accord and the Libyan Arab Armed Forces. We commend the mediation efforts within the framework of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission with talks facilitated by Mrs. Stephanie Turco Williams, Acting Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya. We urge the parties to fully implement the agreement, disengage from outside influences, curb incitement to violence, open transportation routes and build on other areas of mutual interest in order to achieve a better and more peaceful future for all Libyans. Despite those positive developments, my delegation would like to reiterate three concerns.

First, Costa Rica expresses its deep concern over the recent announcement by Israel regarding the continued expansion of settlements in the occupied West Bank and in areas in and around Jerusalem. Costa Rica reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policies and continued demolitions, seizures, evictions, dispossession and confiscation of Palestinian homes and structures in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. We reiterate that those settlements are illegal under international law and also undermine the viability of the two-State solution and the prospect of lasting peace in the region. We also call on the parties to fully comply with resolution 2334 (2016).

Secondly, Costa Rica also reiterates its concern about the ongoing humanitarian crisis faced by Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, where more than 38 per cent of Gazans live in poverty and 50 per cent are unemployed. In that vein, Costa Rica would like to highlight the remarkable work carried out by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) despite the pandemic caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the economic constraints that the Agency faces. We reiterate our commitment to and support for UNRWA's mission, which provides services of the highest quality and supports nearly 5.6 million Palestinian refugees so that they can live more secure and productive lives.

Costa Rica is also extremely concerned about the increase in violent incidents against civilians throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Adequate steps must be taken to prevent acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, incitement, hate speech and property destruction, especially the excessive use of force by Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians. We also condemn the firing of rockets, drones and missiles into Israel and reiterate our strong support for Israel's security. Let us be clear — civilians are not a target, and they must never be a target. We therefore encourage the Council to work together with the relevant United Nations bodies to uphold the principle of the protection of civilians in situations of armed conflict.

Thirdly, Costa Rica believes that the Security Council should not continue with its routine of convening briefings and debates without sufficient follow-up. We again call on the Council to assert its mandate under the Charter of the United Nations and act as a matter of urgency to bring an end to the Israeli occupation. Setting timelines and parameters to make the two-State solution a reality is critical. Moreover, we strongly believe that the Security Council must look at ways in which to build mutual confidence between the parties. In that regard, we must not ignore the huge potential of women and young people to contribute to the resolution of this conflict, and we greatly appreciate that women's involvement in political and peace processes will be reaffirmed by the Council later this month when it marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000).

Costa Rica hopes that the recent agreements signed between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and the Sudan will open the door for a new chapter of peace talks in the region, in which the parties will have an opportunity to re-engage in serious, meaningful and direct negotiations, based on international law and agreed parameters, and in close collaboration with the Middle East Quartet. The success of such negotiations goes hand in hand with a definitive commitment by Israel to taking the annexation of Palestinian territories off the table and ending its settlement policy.

A just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is long overdue. We will continue to spare no effort to turn our ambition, namely, the creation of a sovereign, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, living in peace and security side by side with Israel, into a reality. The Security Council has a key role to play in that endeavour. Indeed, if the Council had been responsible all along in implementing its own resolutions, peace in the region would likely already be a reality.

Annex 26**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations, Pedro Luis Pedrosa Cuesta**

[Original: Spanish]

We endorse the statement submitted by Azerbaijan on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM) (annex 19).

A global epidemic has dramatically changed daily life. The impact of the coronavirus disease requires from us a dynamic, coordinated and effective response based on complementarity, cooperation and solidarity. The long-desired right of humankind to live in peace and security, with justice and freedom, which is the basis of coexistence among nations, is constantly threatened.

We reiterate our deep concern about its impact on the countries of the Middle East, and we call for the avoidance of any action that could lead to the further deterioration of stability and security in that region, in particular for the Palestinian people, whose situation is increasingly worsening.

Israel continues its occupation of the Palestinian territory, its policies of annexation, the increase in illegal settlement practices and measures, including the construction and expansion of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, punitive demolitions, the seizure of property from Palestinian institutions, the forced displacement of hundreds of civilians and the blockade on the Gaza Strip.

We call for a just solution to the conflict in the Middle East, which requires the genuine exercise of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to establish their own State within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. That entails responsible action by the United States and an end to impunity for Israel's crimes and its policy of annexation.

We condemn Israel's attempts to annex new territories in the West Bank, which constitutes a threat to the future of the Palestinian State after many years of negotiation, in clear violation of international law and human rights.

We once again call on the Security Council to shoulder the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security entrusted to it by the Charter of the United Nations and to demand that Israel immediately and completely cease all its settlement policies and practices. It is worrying that recently no measures have been taken to put an end to the Israeli military aggression and occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, in accordance with resolution 2334 (2016) adopted by the Council, which remains silent while Israel consolidates its policy of expansion of illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory and threatens to annex the Palestinian territories in the Jordan Valley and other parts of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

We deplore the precarious situation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East as a result of the withdrawal of United States financial support.

We express our continued solidarity with the Government and the people of Palestine and support for the State of Palestine to be admitted as a full Member of the United Nations.

The aggressive, unilateral and unjustified actions of the United States in the Middle East severely violate the legitimate interests of the Arab and Islamic nations and result in a dangerous escalation in the region.

We reiterate our opposition to the so-called deal of the century drawn up by the current United States Administration, ignoring the two-State solution, which has the historic backing of the United Nations, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and other international actors.

The unilateral action of the United States Government in recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and establishing its diplomatic representation in that city, disregarding its historical status, and the decision to recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Syrian Golan constitute flagrant violations of the United Nations Charter, international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. We once again call for Israel's total and unconditional withdrawal from the Syrian Golan and all occupied Arab territories.

We reaffirm our full support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran and our rejection of the United States withdrawal from the agreement, its attempts to disregard the validity of resolution 2231 (2015), which endorsed the Plan, the reimposition of unilateral sanctions and the military threat against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

We support the pursuit of a peaceful and negotiated solution to the situation inflicted on Syria without external interference and with full respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity. We reiterate our strongest condemnation of the United States sanctions and the implementation of the Caesar Act, which are obstacles to the reconstruction of that country after nine years of war — an undertaking that is made even more difficult given the complex situation of the coronavirus disease. Such measures constitute a serious and flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the human rights of the Syrian people.

It is unacceptable that some countries suffer from the application of arbitrary unilateral coercive measures, in violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. We call for an immediate end, without political constraints, to the illegal unilateral measures imposed against sovereign States, which, in addition to their ongoing impact on the affected countries, make it difficult to deal with the pandemic.

In that complex context, the United States is pursuing a foreign policy aimed at undermining multilateralism and fuelling and promoting conflicts, divisions, chauvinism and supremacist and racist positions, ignoring the call to join forces in combating the pandemic and withdrawing from the World Health Organization.

We support the urgent call of the Secretary-General to end armed conflict, hostilities and the scourge of war and instead create opportunities for diplomacy and cooperation. All wars, including unconventional warfare and low-impact claims, must cease.

For Cuba, the promotion of the right to peace remains a key priority. It is the duty of all States, in particular the members of the Security Council, to uphold multilateralism and the purposes and principles of the Charter, including respect for the sovereign equality of States and their political independence, unity and territorial integrity, the peaceful settlement of disputes, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and refraining from the use or threat of use of force in international relations.

Annex 27**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on the Russian presidency of the Security Council this month. I appreciate your efforts to lead the Council's work in the light of the many challenges facing the international community, particularly the repercussions of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. I am also grateful for the briefing provided by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov.

Egypt associates itself with the statements submitted on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (annex 19), the Group of Arab States (annex 28) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (annex 48).

This year, as we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, which has given the peoples hope that security, peace and stability will be achieved worldwide, we continue to witness the decades-long suffering of the Palestinian people, despite the many resolutions adopted by the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, on that people's right to an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Palestinian people has remained under Israeli occupation and has been denied its right to self-determination. Although negotiations have been held, agreements have been signed and initiatives have been taken on the matter over many years, none has achieved its objective as a result of Israeli practices designed to impose a *fait accompli* and undermine the two-State solution in order to render the independence of a contiguous, viable Palestinian State unattainable.

The world, including the Palestinian people, has faced many challenges recently as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly with regard to efforts to contain the pandemic and provide the necessary medical supplies and materials. In addition, the economic repercussions of the pandemic have affected the ability of all countries, particularly donor countries, to help the Palestinian people.

The settlement activities of Israel, however, have continued. The occupation authorities have persisted in confiscating land, expelling Palestinian citizens, destroying their homes and announcing plans to build more settlement units. At the same time, Israeli settlers have violated the rights of the Palestinian people in the West Bank. Holy sites, particularly Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, have not been spared violent acts, despite the city's centrality to the followers of the world's three monotheistic religions.

Although Israel has announced the suspension of its plans to annex Palestinian land in the West Bank, we hope that it will permanently cancel them, given that any annexation plans violate the rules of international law and international legitimacy, particularly resolution 2334 (2016). Egypt is also calling for a freeze on settlement activity. The continued construction of settlements, such as the recent announcement of 5,000 new settlement units in the West Bank, undermines the chances for establishing a Palestinian State.

Such unilateral measures will only worsen the situation in the occupied territory and the chances for peace, and will adversely affect security and stability throughout the region. They will also lend support to extremist and radical voices that are hostile to peace and coexistence among the peoples of the region.

Egypt has always asserted its constant position concerning the Palestinian people and that people's legitimate right to an independent State based on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. In the light of current developments, Egypt believes that the only way to uphold the rights of the Palestinian people is to halt Israeli practices in the West Bank and lift the blockade on the Gaza Strip. Those steps would create a climate conducive to the resumption of negotiations on the basis of a two-State solution, the Arab Peace Initiative, international law and internationally recognized resolutions.

The other crises in the Middle East are not faring much better than the question of Palestine. Our region is increasingly affected by a dogmatic terrorist project that uses religion as a smokescreen to seize and monopolize power, destroying the principles of the nation-State and citizenship, without regard to the cost to the peoples of the region. It is regrettable that the United Nations and its organs continue to turn a blind eye to the crude and destructive actions of the Governments of a limited number of States in the region in support of these warped designs, while those States continue to spread terrorism, chaos and sectarian divisions, flouting the most important principles of international law.

Those malicious schemes are doomed to fail. In the end, the solutions that will prevail are those that serve the interests of the peoples of the region and meet their aspirations for security and development through sovereign democratic States that respect the principles of citizenship and do not use religion as a smokescreen for political ambitions or expansionist fantasies.

Egypt endorses the call for a global ceasefire, including the appeal made at an early stage by the Secretary-General, to enable the peoples of the region to address pandemic-related developments and lay the groundwork for a comprehensive political process based on the terms of reference set out in the relevant Security Council resolutions on resolving protracted regional conflicts. The United Nations must ensure that efforts aimed at peacefully resolving the crises in Syria and Yemen are guided by the peoples of those countries, free from foreign interference or dictates. Egypt also supports the efforts of the Special Envoys of the Secretary-General for Syria and Yemen to reach a political settlement, a comprehensive ceasefire and the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions, and emphasizes the need for the Security Council to play a more active role in efforts for the political settlement of those crises, which may help to establish conditions for the voluntary and safe return of refugees.

Egypt reiterates its deep concern at the alarming findings set out in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015) (S/2020/531), published in June. Those findings relate to the origin of smuggled weapons seized en route to Yemen, as well as to the missiles and uncrewed aerial vehicles used in attacks on vital facilities in Saudi Arabia last year — attacks that Egypt condemned in the strongest terms.

