

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 26 June 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 briefings provided by the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres; the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov; and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Mr. Ahmed About Gheit; as well as the statements delivered by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Commerce of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sir Louis Straker; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Mrs. Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, Mr. Nouredine Erray; the Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Mr. James Cleverly; the Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, Mr. Alvin Botes; the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam, Mr. Dang Minh Khoi; and by the representatives of Belgium, China, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, the Niger, the Russian Federation and the United States of America, in connection with the video teleconference on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, held on Wednesday, 24 June 2020. Statements were also made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, Mr. Riad Al-Malki, and by the representative of Israel.

Pursuant to the understanding reached among the Council members for this video teleconference, the following delegations and entities submitted written statements, copies of which are also enclosed: Costa Rica, Egypt, the European Union, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, 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 briefings and statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Nicolas de Rivière**
President of the Security Council



Annex 1**Statement by the Secretary-General**

I address the Council today with a deep sense of concern over the evolving situation in Israel and Palestine.

We are at a watershed moment. Israel's threat to annex parts of the occupied West Bank has alarmed Palestinians, many Israelis and the broader international community. If implemented, annexation would constitute a most serious violation of international law, grievously harm the prospect of a two-State solution and undercut the possibilities of a renewal of negotiations.

I call on the Israeli Government to abandon its annexation plans.

The Palestinian leadership has reacted by considering itself exempt from all bilateral agreements with Israel and the United States. Increased economic fragility as a result of the coronavirus disease pandemic, reduced donor support and the recent Palestinian decision to stop accepting clearance revenues that Israel collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority risk increasing the hardship of the Palestinian people.

As I said in February when I spoke before the Council and President Abbas (see S/PV.8717), I am fully committed to continuing to support Palestinians and Israelis to resolve the conflict and end the occupation, in line with international law, relevant United Nations resolutions and bilateral agreements. The goal is to achieve the vision of two States — Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable Palestinian State — living side by side in peace and security, within secure and recognized borders based on the pre-1967 borders and with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

I will continue to consistently speak out against any unilateral steps that would undermine peace and the chances for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through meaningful negotiations. Such actions also further hamper efforts to advance regional peace and to maintain international peace and security. I urge Israeli and Palestinian leaders to commit to meaningful dialogue, with the support of the international community.

I encourage regional and international supporters of the two-State solution to help bring the parties back to a path towards a negotiated, peaceful settlement. I call on fellow members of the Middle East Quartet to take up our mandated mediation role and find a mutually agreeable framework for the parties to re-engage, without preconditions, with us and other key States. Leaders must act wisely and swiftly and demonstrate the will to advance the goal of a just and lasting peace.

Annex 2

Statement by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Nickolay Mladenov

I am devoting my regular briefing on the situation in the Middle East to the fourteenth report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) (S/2020/555). The written report that Council members have already received covers the period from 21 March to 4 June 2020.

Before turning to developments that have occurred since the written report, I would like to reiterate the Secretary-General's grave concern over the continuing threat of Israeli annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank — a process officials have said could begin in a matter of days or weeks.

Deliberations over that move have brought this long-standing conflict to a critical juncture. Annexation could irrevocably alter the nature of Israeli-Palestinian relations. It risks undoing more than a quarter of a century of international efforts in support of a future viable Palestinian State living in peace, security and mutual recognition with the State of Israel.

The Secretary-General has just unequivocally stated that any move to annex occupied Palestinian territory would have serious implications in terms of international law, the two-State solution and the prospects of a negotiated, sustainable peace.

International and regional opposition has also been widespread. European leaders continue to voice their opposition to annexation and have also affirmed that it would amount to a violation of international law. Powerful statements rejecting such a move have been issued in the past weeks by the King of Jordan, the League of Arab States and leaders across the Arab world, including a strong message directly to the Israeli people from the United Arab Emirates.

In addition to the official statements, we have witnessed opposition to the move from Israeli and Palestinian civil society, think tanks, academics and many others. Multiple opinion polls have indicated that Israelis are deeply divided over the issue and do not consider it a priority as the country is in the grips of an economic crisis and rising unemployment. Thousands of Israelis have protested the move at gatherings in Tel Aviv's Rabin Square and other locations across the country.

Recognizing that both peoples have a right to live in their ancestral home, 27 years ago Israeli and Palestinian leaders agreed to embark on a noble but difficult road to resolve the conflict through negotiations, without taking unilateral action, in order to reach a final status agreement on a just peace. Today we are further than ever from that goal.