Egypt maintains its firm position in support of the political settlement of the Libyan crisis under the aegis of the United Nations and in accordance with the conclusions of the Berlin Conference. That position is that a ceasefire must be established and hostilities must cease on the Sirte-Jufrah line, as stated by Egypt on more than one occasion. In order to complement the continued efforts of Egypt to support the political resolution of the Libyan issue — efforts that have included the Cairo declaration and the hosting of meetings of tribal elders and other leaders — the meetings of the Libyan military dialogue, which served as the first official talks between the Libyan National Army and the Government of National Accord and, to a great extent, paved the way for the meetings of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission

in Geneva, were jointly hosted by Egypt and the United Nations in the city of Ghardaqah this month.

In that connection, Egypt believes that the best use must be made of the current opportunity to stabilize the ceasefire and stimulate Libyan political dialogue, with Libyans themselves playing a key role in shaping the future of their country and approving any future security arrangements. Under those arrangements, all foreign forces and mercenaries will need to leave Libya and well-known regional parties will need to stop playing a dubious role in undermining the security and stability of Libya and the entire region by transferring foreign terrorist fighters and mercenaries there to play roles that serve their own narrow self-interests.

The time has come, 75 years after the founding of the United Nations, for the Security Council to assume its role in maintaining international peace and security, fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of the region to live in security and peace, preserve the region's resources, rather than squander them in conflicts, and guide efforts to build a better tomorrow for those peoples and for future generations.

Annex 28**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations on behalf of the Group of Arab States**

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on the Russian presidency of the Security Council this month. I appreciate your efforts to lead the Council's work in the light of the many challenges facing the international community, particularly the repercussions of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. I am also grateful for the briefing given by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

The Palestinian question is one of the most prominent issues addressed by the United Nations in the 75 years since its establishment. The justness of that cause, however, has not enabled the Palestinian people to enjoy its legitimate rights, or the Middle East region to enjoy peace. It remains a central issue for all peoples of the region.

Over the decades, there have been many developments in the Palestinian issue. A process was put in place with a view to finding a peaceful solution based on the internationally recognized resolutions. Numerous negotiations took place, agreements were signed and initiatives were taken. Yet the result that had been hoped for, namely, an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, has not been achieved.

The Arab States had hoped that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, would have improved in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which created new challenges for all States of the world, including the Palestinian people. Instead, it has deteriorated: Israel's actions have intensified since the outbreak of the pandemic. Everyone had hoped that the Secretary-General's call for a ceasefire in all international crises would have been heeded so that peaceful solutions could be sought and the pandemic addressed.

The Arab States have repeatedly stressed that there can be no path to peace in the Middle East without the Palestinian people exercising its legitimate right to an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Israeli practices that undermine the prospects for peace, particularly settlement construction, must come to an end. The occupation authorities have confiscated more land, displaced Palestinian citizens and demolished their homes, and announced plans to build more settlement units, including, most recently, a plan to build 5,000 new units. Israeli settlers have continued to violate the rights of the Palestinian people in the West Bank. Holy sites, particularly in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, have been subjected to practices that undermine the status quo in the holy city.

Unilateral measures will cause the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, to deteriorate further, and the prospects for peace to recede. They will also have a negative impact on the security and stability of the region as a whole, give succour to hard-line and extremist voices and undermine the prospects of an independent, contiguous and viable Palestinian State. The Group urges Israel to cancel any plan to definitively annex Palestinian territory in the West Bank, as such plans are a clear breach of international humanitarian law and the internationally recognized resolutions, particularly resolution 2334 (2016).

The Group of Arab States stresses that it remains committed to its long-standing position that the Palestinian people has a legitimate right to an independent State on the borders of 4 July 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the internationally recognized resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the principle of land for peace on the basis of the two-State solution.

The Group of Arab States will continue to work for peace, security and stability in the occupied Arab territory, including East Jerusalem, and across the Middle East region. The Group values the ongoing efforts of King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, Custodian of Islamic and Christian Holy Sites in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, to achieve peace and preserve the historical and legal status quo in the holy sites, particularly the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The Group also appreciates the ongoing efforts of King Mohammed VI of Morocco, who chairs the Al-Quds Committee. The Group welcomes the fact that, on 30 March 2019 in Rabat, King Mohammed VI and Pope Francis signed the appeal for Jerusalem calling for Jerusalem to be a city of peace, fraternity, tolerance and coexistence among followers of the three monotheistic religions.

Peace can be achieved in the Middle East only once the Palestinian people can fully exercise its legitimate and inalienable rights, the Israeli practices in the occupied territory come to an end and the blockade on the Gaza Strip is lifted, with a view to creating an environment conducive to negotiations on the basis of the internationally recognized resolutions and the agreed terms of reference. The Group appreciates all international efforts towards that goal, particularly those of the Quartet.

We also cannot fail to commend the ongoing efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and its new leadership to provide the necessary support for Palestine refugees and meet their financial burden, which has increased owing to the pandemic, not to mention the considerable work that has been done to develop the Agency's working methods. The Group is therefore grateful to all donor States and calls on them to continue providing multi-year funding so that UNRWA can continue to fully discharge its mandate to help Palestine refugees pending a just solution to the Palestinian question in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

The Group looks forward to the day when the Palestinian people can exercise its right to self-determination and an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. That outcome would bring an end to the decades-long suffering of the Palestinian people and enable the people of the region to enjoy security and peace.

Annex 29**Statement by the Head of Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, Olof Skoog**

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania and the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina align themselves with this statement.

The European Union remains united in its commitment to achieving a two-State solution that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967 and resolves all permanent-status issues in order to end the conflict.

The EU welcomes the announcement of the normalization of the relations between the State of Israel and the United Arab Emirates and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Israel's commitment to suspend plans to unilaterally annex areas of the occupied Palestinian territory is a positive step. Any unilateral decision that undermines a lasting, agreed solution should be avoided. The EU reiterates that any annexation would constitute a serious violation of international law.

The EU remains ready to support the Israelis and the Palestinians in efforts to resume meaningful negotiations on all final-status issues in order to achieve a just and lasting peace. The EU will continue to support all efforts to help resume credible negotiations.

The EU reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy, which is illegal under international law, and actions taken in this context, such as demolitions and confiscations, including of humanitarian structures and EU-funded projects, evictions and forced transfers. The EU calls on Israel to halt continued settlement expansion and demolitions in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, especially in sensitive areas, such as Har Homa, Givat Hamatos and E-1, which seriously threaten the two-State solution.

The violence and loss of human lives in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel remain of deep concern for the EU. The Palestinian population continues to face repeated human rights violations and abuses. The EU recalls the importance of unhindered work of civil society organizations, both in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The worsening humanitarian and human rights situation in the Gaza Strip remains of grave concern, and the EU calls for an end to the closure and a full opening of the crossing points, while addressing Israel's security concerns, and unimpeded access for humanitarian actors.

The EU firmly condemns the increased launching of rockets and incendiary balloons and other attacks from the Gaza Strip targeting civilians in Israel, as well as terrorist attacks, and any other form of violence, including a continued upward trend of settler-related incidents, and incitement on all sides. While recalling Israel's right to defend its legitimate security interests, the EU expects the Israeli authorities to fully meet their obligations under international human rights and international humanitarian law, not least in these difficult times of the coronavirus pandemic, including with regard to Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons.

The Palestinian Legislative Council was dissolved in December 2018. Strong, inclusive, accountable and functioning democratic Palestinian institutions based on

respect for the rule of law and human rights are vital for the two-State solution. In that context, taking note of the recent announcement regarding elections, a date should be set very soon for elections in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in the Gaza Strip. The EU calls upon all Palestinian factions to unequivocally commit to democratic principles prior to the elections.

The EU reiterates its deep and genuine appreciation for the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and for its dedicated staff, who are working in an extremely difficult and challenging context. UNRWA is an essential provider of vital services to millions of Palestinian refugees and a stabilizing force in the region. Until a just, fair, agreed and realistic solution to the Palestinian refugee issue in accordance with international law is found, UNRWA remains crucial for providing the necessary protection and essential services to Palestinian refugees, and we will continue to support it in all its fields of operation, including in East Jerusalem. The EU welcomes the additional financial support from other and new donors and calls upon all partners to increase their contributions to UNRWA.

The EU recalls that a lasting solution to the conflict must be achieved on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions; the Madrid principles, including land for peace; the road map; the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition. The EU reiterates its fundamental commitment to the security of Israel, including with regard to the current and emerging threats in the region.

The EU strongly opposes all actions that undermine the viability of the two-State solution and urges both sides to demonstrate, through policies and actions, a genuine commitment to a two-State solution in order to rebuild trust and create a path back to meaningful negotiations.

Allow me to turn to the situation in Syria.

The Syrian conflict is now in its tenth year and is still marked by persistent violations and abuses of international law, including abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law, by all parties, particularly by the Syrian regime and its allies. The crisis continues to have profound repercussions on the overall stability of the entire region. The human devastation of the country endures. The strain of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic adds to the gravity of the situation.

In the north-west of Syria, the situation remains fragile. The EU reiterates its call on all parties to uphold the present ceasefire so as to guarantee the protection of civilians on the ground and from air strikes.

The EU continues to call upon the Syrian regime and its allies to fully respect international humanitarian law and in particular to permanently cease indiscriminate air strikes against and the shelling of civilians. The EU also notes with concern the ongoing insecurity in the north-east of Syria and reiterates its call for the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire, in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

The EU insists further that the Syrian regime must fully cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), including its investigations of the use of chemical weapons in the conflict, and deplores the lack of cooperation of the Syrian regime, as shown by the report of the OPCW's Director General released on 14 October following the July 2020 Executive Council decision. As set out in that decision, it will now be the duty of the Conference of the States Parties to decide on a further course of action, and we call on all States parties

to fulfil their responsibility and uphold the credibility of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Respect for international humanitarian law must be ensured at all times and in all circumstances. We reiterate that the use of chemical weapons is a violation of international law and unacceptable under any circumstances, and that impunity for the use of chemical weapons must not and will not be tolerated.

While the EU welcomed the decision by the Security Council on 10 July to extend the authorization for cross-border humanitarian assistance to people in need in Syria for a further 12 months, the authorization of only one crossing point, in the north-west, is disappointing. The EU continues to demand that all parties in conflict, in particular the Syrian regime, allow safe, unimpeded and sustained access for the humanitarian convoys to the Syrian population in need in all parts of the country.

Turkey is a key partner of the European Union and a critically important actor in the Syrian crisis and the region. Turkey's security concerns in north-east Syria should be addressed through political and diplomatic means, not with military action, and in accordance with international humanitarian law.

The EU remains committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian State and recalls that any sustainable solution to the conflict requires a genuine political transition in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) negotiated by the Syrian parties within the United Nations-led Geneva process.

All those responsible for breaches of international law and human rights law, some of which may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, must be held accountable. The EU reiterates its call to have the situation in Syria referred to the International Criminal Court. In the absence of avenues for international justice, the prosecution of war crimes under national jurisdiction where possible and the recent initiative of the Netherlands to invoke Syria's responsibility for human rights violations represent an important contribution towards securing justice. Moreover, we will continue to support efforts to gather evidence with a view to future legal action, including by the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. The EU further welcomes the report of the Commission of Inquiry and expresses its concern about the report's findings

The EU fully supports the efforts of United Nations Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and has welcomed the establishment of the Syrian-led Constitutional Committee under United Nations auspices. A third round of talks took place at the end of August this year, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU urges the Syrian regime to return to the negotiating table as soon as circumstances allow a fourth round to be held and to engage in the Committee's work in good faith and with the aim of making progress. The EU reiterates that all elements of resolution 2254 (2015) must be implemented, including the issue of detainees and missing persons and the establishment of a safe and neutral environment in order for free and fair elections to be held under United Nations supervision.

Regarding the situation of refugees and of internally displaced persons, the EU continues to voice strong concern about reports of social and demographic engineering in all areas throughout Syria and mass waves of displacement, inter alia, in parts of the north-west and north-east. The EU insists that their return to their places of origin can be encouraged only if it can take place in a safe, voluntary and dignified manner, in line with the parameters defined by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and in accordance with international law. That was also agreed by all participants in the fourth Brussels Conference on Syria and

the region at the end of June. The underlying causes of the refugee and displacement crisis must be addressed through the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015).

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.

Annex 30**Statement by the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, T.S. Tirumurti**

I thank the President of the Security Council for having convened this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

It is an unfortunate reality that the interlinked and mutually reinforcing challenges faced by the people of the Middle East have not yet been resolved. Political instability, long-festering conflicts, sectarian divides, the issue of refugees and terrorism continue to plague the region. The coronavirus disease pandemic has only exacerbated the threats posed by those challenges.

India wishes to highlight the fact that Palestinian aspirations to a sovereign and independent State are yet to be fulfilled. India has been unwavering in its commitment to the Palestinian cause and remains supportive of a peaceful, negotiated resolution of the Palestinian issue.

India has supported the two-State solution as a just and acceptable solution to the conflict. The establishment of a Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel, within mutually agreed borders, should be achieved through negotiations directly by the two parties. Any stalemate could strengthen the hands of extremists and shut the door to cooperation, thereby jeopardizing the security, stability and prosperity of the peoples on both sides and the region. Accordingly, India urges Israel and Palestine to resume direct negotiations at the earliest. The international community is called upon to take concrete steps towards resuming and facilitating those negotiations quickly.

India has always welcomed and has actively participated in various international initiatives on the Middle East peace Process. India also appreciates the efforts made by the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator, Nickolay Mladenov, the Middle East Quartet and other countries in the region to kickstart the stalled negotiations. In that regard, India supports President Mahmoud Abbas's call for an international conference organized by the Secretary-General to engage all concerned parties in a meaningful peace process.

India appreciates the agreement between Fatah and Hamas for the holding of parliamentary and presidential elections and also elections for the Palestinian National Council, which will help fulfil the democratic aspirations of the Palestinian people. Similarly, the truce between Israel and Hamas has eased the humanitarian situation in Gaza. India hopes that the temporary truce will be converted into a permanent ceasefire, which can save precious human lives on both sides and create a conducive environment for talks.

We welcome the agreements for the normalization of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. India has always supported peace and stability in West Asia, which is our extended neighbourhood.

The decade-long armed conflict in Syria has claimed more than 400,000 lives, displaced 6.2 million people internally and compelled another 6.3 million people to seek shelter in neighbouring countries. Some 2.5 million children have been deprived of schooling, and 50 per cent of the infrastructure has been destroyed. Surging inflation, a near-halt in economic activities and severe sanctions have accentuated the humanitarian crisis. While we are heartened to see the return of normalcy to major parts of the country, we are also reminded of the enormous resources that would be required to provide urgent humanitarian aid, rebuild the infrastructure, enable the return of the refugees and restore a normal and dignified life to all Syrians. India is not only contributing to the return of normalcy and the rebuilding of Syria

but has also consistently called for a comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the Syrian conflict through a Syrian-led dialogue, taking into account the legitimate aspirations of the people of Syria. In that context, we remain supportive of both the Geneva and Astana processes.

India remains concerned about the security and humanitarian situation in Yemen. The recent exchange by the Government of Yemen and Ansar Allah of prisoners who had been detained in connection with the conflict is a welcome development. India hopes that the parties will take more confidence-building measures to provide the necessary impetus for the full implementation of the Stockholm Agreement. India also encourages all parties to engage constructively with the United Nations Special Envoy, Martin Griffiths, for the early finalization of the joint declaration, paving the way for a peaceful political transition in Yemen. India also hopes for peace and stability in Iraq, with full respect for Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In the aftermath of the 4 August blast that brought destruction to vast swathes of Beirut and inflicted a heavy loss of life, India stood in solidarity with Lebanon. We sent more than 58 metric tonnes of emergency humanitarian aid to Beirut. We look forward to the swift formation of a new Government that can offer political stability and also tackle the grave socioeconomic challenges being faced by the people of Lebanon.

The commencement of discussions on the disputed border between Israel and Lebanon is a significant development. I am hopeful that this will provide an opportunity to resolve the longstanding issue between the two countries.

India has invested much in the peace and stability of the region by deploying its personnel as part of United Nations peacekeeping forces, through humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and capacity-building, and will continue its contribution towards peacebuilding in the Middle East. India calls on the concerned parties to completely stop support to terrorist forces such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and others. India also urges all parties in the region to work constructively and in good faith to promote peace, stability and development for the benefit of all people in the Middle East.

Annex 31**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, Majid Takht Ravanchi**

Seventy-five years ago, the United Nations officially came into being based on such inherent values as justice, equality, the dignity and worth of the human person and the rule of law, as well as essential principles such as the prohibition of the threat or use of force, along with noble objectives such as international cooperation in solving international problems and employing international machinery for the advancement of all peoples.

During the past 75 years, many nations have benefited from these principles. Nevertheless, unfortunately, the Palestinians have been deprived of such lofty goals despite the fact that the Palestinian question, as the world's longest-lasting crisis, has been at the top of the agendas of the General Assembly and the Security Council since the creation of the United Nations.

As a result, during the past 75 years, the Security Council has been unable to end the decades-long occupation of Palestine, protect the very basic rights of millions of oppressed Palestinians at home and abroad or confront an occupying regime that has committed all four core international crimes, not once but several times.

As is crystal-clear, the main reason behind the Council's failure to fulfil its duties with respect to the question of Palestine is the policies and practices of the United States, which, through violations of the peremptory norms and basic principles of international law, disregarding all standards of international conduct and contravening all principles of humanity and morality, as well as abusing its status as a permanent member of the Council, continues to completely, systematically and unreservedly shield the Israeli regime.

The decades-long inaction by the Security Council has helped the Israeli regime continue all its unlawful acts and inhumane practices with total impunity.

Today, the suffering of the Palestinian people has become manifold as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as well as the intensification of oppressive measures by the Israeli regime, including its continued brazen insistence on further advancing its unlawful expansionist policies, a recent example of which was its decision to construct nearly 5,000 housing units in the West Bank.

The international community has a serious responsibility to do everything in its power to address this crisis and prevent its negative consequences for regional and international peace and security from further deteriorating.

As the body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council has a special responsibility in this regard. To prevent the persistent erosion of trust and confidence in the Security Council, it must act decisively in resolving the question of Palestine, in accordance with the principles of justice and international law.

The international community must also compel the United States to put an end to its irresponsible policy of unreservedly supporting the unlawful acts of the Israeli regime and its complete and systematic shielding of Israel against the Security Council's criticism thus emboldening that regime to continue committing more crimes.

The Israeli regime must also be compelled to put an end to its continued construction and expansion of settlements as well as the sustained inhumane blockade of the Gaza Strip. The latter is more urgent given the outbreak of the COVID-19

pandemic and the Palestinians' dire need of medicine and medical equipment to treat the patients and to prevent further spread of the virus.

Furthermore, the Israeli regime must be compelled to end the occupation of all the Palestinian territories, of the occupied Syrian Golan and of parts of Lebanon, and to stop all its destabilizing activities in the region, including the systematic violation of the sovereignty of Syria and Lebanon.

I would like to reiterate that the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to support the just cause of the Palestinian people and the full realization of all their inalienable rights, including their inherent right to self-determination and to establish an independent Palestinian State encompassing the entirety of Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

In recent years, it has been the standard practice of the Israeli regime to abuse Security Council meetings to accuse others and play the victim, seeking to distract attention from its oppressive practices and crimes against Palestinians and its destabilizing policies in the region. Likewise, the United States, by accusing others, attempts to distract attention from its irresponsible policies and military adventurism in the region. Such deceptive measures must not distract the attention of the Council from the reality that the Israeli regime, as the aggressor and occupier, is the main source of insecurity and instability in the Middle East and beyond and, with the unequivocal support of the United States, continues to commit all its crimes and brutalities.

Annex 32**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations**

I want to thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his frank update. Let me also take this opportunity to pay tribute to his Deputy, Jamie McGoldrick, an Irish citizen, who retired last month. Jamie has spent a distinguished career in the service of the United Nations and we wish him well.

Today, our thoughts and prayers are also with Secretary General Saeb Erekat as he battles the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

Ireland and its European Union (EU) partners share a firm commitment to a negotiated two-State solution that ends the occupation that began in 1967, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, on the basis of international law, including relevant Security Council resolutions. We believe that the Security Council should spare no effort to achieve that goal. Ireland is committed to supporting all constructive efforts. Confidence-building measures that can build trust are vital. The engagement of the parties themselves and that of international partners are critical to enabling a route to inclusive engagement, including through the Quartet mechanism.

Ireland welcomes the efforts towards strengthening Palestinian unity. We also welcome President Abbas's announcement about Palestinian elections, which will allow a new generation to engage in the democratic process. Elections are a vital connection between government and its citizens and are critical to uniting Gaza and the West Bank under a single national authority. We also await with interest the follow-up to President's Abbas's remarks during the General Assembly general debate regarding an international peace conference.

Ireland also welcomes the agreements of Israel with the United Arab Emirates and with Bahrain. Ireland believes, however, that the suspension of Israeli annexation plans over the West Bank should be made permanent.

Ireland reaffirms its long-stated position that all settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory is illegal under international law. Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs condemned the latest announcement of significant further settlement expansion of close to 5,000 new housing units in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The construction of settlements in the Har Homa, Givat Hamatos and El areas undermines the viability and territorial contiguity of a future Palestinian State. Continued settlement activity is not only illegal but corrosive to trust between Palestinians and Israelis.

We urge the Israeli Government to reverse its actions in relation to these settlement plans and halt all settlement construction. We are also extremely concerned at the acceleration in demolition or confiscation of Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank in recent months, notwithstanding the severe impact of COVID-19. We call on Israel to halt demolitions and to allow for legal construction for Palestinian residents.

Ireland is a proud supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), whose programmes deliver essential services to Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory and elsewhere in the region. I call on others in the region and elsewhere to step up and fund UNRWA, whose work needs support now more than ever, facing as it does a shortfall of \$130 million. Ireland is particularly concerned about the situation in the Gaza Strip, where 80 per cent of the population depends on humanitarian assistance. The rise in COVID-19 cases has affected children in Gaza in need of access to life-saving medical treatment. Once again, Ireland calls on Israel to lift the illegal blockade against Gaza.

Ireland stands with the Palestinian and Israeli people as they, too, battle the dreadful virus and the havoc it has wreaked on their lives. I want to pay tribute to the health-care professionals and other front-line workers, including UNRWA and other United Nations agency staff.

Turning to the situation in Syria, where the conflict continues to cause terrible suffering, the only way to bring lasting peace for the Syrian people is through a sustainable, Syrian-owned political process. Ireland and the EU fully supports United Nations Special Envoy Pedersen in his efforts and urges the parties to engage fully with him. In particular, the Syrian authorities should engage positively in a further meeting of the Constitutional Committee. A sustained peace in Syria will require respect for human rights and strong human-rights safeguards. Those responsible for violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law must be held accountable for their actions.

The impact of COVID-19 and worsening economic conditions have made the people of Syria even more vulnerable. We must do all that we can to support the work of humanitarian organizations in reaching those in need, and remain gravely concerned about the major challenges facing United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations with regard to humanitarian access to Syria.

Annex 33**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations, Ishikane Kimihiro**

There have been notable developments since the last open debate in July (S/2020/736), in particular the normalization of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain as well as the Sudan. The suspension of the application of sovereignty over the West Bank by Israel is also a positive gesture. Japan appreciates the mediation efforts of the United States and hopes these events will lead to an easing of tensions and to stability in the region.

Despite such developments, however, the situation on the ground remains worrisome. The Government of Israel has recently approved plans for the construction of about 5,000 housing units in settlements in the West Bank. Japan deeply deplores the continued settlement activities of the Government of Israel, despite repeated calls from the international community, including Japan, to freeze such activities, which are in violation of international law. Such action runs counter to the efforts to provide momentum towards reducing tensions in the region, including through the agreements to normalize bilateral relations.

The Middle East peace issue should be resolved only through negotiations among the parties concerned, and not through violence or unilateral actions. I wish to reaffirm Japan's commitment to supporting a two-State solution based on relevant Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters. Japan will continue to work on building confidence among the parties with a view to the resumption of dialogue, the first step towards a two-State solution.

Intra-Palestinian reconciliation is also imperative for realizing a two-State solution. Japan welcomes the announcement by President Abbas at the general debate last month (see A/75/PV.10) of his intention to hold elections, which should provide a unique opportunity for reconciliation and solidarity among the Palestinian people through the democratic process.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is causing a human-security crisis, threatening people's survival, livelihoods and dignity around the world, including in the Middle East. As always, the most vulnerable people are hit hardest. The increasing number of infections among Palestine refugees is particularly alarming, given their living conditions in overcrowded camps and the limited health services available. Japan commends the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in this regard and expresses its utmost respect for the Agency's front-line workers operating under challenging circumstances.

In addition to its contribution of about \$1.5 million to UNRWA earlier this year in response to the COVID-19 flash appeal, Japan has recently decided to provide approximately \$4.1 million of food assistance through UNRWA. This brings Japan's total contribution to UNRWA in 2020 to approximately \$30 million.

The pandemic calls for short-term humanitarian assistance, as well as medium- to long-term social and economic support. Japan will continue providing necessary assistance to Palestine refugees through UNRWA, with a view to protecting and empowering them and ensuring human security. In this respect, Japan expects UNRWA to continue its efforts to improve and strengthen its management, which is essential for delivering effectively to people in need.

Lastly, we should not forget the importance of improving the overall quality of life in Palestine, even amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Japan has recently decided to provide approximately \$34 million of assistance, which includes food assistance

through the World Food Programme and aid for the construction of schools and improvement of refugee camps. Japan reiterates its continued commitment to the realization of a life of dignity and hope for the Palestinian people.

Annex 34**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Jordan to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

I have the honour to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to thank you for judiciously guiding its work. I would also like to thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, for his valuable briefing.

The quarterly meetings of the Security Council concerning the Palestinian question have continued, and so does the suffering of the Palestinian people under occupation. Since the last meeting, before our very eyes, unilateral Israeli steps to expand settlements have gathered pace, undermining the prospects of a two-State solution, increasing the pressure on the Palestinian people and further curtailing its rights.

The international community should embark on an effective endeavour to end the occupation, bring an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people and achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace on the basis of the two-State solution through direct and genuine negotiations with a view to the establishment of an independent State of Palestine on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international law, the internationally recognized resolutions, the agreed terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative.

There is an urgent need for the international community to take a stand and press Israel to refrain from annexing occupied Palestinian territory and declare a permanent end to such annexation, which contravenes international law and the resolutions of the United Nations, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) and undermines the prospects of peace and a two-State solution.

Israel must put a stop to its illegal unilateral measures, including settlement activities, which violate international law and the internationally recognized resolutions.

Jordan condemns the ongoing Israeli unilateral measures including the threat of annexation of Palestinian territory, the construction and expansion of illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the confiscation of property and demolition of homes, and breaches of the holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem. Those provocative actions violate international law and are pulling the region towards greater tension and conflict.

We also condemn the Israeli Government's decision to build 4,900 new settlement units in the occupied West Bank, in violation of international law, and to persist with its illegal steps that undermine the two-State solution and the prospects of a comprehensive peace. We call for a clear international stance rejecting those steps and pressing for their cessation, for the sake of peace and international law.

A just and lasting peace based on the two-State solution, in accordance with the internationally recognized resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, would do justice to all the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. It is a Jordanian, Palestinian and Arab strategic choice. Jordan will keep working with Arab States and their partners in the international community in order to fulfil that goal. Mindful of the Hashemite dynasty's duty of custodianship, it will also continue its efforts to protect the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem and to preserve the city's legal and historic status.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) must continue to provide its services to Palestine refugees pending a solution to the Palestinian question that would uphold their right of return and compensation in accordance with the internationally recognized resolutions, particularly General Assembly resolution 194 (III), in the context of a comprehensive solution to the conflict on the basis of a two-State solution bringing an end to the occupation that began in 1967. Jordan will continue to cooperate with its partners in the international community and to make every possible effort to garner international political and financial support for UNRWA, enabling it to continue fulfilling its functions, in accordance with its United Nations mandate, for 5.5 million Palestine refugees.

In the middle of this month, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Jordan and Sweden hosted the third ministerial strategic dialogue to garner support for UNRWA, discuss joint efforts in that regard, and find practical ways and means to confront the financial challenges facing the Agency. We urge all States to comply with their commitments as soon as possible, and to increase them if possible, in order to ensure that UNRWA can continue to provide its services and meet urgent needs arising from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

In coordination with its partners in the international community, Jordan will continue to make every possible effort to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace and to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Such a solution is a condition for the realization of security, stability, welfare and prosperity for peoples that aspire to better living conditions and a brighter future. The solution before us is clear: a two-state solution leading to the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, alongside Israel, with East Jerusalem as its capital. This is the only way to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace acceptable to the peoples of the region.

Annex 35**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Kuwait to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Permanent Mission of Russia on successfully steering the work of the Security Council in October 2020. We wish it every success in the remaining meetings of the month. We also thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his valuable briefing.

Today's quarterly open meeting on the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, comes at a time when the international community is continuing its fight against the novel coronavirus, which has spread all around the planet and poses an imminent threat to the survival of humanity as a whole.

Regrettably, in view of that direct existential threat, Israel, the occupying Power, has persisted with its aggressive policies towards the Palestinian people, and continues to give us periodic reminders that it has not renounced its plans to annex more of the West Bank, and that the plans have merely been temporarily suspended. Such policies show yet again that Israel seeks to entrench the occupation by extending its illegal activities and policies through the expansion, construction and establishment of thousands of settlement units and the annexation of land, in an open violation of resolution 2334 (2016). Recent United Nations reports show that settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have escalated since the Israeli Government gave the green light for the construction of thousands of new illegal settlement units.

We are also concerned that, concomitantly with the Israeli authorities authorizing illegal settlement construction, Israeli settlers committed acts of violence against defenceless Palestinian civilians and destroyed Palestinian buildings and property in order to make space for settlements. Those actions will help eliminate the Palestinians' prospects of establishing an independent, contiguous, viable, lasting and sovereign Palestinian State.

In their reports and on numerous occasions, the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights have reported on the prevailing climate of impunity for settlers and those taking over Palestinian land and displacing Palestinian families from their homes. In a recent report of the Secretary-General on Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, it is stated that the Israeli Ministry of Justice has conducted dozens of investigations without convicting a single settler. Such practices require us, more than ever before, to leverage international political and legal mechanisms to hold Israel accountable for the ongoing and constant violations of the rights of the Palestinian people, rights that are guaranteed under international law.

Despite the current exceptional circumstances, Kuwait and the Arab States have worked to confront Israel's attempts to take advantage of the world's concern with the coronavirus and to ignore the humanitarian and global opinion that the aggression, war and blockade should come to an end during these challenging humanitarian conditions. When it met on 9 September, the Council of the League of Arab States at the ministerial level stressed the centrality of the Palestinian cause to the Arab homeland and the Arab character of occupied East Jerusalem. It reiterated that Arab States are committed to peace as a strategic choice, and to reaching a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict consistent with international law, the internationally recognized resolutions and the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, enabling the Palestinian people to exercise its full, legitimate political rights and establish its independent State on its own territory, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Annex 36**Statement by the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, Maged Abdelfattah Abdelaziz**

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on presiding over the Security Council this month and on all your ongoing efforts to support international peace and security, particularly in the Middle East region. I thank the Secretary-General and his Special Coordinator, Nickolay Mladenov, for his outstanding briefings on the developing situation in the Arab region and, in particular, the response of the United Nations to the Palestinian question.

The Palestinian question has always been and will remain the central issue and fulcrum of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Notwithstanding the proliferation of opinions regarding the best way to reach a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, the League of Arab States and its States members remain convinced that stability in the Middle East region depends on finding a just solution to the Palestinian question on the basis of international law, in accordance with the agreed terms of reference and, in particular, land for peace, the two-State solution, the Madrid and Oslo understandings, the Arab Peace Initiative and the numerous resolutions of the Security Council. The goal is clear — the establishment of a Palestinian State on the borders of 4 July 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, through direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine with support from the Quartet.

The League has therefore adopted no shortage of resolutions at the ministerial and summit levels addressing the Palestinian question in all its main aspects, including the refugee issue, which is a major concern for the League and its States members. The League and its States members believe in the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and support any action to ensure that it is effectively fulfilled. The League is strongly convinced that any attempt to thwart or call into question the Agency's mandate would strike at one of the most important of the five main negotiating issues for a final settlement to the Palestinian question. Although Israel is the party that caused the Palestine refugee crisis, and although the international community bears primary responsibility for engaging with Israel to ensure that Palestine refugees can enjoy all their rights in accordance with international instruments and standards, the Arab side has always been proactive in filling gaps in the Agency's funding in order to shore up its material and field capacities. It has done so because of the bonds of solidarity among the Arab peoples and Governments, bonds that reach their fullest expression in the League of Arab States.

Similarly, the League supports all efforts to unite Palestinians. It has backed efforts to achieve intra-Palestinian reconciliation. It is convinced that reaching an agreement between Fatah and Hamas, and holding legislative and presidential elections, would strengthen the unity of the Palestinian people and make it better able to negotiate, under united Palestinian leadership, towards the goals to which we aspire.

The League stands ready to support the Palestinian vision that has been articulated by President Mahmoud Abbas before the Security Council. President Abbas has warned against rushing into any initiatives that the State of Palestine has had no part in formulating or negotiating. He has insisted that the conflict must be solved by peaceful means, acting through the United Nations and with the effective involvement of the Quartet. He has also called repeatedly for an international peace conference, first in February 2018, when Washington decided unilaterally to move

the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and secondly at the emergency Security Council meeting of February 2020 (S/PV.8717), after President Trump had announced his deal of the century, known as “Peace to prosperity”, which did not meet any of the terms for a final settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict and was rejected by all peace-loving international forces.

The League supports the initiative presented by President Abbas in his statement before the General Assembly on the occasion of its seventy-fifth anniversary, namely, that the Secretary-General should start preparing to convene an international conference to launch genuine negotiations between the State of Palestine and the State of Israel, in accordance exclusively with the principles and terms of reference agreed under international law. The Security Council would no doubt bear the greatest share of responsibility for effectively preparing for the conference and ensuring that it achieves the desired results, in coordination with the Secretary-General, the League of Arab States and the other regional and international stakeholders.

Mindful of the need to break the current deadlock in the peace process, the League of Arab States commends all the efforts made by the main regional and international stakeholders, including the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the European Union. Such efforts include the international and regional endeavours to bring together and unify international forces to support the Palestinian negotiator in preparation for a new round of negotiations with the participation of the Palestinian Authority. The most recent such effort was the meeting held in Jordan, which brought together the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Germany, France, Egypt and Jordan, and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, culminating in a statement supporting international law. The League emphasizes the importance of the proposed conference. It calls on the Quarter and international and regional supporting parties to make every endeavour to play a constructive role in bringing the conflict out of its current dire straits and open up prospects for a genuine peace and the just settlement to which we aspire. The League has every confidence that the Secretary-General of the United Nations has the capacity and wisdom to guide international efforts to meet Palestinian and Arab aspirations, and indeed the aspirations of the region and the world.

Israel has persisted in its constant efforts to fulfil its settlement schemes on occupied Palestinian and Arab territory. It has taken a series of muted steps towards enacting its plan for stealth annexation. Most recently, it built 2,600 settlement units in Jerusalem and the West Bank, and cut off Area C in preparation for the full annexation of the Jordan valley. It has continued to hamper efforts to reach a settlement by attempting to redefine such core issues as Jerusalem, the refugees and the borders. It has also sought to effectively entrench its policies of racial discrimination, particularly by enacting a new nation-State law turning Arab inhabitants of Israel into second-class citizens. It has sought to impose a fait accompli leading to a one-State solution in lieu of the two-State solution, which is now in grave peril, especially since Israel violated its own stated commitment, which was a fundamental component of its recent agreement with the United Arab Emirates, that it would fully freeze settlement activities. The Secretary-General of the League has forcefully denounced that course of action and expressed the League’s fears regarding the repercussions for the future of the negotiations towards an independent, geographically contiguous State of Palestine.

Pending genuine negotiations in the peace conference for which President Abbas has called, the League emphasizes that the Human Rights Council and

the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights must, in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 43/31, press Israel to confront the catastrophic humanitarian repercussions of the annexation and the indiscriminate Israeli settlement activities against the Palestinian people, including racial discrimination. If Israel persists with its settlement policies and its illegal practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, action must be taken, further to the reports compiled by international committees of inquiry, to lay the groundwork for every possible measure to hold Israel legally accountable for all the well-documented violations and crimes against the Palestinian people committed by its leaders and senior officials.

Annex 37**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations, Amal Mudallali**

I would like to start by congratulating the Russian Federation on assuming the presidency of the Council for this month, and thanking the Niger for its successful presidency last month.

I would also like to wish all participants a happy United Nations Day.

On this seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, the situation in the Middle East is fraught with conflict, challenges and a lack of a horizon for comprehensive and durable peace in the region. The principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations are challenged in every area of peace and security, there is no path for a sustainable future for its young populations, and the pandemic is stealing what progress was made over the last few decades in most areas, especially in education, poverty reduction, rights and equality.

Some countries are doing better than the others, but the trajectory for the majority is alarming. My country, Lebanon, has been through an *annus horribilis* in every sense of the word since last October.

The economic and financial crisis that wrecked the lives of the people and robbed them of their savings and financial security was accompanied by a pandemic, accompanied by a catastrophic explosion that destroyed the port of Beirut and a large part of the city. It also caused the death of 200 people and injured thousands. The explosion destroyed the heart of the city of Beirut and its business district, making the recovery more difficult. It also shattered the cultural and art districts, adding to the darkness that has overshadowed the lives of people and deprived them of even the pleasure of finding refuge in their cultural heritage.

A sense of despair descended on the country and population, but the quick response of the United Nations and the international community was overwhelming and heartening. Support, sympathy and aid poured into the country, telling the Lebanese that they are not alone, making a difference and encouraging the Lebanese to stand up again and start the long journey of recovery. In this journey, Lebanon needs its friends and the international community today more than ever as it embarks on the reconstruction and rehabilitation phase of its recovery to build back better.

We thank France and the United Nations for swiftly stepping in to help Lebanon by holding an international conference on 9 August to help Lebanon in response to the explosion and the humanitarian crisis. We also thank the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme for organizing briefings for member States to help with the response to the situation in Lebanon. These meetings are invaluable in garnering support and much needed assistance to help Lebanon mitigate the effects of the explosion in different areas. Sectors in dire need for assistance are education and health. The impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic is heavily concentrated in the education sector, where the deficit in technology penetration and Internet is threatening to produce a lost generation if students cannot go to school and have no access to virtual learning.

Health is also a major challenge, with the sector facing problems of capacity and shortages of medicine and of medical equipment. All of these challenges are taking place in the midst of a political vacuum, in the absence of a new Government.

The Lebanese people are seeking a glimmer of hope in the formation of a new Government and a new way of doing business in that Government. They hope

that, after a period of political gridlock, the country will be back charting a path of economic, financial and political rehabilitation. A new Prime Minister, Mr. Saad Hariri, has been designated to form this new Government and, if this hope materializes with the formation of a new Government, Lebanon can start again on the road to finding solutions for its problems, and enact the reforms required by the international community, which will allow international support to flow again to the country.

There is also movement on another front in Lebanon. The Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament announced on 1 October that a framework agreement was reached to start indirect technical negotiations, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the mediation of the United States, to reach an agreement over the disputed land and maritime border between Lebanon and Israel.

Once such an agreement on the delineation of the maritime and border is reached, the Speaker said it will be deposited with the United Nations, in accordance with international rules and practices. The framework agreement will be based on the Israel-Lebanon ceasefire understanding, of April 1996, and on resolution 1701 (2006).

The first meeting between the Lebanese and the Israelis, under the auspices of the United Nations and in the presence representatives of the United States, was held on 14 October at Naqoura, and other meetings are expected to follow before the end of the month and in the coming months.

A day before the start of the discussions, President Michel Aoun gave his instructions to the members of the Lebanese delegation, stressing that “these discussions are technical and are limited to the demarcation of the maritime borders” and aim to “defend internationally recognized Lebanese rights”. Lebanon hopes that a border agreement will be reached soon that will allow Lebanon to recover its land and territorial waters, benefit from its natural resources, extend its sovereignty over all its land and water and help its economy.

Last August, the Security Council adopted resolution 2539 (2020), extending the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) until 31 August 2021. By renewing the mandate of UNIFIL, the Security Council and its members voiced their strong and unified message of support to UNIFIL, preserving its badly needed strong capacity to preserve peace and security along the Blue Line.

After the port explosion and in line with UNIFIL’s mission mandate spelled out in resolution 2539 (2020), which authorizes it to take “temporary and special measures to provide support to Lebanon and its people”, UNIFIL extended a helping hand to Lebanon in Beirut. At the request of the Government of Lebanon and in coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces, UNIFIL, on 27 September, deployed a multinational force detachment to Beirut in order to assist the Lebanese authorities with their efforts to deal with the aftermath of the explosion.

Lebanon is extremely thankful to UNIFIL’s leadership and staff for their relentless dedication, and commends the strong and steady cooperation between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Government. Let me also express my country’s genuine gratitude to troop-contributing countries, for their longstanding support and unwavering commitment especially through these challenging times Lebanon is going through.

Furthermore, Lebanon salutes the crew of the Bangladeshi ship who were badly hit by the explosion at the port, and the rest of the affected UNIFIL personnel for their courage and sacrifice.

Lebanon reiterates its full commitment to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) in its entirety and calls on this organ to do everything in its power to make sure that Israel does the same and stops its daily violations by land, sea and air of Lebanese sovereignty.

Palestinians have been suffering a strangling blockade and unliveable conditions in Gaza, and experiencing hardships and restrictions on their freedom of movement in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. This is coupled with the continued expansion of Israeli settlements and rise in settler violence, excessive use of force by Israeli security forces and increasing house demolitions by Israeli authorities, as documented by relevant Secretary Council reports.

The Israeli plans for annexation of parts of the West Bank were supposedly suspended last August. They were not cancelled, just put on hold, and now we are witnessing unprecedented and record settlement activity by the Israeli authorities. Nearly 5,000 new settlement units are reported as being approved by the Israel High Planning Council in mid-October. There are reports that 12,159 settlement units have been approved so far in 2020. Peace Now reports that this is the highest total of settlement units advances in any year since it began tracking in 2012.

These Israeli actions are in contravention of international law, the Geneva Conventions and Security Council resolutions on this matter. But, most importantly, they end any hope for an equitable settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and any chance for peace.

Any solution to the Palestinian question must be just and comprehensive, based on international legality and rooted in relevant United Nations resolutions especially, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 2334 (2016). It must also be based on the formula of land-for-peace and the two-State solution, including a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Arab Peace Initiative remains a credible way forward for such a peace. Ignoring the rights and national aspirations of the Palestinian people will not lead to real peace.

Annex 38**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations, Syed Mohamad Hasrin Aidid**

I thank you, Sir, for organizing this important open debate. Malaysia wishes to align itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Azerbaijan and of the United Arab Emirates, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (annex 19) and of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (annex 48), respectively.

We recently commemorated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, in September this year. Two days ago, on 24 October, we celebrated United Nations Day. These two historic occasions should serve as strong reminders to Member States to act on their commitments under the Charter of the United Nations, as well as our shared values and ideals of freedom, accountability, and prosperity for everyone, including for our Palestinian brothers and sisters.

Malaysia's position on the question of Palestine remains clear. We will continue to advocate the resolution of the question of Palestine on the basis of an international framework, and against annexation and in support of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. We will continue to support the realization of the State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. For there to be lasting peace in the Middle East, the established international consensus, in unison with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant resolutions, must be respected and complied by the occupying Power.

First, Israel must end its occupation of Palestinian lands and withdraw its troops from the occupied Palestinian territory and surrounding Arab States. Secondly, Israel must cease all of its illegal settlement activities, as demanded by resolution 2334 (2016). The acquisition of any territory by war or force is inadmissible and illegal. Malaysia also would like to recall that, on 16 June 2020, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and 47 other independent experts of the United Nations human rights system issued a statement expressing that the annexation of the occupied territory was a serious violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and contrary to fundamental rules affirmed by the Security Council and General Assembly.

Thirdly, Israel must allow Palestinian refugees their right to return to their land and property.

Fourthly, Israel must restore the original status of Jerusalem.

Last but certainly not least, Israel must restore its credibility and return to the negotiating table with Palestine. Malaysia believes that the only viable way forward is a negotiated two-State solution. In this context, Malaysia supports the international community's call, including by the Secretary-General, for the Middle East Quartet to find a mutually agreeable path for the parties to re-engage towards a negotiated, peaceful settlement.

These are not new preconditions but rather a reflection of years of diplomatic effort and the consensus reached over decades of negotiations. These are certainly not narratives of the Palestine alone, but a genuine, worldwide call to address the root causes of the conflict and put an end to the longest occupation in the history of the world. Israel can no longer be in denial and must act responsibly.

In this regard, Malaysia calls on the Council to act urgently to ensure the full implementation of all applicable Council resolutions and defend the rules-based order so as to ensure the maintenance of regional and international peace and security.

Annex 39**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Morocco**

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Russia for its successful presidency of the Security Council this month. We appreciate your efforts, Sir, and those of your predecessor.

I would like also to thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, for his comprehensive briefing.

The Kingdom of Morocco is deeply concerned about the situation of the Palestinian people. The coronavirus disease pandemic and its repercussions exacerbate the economic, humanitarian, and social crises in the region.

His Majesty King Mohammed VI, as the Chair of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, stands with the Palestinian people in their quest to achieve their legitimate right to establish an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and reaffirms the importance of ending settlement activity.

The Palestinian people are suffering under the Israeli occupation of their territory, daily violations of their legitimate rights, and activities on their land that flout internationally recognized resolutions and international humanitarian law.

The Kingdom of Morocco expresses its concern at the advancement of nearly 5,000 housing units by Israel in the West Bank. Settlement activities are a violation of international law and one of the major hindrances to peace. They threaten the possibility of reaching a viable two-State solution.

Morocco rejects any unilateral steps that would undermine the legal and historical status of Jerusalem, Al-Quds Al-Sharif, as a holy city, and attaches great importance to its spiritual significance, as well as its special vocation as a city of peace. I wish to recall the Al-Quds Call, signed by His Majesty King Mohammed VI and His Holiness Pope Francis, during His Holiness's visit to Morocco in March 2019, aimed at promoting and enhancing the specific multi-faith character of the holy city, its spiritual dimension and its special identity.

My country reiterates its strong support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and its mandate. UNRWA plays a vital role in supporting the education, health and social services of millions of Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and continues to do so, especially under the challenging circumstances of the coronavirus disease pandemic. For its part, the Bayt Mal Al-Quds Al-Sharif Agency, the executive branch in the field of the Al-Quds Committee, continues to support the city's people through a range of key projects concerning, in particular, cultural and urban heritage conservation, social assistance and the preservation of the Palestinian national archives.

In conclusion, the international community should step up its efforts to bring the Palestinians and Israelis back to the negotiating table to achieve a two-State solution within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine.

Annex 40**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Namibia to the United Nations, Neville Gertze**

I congratulate you, Sir, on the Russian Federation's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October 2020 and thank you for organizing this open debate on this issue of great importance to Namibia.

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 by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

I would like to begin my statement by expressing my concern at the rising rate of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) infection in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel. This pandemic has shattered the lives of many around the world and impacted the most vulnerable. Chief among them is the Palestinian population in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. I wish to remind Council members that Gaza has one of the highest population densities in the world, a weak health-care system and lingering humanitarian and economic crises. This represents an auspicious environment for COVID-19 to spread and cause more heartache and destruction to the people of Gaza.

The financial crisis currently affecting the Palestinian Authority further compounds its ability to respond to COVID-19 in the Palestinian territories, as service provisions have been direly impacted.

In this regard, Namibia welcomes the United Nations engagement with all sides to ensure the unimpeded provision of humanitarian assistance. I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate Namibia's support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, as the needs and demands for the services provided by the Agency to the 5.6 million Palestine refugees drastically increase because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his 29 September address to the Security Council (see S/PV.8762), in which he presented the fifteenth report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General noted that no concrete steps had been taken during the reporting period to implement the provisions of this resolution. This follows a similar pattern since the adoption of the resolution in December 2016.

Mr. Mladenov underscored that no steps had been taken to "immediately and completely cease all settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem" (*resolution 2334 (2016), para. 2*). I wish to highlight the decision taken on 14 and 15 October by Israeli authorities to advance nearly 5,000 housing units, most of which are in outlying locations deep inside the occupied West Bank. I take this opportunity to reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law and represent an obstacle to peace and to the two-State solution.

Furthermore, demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures by Israeli authorities continued across the occupied West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, and have reached the highest demolition rate in the past four years. These actions also represent an obstacle to peace.

Since my last statement to the Security Council under this agenda item in July (S/2020/736, annex 39), the normalization of relations of Israel with both the

United Arab Emirates and Bahrain has been announced. Parties have underscored that the signing of these Abraham accords would provide a new impetus for peace in the region. The advancement of new settlements and the highest demolition rate in four years does not represent a new impetus for peace for the Palestinian people. Furthermore, the suspension of annexation plans included in the Accords does not bring any respite or peace to the Palestinian people.

I wish to draw attention to the call made by President Abbas during his address to the General Assembly, on the occasion of the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session (see A/75/PV.10), to hold an international conference at the start of 2021. Namibia expressed support for this proposal.

As the international community celebrates the seventy-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations, the support for the Palestinian cause remains steadfast, as demonstrated by the countless expressions of support during the general debate of the high-level week held in September. Nevertheless, we continue to fail the Palestinian people. This is notably demonstrated in the lack of implementation of the historic Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), adopted almost four years ago. That resolution provided Palestinians with hope and expectations for a solution to be found to this drawn-out conflict.

However, since its adoption, the humanitarian, social and political situation has only worsened and tensions have risen drastically, now compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. Actions taken have severely undermined the process of reaching a mutually acceptable, just and lasting solution. The people of Palestine have the fundamental right to self-determination and independence, with East Jerusalem as their capital. 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.

Annex 41**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Mona Juul**

As we convene for this debate, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to severely affect the lives of Israelis and Palestinians alike. Authorities on both sides have implemented extensive measures to contain the virus and save lives, at a high economic cost.

When we addressed the Council six months ago (see S/2020/341), we commended the parties for their cooperation in responding to the pandemic. However, we note with regret that the space for dialogue and cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians has deteriorated since then.

Norway has repeatedly warned against the Israeli annexation of parts of the West Bank. We call on Israel to make the current suspension of those plans permanent. Such a step could create a more conducive environment for cooperation and negotiations.

The unprecedented strain placed by the pandemic on the already fragile Palestinian economy and on the Palestinian Authority's ability to operate must be properly addressed. In that regard, Norway regrets that the question of the transfer of clearance revenues from Israel to the Palestinian Authority remains unresolved.

With the Palestinian economy on the brink of insolvency, we strongly urge the parties to stabilize the Palestinian Authority's budget by agreeing on fixed, regular and predictable transfers of revenues. The parties must also settle other outstanding fiscal questions in order to strengthen the Palestinian economy.

Ordinary people, in particular the most vulnerable, will be the ones bearing the brunt of the problems as long as this issue remains unresolved. Preserving the fiscal viability of the Palestinian Authority is also fundamental to the prospects for a two-State solution.

During this time of crisis, we urge the Palestinian Authority to continue the delivery of basic services to the Palestinian population, and, to the extent possible, to ensure salary payments to public employees in the West Bank and Gaza.

As chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC), Norway will do its utmost to mobilize resources to Palestinians in need and to address immediate public-health issues. This work is already ongoing. We plan for the next meeting of the AHLC to take place in February 2021 and will coordinate the timing with the parties and major donors.

The pandemic has exacerbated the already dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. We recognize the ongoing efforts made by the actors involved to facilitate the transfer of medical supplies into Gaza. However, this is far from enough. We call on Israel to do more to fulfil its obligations, including by easing the closure and improving access and movement of goods. Norway also encourages the Palestinian Authority to continue to carry out its responsibility of supporting Gaza's health-care system. In addition, international support to alleviate the impact of the pandemic will need to also address the critical public-health situation in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

The current crisis again underscores the critical role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which supports the basic needs of millions of Palestinian refugees in the region. UNRWA continues to do so in the face of the most severe financial crisis in its history. The

organization's schools, clinics and other facilities across the region are essential to avoid further instability. Norway calls on donors to increase their funding to UNRWA.

Norway remains hopeful that the normalization of Israel's bilateral relations with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain will increase the space for dialogue and cooperation between Israel and the Arab world. That development demonstrates that peaceful coexistence between the countries of the Middle East is possible and offers new opportunities for diplomatic and economic cooperation. It is positive if this can contribute to increased political stability in the region, and we hope that increased contact across the Middle East will support the efforts to secure a peaceful and just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We encourage Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain — alongside other countries in the region — to seize the momentum generated by their historic steps towards that end.

Still, the normalization agreements do not resolve outstanding questions in the conflict. Norway is deeply concerned about the continued Israeli settlement activities in the West Bank, which constitute a violation of international law. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, over recent months there has been a spike in the demolition or confiscation of Palestinian-owned structures and homes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. We call on Israel to halt such activities. We also call on all duty-bearers to respect and protect the fundamental human rights of the people within their areas of authority and to end impunity.

Let me conclude by repeating Norway's call on the parties to commit to a meaningful dialogue on the basis of existing agreements and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

We encourage all supporters of the two-State solution to help bring the parties back to a path towards a lasting settlement, including talks on the final-status issues of borders, security, refugees and Jerusalem. As Norway has underlined repeatedly in these debates, there continues to be strong international consensus that a sustainable peace between Israelis and Palestinians can be achieved only through a negotiated and viable two-State solution.

Norway is honoured that on 1 January 2021, it will join the Council as an elected member. We are committed to using every opportunity around this table to advance the prospects for a sustainable peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Annex 42**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Peru to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

Peru welcomes the holding of this quarterly open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. We thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov for his comprehensive briefing.

Peru is following with deep concern the progressive deterioration of the political and humanitarian conditions that underlie the question of Palestine. The inflexibility of positions, the absence of dialogue between the parties and the ongoing violence have led to an impasse in the peace process.

We cannot but deplore the continuing fatalities among the civilian population and the pronounced deterioration in security conditions for millions of Palestinians and Israelis. The parties must cease all acts of violence and investigate and punish all violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Peru, guided by its commitment to multilateralism, international law and the peaceful resolution of disputes, supports the solution involving two States with internationally recognized and secure borders, to be negotiated directly between Israel and Palestine, on the basis of the 1967 borders. Such negotiations must also determine the final status of Jerusalem.

We recognize Israel's right to preserve its own security and existence through the exercise of legitimate self-defence, provided that it takes place in accordance with the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions. The human rights of Palestinian citizens, including those of minors, cannot be ignored.

To that end, we deem it urgent to put an end to the increased practices of settlement-building, the demolition of buildings and evictions in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, in line with resolution 2334 (2016). Such practices are contrary to international law. They seriously jeopardize the territorial integrity of the Palestinian State and undermine the possibility of reaching a solution based on the existence of two States.

We also emphasize the urgent need to continue meeting the basic needs of the people of Gaza, as poverty and marginalization create fertile ground for those who would promote violence and terrorism.

We encourage the continued provision of the crucial support that the United Nations and its agencies have been providing to face the serious socioeconomic consequences resulting from the blockade to which the population is subjected, which has been exacerbated by the impact of the coronavirus disease. We also look forward to a more fluid cooperation between Israel and Palestine to provide an effective response to the pandemic.

We also consider it vital to redouble our efforts with a view to advancing the intra-Palestinian reconciliation process, as it would ease the humanitarian situation and provide an impetus for the resumption of dialogue with Israel. We welcome the rapprochements registered last September, and we hope that they will lead to the holding of presidential and legislative elections.

We deem it essential that the Council be capable of reaching a minimum consensus and expressing its views when the situation on the ground so warrants, demanding that the parties comply strictly with their obligations under international law, international humanitarian law and human rights. This must necessarily be accompanied by concrete examples of restraint and commitment to peace on the

part of the leaders of both parties. Hate speech, incitement to violence, resort to terrorism, laws that promote discrimination, and anti-Semitism must definitely be put aside.

We welcome the willingness shown by various countries to utilize their good offices, particularly those that have historically participated in this process. We highlight the central role that the Quartet is called upon to play and the relevance of the Arab Peace Initiative.

We would like to conclude by expressing our full support for Mr. Mladenov in his efforts to prevent any further escalation and promote dialogue between the parties, and also by reaffirming our commitment to finding a solution to the question of Palestine, which will contribute to the achievement of a sustainable peace in the region.

Annex 43**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations, Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani**

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, I wish to commend the Russian Federation for its presidency of the Security Council this month and its Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sergey Vasilievich Vershinin, for chairing this important meeting. We thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, for his comprehensive briefing and his constant work on the issue.

For the second consecutive time, Member States' participation in this open meeting is limited to written statements owing to measures taken to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus. That situation calls to mind the anxiety arising from the global health crisis that has spread all over the world, including the Middle East region, where its effects have been exacerbated by the ongoing conflicts and crises, which have caused difficult humanitarian situations and economic challenges. The threat, which affects everyone, should be an additional incentive to bring an end to the conflict and tension in the region.

This quarterly meeting provides an opportunity for Member States to emphasize constantly, with one voice, the central importance of the Palestinian issue, which has wide-ranging implications for security and stability, not to mention being a question of inalienable rights. The international community has a responsibility to uphold those rights and achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement.

We are convinced that a just, lasting and comprehensive peace and a settlement to all aspects of the Palestinian question must be achieved in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. There can be no substitute for a peaceful, consensus-based settlement reached through earnest negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli sides on the basis of the agreed terms of reference, the internationally recognized resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative, leading to a two-State solution and the establishment of an independent, viable State of Palestine on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in security and peace. That outcome means an end to the occupation of Arab territories, to settlement activities and to any endeavour to illegally annex those territories. It means upholding the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and finding a just solution to the issue of refugees. It means bringing an end to measures that affect the character, legal status and demographic composition of Jerusalem, and bringing an end to the stranglehold on Gaza and to all other practices of the occupying Power that contravene international law and the resolutions of the United Nations. Any arrangements that are not based on those terms of reference will not achieve the peace to which we aspire.

Qatar has a policy of working to mitigate humanitarian crises and economic hardship, and it is committed to creating conditions conducive to peace. Accordingly, in coordination with international partners, it has continued to provide humanitarian and development support to its Palestinian brethren, including in the Gaza Strip. His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Emir, of the State of Qatar, has provided financial assistance amounting to \$150,000,000 to help prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus and tackle its effects in the Gaza Strip. Those efforts complement humanitarian and development support for Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In addition, Qatar has increased its contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Unfortunately, the Palestinian question is not the only issue in our region that needs to be solved. There are other issues with repercussions for regional and international peace and security and for the peoples of the region, and that urgently require a solution. The crisis in Syria has caused considerable suffering to the Syrian people, suffering that worsens with every passing day in which the crisis is not brought to an end. The Constitutional Committee, if a true commitment is made to ensuring its success, is one step in the right direction. Through a meaningful political process under the aegis of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, it can lead to a solution conducive to a political transition in accordance with the Geneva communiqué, and to the implementation of resolution 2254 (2015) in all its aspects, with a view to meeting the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and protecting the unity, sovereignty and independence of Syria. As has been shown, any military solution will only lead to more atrocities and more humanitarian disasters. The country has seen enough war crimes and crimes against humanity. Justice must be done and those responsible, whatever side they belong to, must be held accountable.

The people of Yemen also aspires to and deserves peace, security and stability; an end to the violence and crisis that have lasted for several years; and the protection of the unity and territorial integrity of Yemen. The Yemeni people is still beset with hardship and suffering. It is essential to provide basic necessities and facilitate access to humanitarian assistance for all Yemenis. Efforts must be made to end the crisis through negotiation among Yemenis, in accordance with the outcomes of the national dialogue and the Initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and to comply with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, particularly resolution 2216 (2015). We therefore support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General For Yemen to press for a solution through dialogue.

Turning to the crisis in Libya, we welcome the ceasefire agreement and the resumption of the political process in accordance with the Libyan Political Agreement and its outcomes with a view to reaching a comprehensive political settlement that would preserve the unity, sovereignty and independence of Libya and put an end to the crisis and the resulting violations, suffering and difficult economic circumstances. A military campaign was launched in order to undermine the legitimate Government established under the Libyan Political Agreement, which is recognized by the international community; but the result was merely to complicate the situation and commit war crimes and grave violations of international humanitarian law. What the Libyan people needs now is respect for its determination to find a peaceful solution, end the violence and reach national consensus.

Faced with all those crises, our region urgently needs de-escalation and solutions through dialogue consistent with the principles for the peaceful settlement of disputes. Qatar has taken that approach as a matter of principle in confronting the Gulf crisis that was unjustifiably imposed on it three years ago with the introduction of an unfair blockade and illegal unilateral measures that have complicated the situation in the region and affected stability and security.

Since the outset of the crisis, His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, has called for a solution through dialogue based on neighbourly relations, respect for the sovereignty, independence and unity of States, and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. He has encouraged mediation brokered by friendly neighbouring States, in particular by the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait.

Qatar has stood by its principles, which are grounded in respect for international law, and has successfully petitioned the international legal system, first and foremost the International Court of Justice, to confront those measures, which

are a violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, international agreements and covenants, and human rights.

Lastly, Qatar will remain committed to its principled stance in favour of peace and stability in the region, de-escalation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts for the benefit of the peoples and States of the region.

Annex 44**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations, Abdallah Y. Al-Mouallimi**

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, allow me to congratulate the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, commend the Russian presidency of the Security Council, and express my country's appreciation for your constructive work in the Security Council.

In view of today's discussion concerning the situation in the Middle East, it is worth pointing out that the most significant causes of instability and ongoing conflict in the region are the Israeli occupation of Arab territories and the denial of the rights of the Palestinian people, alongside the aggressive and expansionist policies enacted by the forces of regional chaos, which have founded and deployed armed extrajudicial militias, intervened in the internal affairs of States and fomented sectarian strife.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has consistently supported the Palestinian people as it seeks to exercise its rights. The centrality of the Palestinian question is a key point of Saudi Arabian policy, as is the right of the State of Palestine to exercise sovereignty over all the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif. At the same time, Saudi Arabia is committed to peace as a strategic choice and to reaching a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict in accordance with the internationally recognized resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, which my country proposed in 2002.

My country condemns the ongoing Israeli violations and categorically rejects all the futile and illegal Israeli policies, practices and plans aimed at expanding settlements, entrenching racial discrimination and erasing the national identity of the Palestinian people, including, most recently, the decision taken by Israel to build some 5,000 new settlement units in the West Bank.

The Security Council must urgently fulfil its responsibility by bringing a stop to the ongoing Israeli acts of aggression and ensuring that the relevant international resolutions are implemented, including by ending the Israeli occupation of all occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Arab Golan and Lebanese territory.

The Houthi coup militias continue to demonstrate their extremist designs on the Yemeni people, which is in the sixth consecutive year of a disastrous war. The evidence is clear. The coup militias have continued to ramp up their military campaign, using missiles and drones to target my country, and they have rejected every ceasefire initiative. They have also used the oil tanker *FSO SAFER* as a bargaining chip with which to extort the international community, ignoring the threat which the tanker poses to the marine environment and international commercial navigation lines.

Saudi Arabia supports the efforts of the United Nations to find a comprehensive political solution in Yemen, in accordance with resolution 2216 (2015), the Initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference. It urges the Security Council to assume its responsibility by ensuring that its resolutions on Yemen are implemented, and by working to bring an end to the destructive interference of Iran in Yemeni affairs. Iran has provided military and material support to the Houthi militias in order to foment conflict and advance its expansionist project in the region. Iranian officials have boasted of their support for

the Houthi militias. Most recently, Iran sent an ambassador to the militia, which is not recognized.

Our experience with the Iranian regime has taught us that piecemeal solutions and appeasement will not put a stop to its threats to international peace and security. My country has tried to make peace with Iran. Over the decades, it has engaged with Iran in a spirit of goodwill and openness. It has hosted Iranian leaders on several occasions in order to search for solutions that would make it possible to foster neighbourly relations and mutual respect. Time and again, the world has seen the regime reject those endeavours and persist with its policies of sabotage and its acts of destruction in order to undermine the security and stability of regional States.

The end goal cannot be dialogue for its own sake; it can only be dialogue for the sake of effective solutions. That can happen only if Iran takes measures to instil confidence in its intentions and actions; if it undertakes to respect international laws and instruments and the resolutions of the Security Council; if it refrains from intervening in the internal affairs of neighbouring States; and if it stops supporting armed groups and militias.

Annex 45**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations, Bashar Ja'afari**

[Original: Arabic]

The threat posed by the Israeli occupation to the security and stability of the Middle East region, and to international peace and security as a whole, bespeaks the decades-long failure of the Security Council to assume its responsibility by maintaining international peace and security and addressing the causes of tension and conflict in the region and beyond. Since 1967, Israel has occupied large and cherished swathes of the territory of Arab States in Palestine, Lebanon and my own country, the Syrian Arab Republic. The inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan continue to languish under the occupation, whose criminal, repressive practices show flagrant contempt for the Charter of the United Nations, the rules of international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. Those of our people who have been compelled by the Zionist occupation forces to leave their land and sources of livelihood continue to look forward to the day when they will return to their land, homes and property.

The Israeli occupation would not be able to keep defying the international community and the resolutions of the United Nations were it not backed by several Western Governments that have granted immunity to the Israeli occupation and its representatives and prevented their being held accountable or punished for war crimes, crimes against humanity or grave human rights violations. The United States has a history of using the veto to stymie any draft resolution aimed at putting a stop to the crimes and acts of aggression of the Israeli occupation. That history highlights the double standards espoused by successive American administrations. It also demonstrates their blind bias in favour of the occupation — a bias that has reached an unprecedented degree with the current American administration, which has taken provocative and illegal unilateral measures in an attempt to change the political and legal situation of the occupied Arab territories, firstly by declaring occupied Jerusalem to be the capital of Israel, then by announcing its so-called recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan, which paved the way for attempts by the occupation authorities to annex parts of the West Bank.

The Syrian Arab Republic, along with the overwhelming majority of Member States, strongly condemns the decisions taken by America and its supporters and considers them to be a merely unilateral act performed by a party that has neither the standing nor the political, legal or moral capacity to decide the fate of the peoples of the world or to dispose of lands that are an integral part of the territories of the Syrian Arab Republic and occupied Palestine.

Syria reiterates its support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, the establishment of an independent State over all of its national territory, with Jerusalem as its capital, and the right of refugees to return to their homes in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Any decisions, measures or deals that are inconsistent with the relevant United Nations resolutions or fail to safeguard the established rights of the Palestinians are not remotely viable and should be rejected in form and substance. My country insists once again that Palestine must be allowed to become a full-fledged Member of the United Nations.

One might well wonder for how long the Security Council will remain silent while Israel persists with its systematic and grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the Syrian Golan, which has been occupied since 1967. Such violations include settlement activities, racial discrimination, arbitrary

detention, torture and the theft of the Golan's natural resources. In recent years, the Israeli occupation authorities have also been supporting terrorists and have repeatedly attacked Syrian territory.

My country has diligently informed the Security Council and the Secretariat of the occupation authorities' repeated violations and acts of aggression in the Golan. For instance, the occupation authorities have forced the population of the occupied Syrian Golan to register their land in the Israeli real estate register. They have stolen land owned by the inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan in order to develop a wind farm to generate electricity. They have also endeavoured to Judaize the Golan, doubled the number of settlers and imposed artificial local councils. Those alarming developments have not been mentioned in any of the briefings given by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic therefore once again expresses its strong objection to the continuation of Mr. Mladenov's current approach in those briefings and his deliberate failure to mention the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, developments related to the continuing aggressive and criminal practices of the Israeli occupation authorities, or recent decisions of the United States Administration that flagrantly violate international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly on the Syrian Arab Golan and the other occupied Arab territories, particularly resolution 497 (1981), which was adopted unanimously and states that the decision of the occupation authorities to impose their jurisdiction on the Golan is null and void and has no legal effect whatsoever.

It would be a serious mistake to think that the difficult situation in my country, Syria, will change the fact that the Golan is, always has been and will continue to be Syrian territory. We will keep up the struggle until it has been fully recovered up to the border of 4 June 1967. That right cannot be waived or bargained away, and it will never lapse.

Lastly, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms that, in order to ensure stability in the Middle East and preserve the credibility of the United Nations, measures must be taken to implement all international resolutions aimed at ending the Israeli occupation of Arab territories, including the Syrian Arab Golan, and compelling Israel to withdraw to the line of 4 June 1967, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, including, in particular, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 497 (1981) and 2334 (2016).

Annex 46**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, Feridun H. Sinirlioğlu**

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to imperil the prospects for peace and stability in the Middle East. At a time when we need a spirit of reconciliation and political determination, oppression by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories continues unabated.

As documented in numerous United Nations reports, the demolition of Palestinian houses, regular attacks by settlers and movement restrictions remain as daily practices. Those egregious practices undermine the two-State solution and the established parameters for a just and durable peace. The use of excessive and disproportionate force against civilians, arbitrary arrests and the impunity with which Israeli forces operate also constitute a serious threat to the rules-based international order.

Attempts to erode the status of Jerusalem, the inhumane blockade in Gaza and the illegal settlements have all been part of a recurring pattern that severely curtails the fundamental rights and freedoms of Palestinians. The people of Palestine live in a permanent state of emergency. Decades of occupation and blockade have severely weakened the Palestinian economy, as well as its critical infrastructure and health system. The tragedy of Palestinians has been compounded by the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has had devastating socioeconomic repercussions in addition to its public-health implications.

The situation in Gaza remains particularly fragile. The illegal Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip has entered its thirteenth year. As Special Rapporteur Lynk stated,

“We are no longer on the edge of a humanitarian crisis, but in the middle of one...there is no comparable situation in the world where a substantial population has endured such a permanent lockdown.”

The recurrent electricity and fuel shortages have severely undermined the delivery of essential health care and water and sanitation services. Chronic shortages of medical supplies and hospital beds, combined with population density and the dilapidated infrastructure, have significantly increased the risk of a major COVID-19 outbreak.

We welcome and support the health measures that the Palestinian Government has implemented against the spread of the virus. Despite facing the worst financial crisis in its history, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) remains on the front lines in providing vital educational, health, relief and social services, as well as emergency assistance. We call upon the international community to step up its support to UNRWA, which provides a lifeline for millions of Palestinians. Until a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestine conflict has been reached, the work of UNRWA will remain absolutely indispensable. It is our collective and moral duty to support the Agency.

Today the most immediate and pressing challenge facing the Palestinians is the Israeli Government’s illegal plans for the annexation of the West Bank. Annexation would be a grave violation of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as of the United Nations Charter and the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949. It would exacerbate the grievances and suffering of Palestinians at the hands of the occupying Power.

The Palestinian land and the people of Palestine should not be sacrificed for the sake of Israel’s brazen policies of violence and occupation. An overwhelming

majority of the international community objected to Israel's plans. The Human Rights Council condemned the annexation plans and called for the High Commissioner for Human Rights to compile a report on the impact of a possible annexation. We look forward to that report and call the Security Council to also shoulder its fair share of responsibilities and take urgent action to counteract the threat of annexation.

Some claim that recent developments bode well for the settlement of the conflict and that the threat of annexation has been thwarted. Facts on the ground show otherwise.

As pointed out in the latest report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/75/35), the agreements recently signed neither bound Israel to negotiations with the Palestinians, guided by the internationally agreed parameters, nor included the Palestinian people. Any initiative aimed at a just solution to the question of Palestine must consider the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, engage Palestinian leadership and be based on the two-State solution, according to international law, United Nations resolutions and agreement between the parties. The recent normalization agreements, which failed to meet any of those criteria, can in no way bring us closer to a two-State solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Contrary to the announcements made, the expansion of illegal settlements in the Palestinian territories has not halted. Those new settlements will be the building blocks of future annexation plans. That is to say, Israel is physically continuing to implement its annexation plans. The latest example of Israel's steps as the occupying Power, in complete disregard of international law and United Nations resolutions, is the approval of more than 5,000 additional illegal settlements in the West Bank.

If the international community is sincere about finding a just solution to the conflict on the basis of internationally recognized parameters, then it is incumbent upon the international community to stop Israel from further expanding those illegal settlements.

The measures taken by Israel to consolidate its unlawful annexation of Jerusalem and its surroundings threaten the legal status of the city as well as its demographic composition and its historically multicultural and multireligious character. The international community should refrain from taking any steps that would be tantamount to condoning these illegal actions. Therefore, the intention of certain Member States to relocate embassies to Jerusalem or open them there is a source of grave concern. The status of Jerusalem is a fundamental issue that remains at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The final status of Jerusalem will be part and parcel of the comprehensive solution of the conflict.

In order to reach a negotiated two-State solution, achieving intra-Palestinian reconciliation is an urgent necessity. We are pleased with the outcome of the unity talks between Fatah and Hamas. We hope that this process will lead to the successful conduct of elections. We urge the Middle East Quartet and the international community to redouble efforts to restart the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. In that regard, we welcome and support the call of President Abbas to the Secretary-General to convene an international conference to launch a genuine peace process.

It is high time for us, the Member States, to act on our collective commitment to the ideals and shared values of democracy, accountability and prosperity for everyone. The international community must redouble its efforts to achieve a negotiated two-State solution based on the 1967 borders and the establishment of an independent, sovereign and contiguous State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The people of Palestine deserve to live in freedom, side by side with Israel, in peace and security. That can be realized only with the open and strong support of the international community.

I would like to highlight a couple of points on Syria. We continue our efforts to accelerate the political process and ensure the implementation of all the provisions of resolution 2254 (2015). We actively support Special Envoy Pedersen's efforts to convene the Constitutional Committee regularly and set the agenda for consecutive meetings. The fourth round of the Committee should be held without further delay and focus on the substance. The constructive efforts of the opposition and the Special Envoy in that regard should be reciprocated.

Turkey remains fully committed to stabilizing the situation on the ground and ensuring a lasting ceasefire in Idlib. The regime has been exploiting the 5 March ceasefire as an opportunity to regroup. The regime's military build-up around the Idlib de-escalation area and ceasefire violations aim at disrupting the calm on the ground and derailing the political process. Turkey will continue to take all necessary measures to protect civilians. The Security Council should also raise its voice and not allow the regime to undermine the ceasefire in Idlib.

Turkey's resolve to fight terrorism in Syria is firm. We will not allow terrorist organizations to find safe haven in our neighbourhood to launch cross-border attacks on our territory. The terrorist organization Kurdistan Workers' Party/People's Protection Units (PKK/YPG) also threatens the stability and unity of Syria with its increasingly brazen actions. This is a terrorist organization that has the blood of both Turkish and Syrian civilians on its hands. Since October 2019, PKK/YPG has carried out more than 250 terrorist attacks targeting civilians in areas where Turkey conducted operations to establish stability and calm. Those attacks resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties. The international community must demonstrate a united front against terrorism by unequivocally condemning the PKK/YPG's terrorist attacks, without hesitation.

In addition to targeting civilians, PKK/YPG seeks to consolidate its power throughout north-eastern Syria through oppression and economic incentives. This is a terrorist organization that usurps the natural resources of Syria; promulgates so-called legislation to provide a legal cover for the confiscation of private property; denies education to other communities, including Christians; and recruits children and denies them their right to education and freedom. Furthermore, the PKK/YPG tries to create faits accomplis on the ground, in blatant violation of principles of the territorial integrity and unity of Syria, as enshrined in resolution 2254 (2015).

Annex 47**Statement by the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic and English]

At the outset, I would like to thank the Russian Federation for having convened this important debate. I would also like to thank Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov for his comprehensive briefing.

The United Arab Emirates believes that de-escalation, communication channels and diplomacy are the core pillars of the process of addressing any past and current tensions as well as of avoiding any future challenges in the Middle East. We must rethink our past approaches in order to move past previous stalemates and create a stable, peaceful and prosperous Middle East.

Despite the current conflicts plaguing the region from Yemen to Syria, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, remains the core conflict at the heart of our region. In this context, the United Arab Emirates signed a peace accord with Israel on 15 September, under the auspices of the United States. This historic decision responds to repeated calls from the international community, including many countries represented in this debate today, to maintain the viability of the two-State solution by halting annexation. We are grateful to and encouraged by both Secretary-General António Guterres and Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov for welcoming the agreement.

The United Arab Emirates firmly believes that this agreement, together with the declaration of peace, cooperation, and constructive diplomatic and friendly relations concluded by Bahrain and Israel, presents an opportunity for the region to move in the direction of stability and prosperity. To build upon these positive developments in the region, the United Arab Emirates believes that the following steps are necessary.

First, the Council must use the opportunity created by the accord to break the deadlock in the peace process and restore direct talks between the parties. The United Arab Emirates has repeatedly expressed its grave concerns about plans to annex Palestinian lands. We reiterate here that the United Arab Emirates has been, remains and will always be committed to the two-State solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map. In this context, the United Arab Emirates supports any initiative aimed at a peaceful resolution based on the aforementioned references.

Secondly, we urge the international community to be steadfast in its support of the Palestinian people, especially during the current coronavirus disease pandemic. Since the United Arab Emirates' founding, almost 50 years ago, the United Arab Emirates has been committed to supporting the Palestinian people, including during the pandemic, and between 2013 and 2020 we have contributed more than \$837 million in aid to the Palestinian people and to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). During the United Arab Emirates' current chairmanship of the UNRWA Advisory Commission, we have sought to establish a thematic engagement approach to providing assistance set out in the United Arab Emirates' aid strategy and align it with UNRWA's mandate and medium-term strategy 2016-2021, focusing on four areas, which include the digitalization of education, women's and girls' empowerment, youth empowerment and environment sustainability.

Thirdly, we should encourage any positive steps that promote peaceful coexistence and interfaith dialogue, particularly between our youth in the region. We must build bridges that support mutual understanding and tolerance and therefore open new avenues to peace. We must include the region's youth in these efforts and empower them to build a future that is secure for the region.

Finally, the Council must be united in addressing any behaviour that destabilizes the region and undermines peace efforts. In this regard, it is critical that the Council take concrete action to address those State actors that seek to sow discord in the region by supporting terrorist and extremist groups and that interfere in the internal affairs of Arab States, in violation of international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates affirms that it will continue to work with its partners in the region and around the world to address some of the most critical challenges of our time. As an elected member of the Security Council for 2022-2023, the United Arab Emirates will continue to be a forward-thinking proponent of peace and will maintain its call for unity.

Annex 48**Statement by the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation**

I have the honour to submit this statement on behalf of the States members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in my capacity as Chair of the OIC group.

Our deliberations today are taking place at a critical time, characterized by distressing humanitarian and health challenges in the occupied Palestinian territory as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Additionally, the current political stalemate constitutes an obstacle hampering the achievement of a just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and continues to obstruct the realization of Palestinian rights, including to self-determination.

In particular, the OIC group is concerned about the continued Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The recent approval by the Israeli authorities of the construction of more than 5,000 new settlement units is a blatant violation of international law and United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). Additionally, settlement activities further entrench the occupation, undermine the territorial integrity and contiguity of the Palestinian State and jeopardize the viability of the two-State solution based on the 4 June 1967 borders. Settlement activities must be completely and immediately halted.

The OIC group also remains seriously concerned about the situation in East Jerusalem. We reaffirm that East Jerusalem is an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territory. All illegal measures and decisions aimed at altering its demography and historical, legal, and political status are null and void under international law and United Nations resolutions, particularly resolutions 476 (1980), 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016), and must accordingly be rejected by the international community.

Another major concern is the deterioration of the social and economic conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, which is further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the occupation. During the last monthly meeting on the situation in the Middle East (see S/PV.8762), Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov warned that “the health emergency is rapidly becoming a socioeconomic crisis” in the occupied Palestinian territory. He noted that the shocking 50 per cent unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip, where the humanitarian crisis is dire and conditions are deemed unliveable. Meanwhile, UNRWA is currently facing a funding gap of \$200 million, which risks the suspension of some of the agency’s essential services.

In light of the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, the OIC group calls on the international community to pursue the following priorities.

First, the Council should take the necessary measures to put an end to settlement activities and maintain the historical status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem. Israel must stop all its illegal actions, including wall and settlement construction, land confiscation, the demolition of homes and properties and the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians.

Secondly, the international community must intensify its efforts to break the deadlock in the political process. We encourage launching a credible, time-bound and multilaterally sponsored political process to realize the vision of the two-State

solution, based on the 4 June 1967 borders, to which the OIC remains fully committed. We encourage in this regard any steps that are aimed at preserving the prospects of a just peace and advance its realization.

Additionally, in this regard, the OIC group supports the call of the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, on the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps, in cooperation with all members of the Security Council and the international Quartet, to convene a multilaterally-sponsored international peace conference, with full authority and with the participation of all concerned parties, and to re-engage in a meaningful peace process, based on international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Finally, we must provide humanitarian and financial assistance to the Palestinian people, including Palestinian refugees. The international community must also ensure that the occupied Palestinian territory has enough medical supplies and equipment to confront the pandemic. We must also provide more predictable and sufficient financial contributions to UNRWA and support its COVID-19 appeal.

In conclusion, the OIC will continue to support the Palestinian people's efforts to regain their legitimate rights, including to freedom and independence within their sovereign State, based on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and resolving all final status issues, including the question of refugees, based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III).