As the prospect of a negotiated two-State solution is undercut, the spectre of anger, radicalization and violence emerges. Beyond the legal, security and economic implications, the threat of unilaterally annexing parts of the West Bank will send one message and one message only — bilateral negotiations cannot achieve peace.

We cannot allow that to happen.

No good can come from the breakdown of dialogue and communications. Diplomacy must be given a chance. All of us who believe in the legitimate right of both Palestinians and Israelis to self-determination, security and a brighter future must reject this move and consolidate efforts to preserve a sustainable two-State solution.

That is why I ask everyone present today to join the Secretary-General in his call for an immediate re-engagement, with no preconditions, among the Middle East Quartet — the United States, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United Nations — and the Palestinian leadership, Israel and the countries of the region in order to find a way out of the current crisis.

I believe that only by working together can we restore meaningful Israeli-Palestinian dialogue and improve stability and conditions for people on the ground. Such discussions have been dormant for too long, letting both sides drift further apart along diverging paths. Unilateral action has made the goal appear ever more distant. Based on shared principles and aspirations, we can identify realistic steps to avoid further polarization and advance the goal of two States, living side-by-side in peace and security and integrated into the region.

In the interest of peace, I urge the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to take this opportunity and return to the path of engagement.

In response to the threat of annexation, the Palestinian leadership declared itself exempt from all agreements and understandings with Israel and the United States. It has subsequently halted all bilateral contacts. That decision has had, and will increasingly have, a dramatic impact on all aspects of Palestinian life.

Particularly worrisome is the decision to stop accepting the clearance revenues that Israel collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority. Adding to the economic uncertainty caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, the Palestinian Authority has now lost 80 per cent of its monthly revenue. This gap cannot be filled by donors.

Palestinians in Gaza, who have lived with closures and under the control of Hamas for more than a decade, are particularly vulnerable. The ending of civilian coordination will not allow them to receive life-saving treatment. Already, an 8-month-old infant has lost his life owing to the situation. Surely there must be a red line when it comes to the lives of children!

The United Nations and other international organizations are increasingly being asked to take on coordination responsibilities. While we are prepared to provide support on an emergency basis, the United Nations cannot replace the Palestinian Authority. It is critical that humanitarian and other assistance not be delayed or stopped.

In the coming weeks, decisions may be reached that will do irreparable damage to Palestinian and Israeli societies and to the security and economic well-being of both peoples. This bleak vision, however, is not yet a fait accompli. The window is closing, but there is still time to avert chaos. It will require a concerted effort by all stakeholders and the will to take political risks to achieve peace. As a first step, I join the Secretary-General in calling on Israel to abandon its plans to annex parts of the occupied West Bank.

Allow me to turn briefly to significant developments since the written report was circulated. In terms of settlement-related activities, on 9 June, Israel's High Court of Justice struck down a controversial 2017 law that enabled wide-scale expropriation of private Palestinian land and the retroactive legalization, under Israeli law, of thousands of housing units in Israeli settlements. The Court ruled that the law was unconstitutional because it violated Palestinians' rights to property and equality.

Meanwhile, one Palestinian was killed and 44 were injured, including six children, during demonstrations, clashes and other incidents across the occupied Palestinian territory, including five by live ammunition. Three Israelis were injured when stones were thrown at a bus traveling through the West Bank. A total of

45 structures have been demolished in Area C and East Jerusalem on grounds of lack of permits, displacing some 28 people and otherwise affecting an additional 250. On 23 June, a 28-year-old Palestinian man from Abu Dis was shot dead by the Israeli security forces in an apparent car-ramming attack at a checkpoint, and a soldier of the Israel Defense Forces was injured. Incidents of settler-related violence during the reporting period were concentrated mainly in Hebron's H2 area and Nablus governorate.

In Gaza, despite the relative calm, the launching of incendiary balloons and devices continued, with some 20 devices launched over the fence into Israel. On 15 June, a rocket was launched from Gaza towards Israel, landing in an open field and causing no damage. In retaliation, Israel Defense Forces targeted several Hamas targets in the Strip.

Meanwhile the Kerem Shalom crossing for goods into Gaza has continued to operate normally. However, the Palestinian Civil Affairs Committee in Gaza stopped receiving and processing permit applications for Gaza residents and ended all communications with Israeli authorities. As a result, hundreds of patients, including many children needing life-saving medical treatment have not been able to exit the Strip.

The financial situation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) remains a serious concern to all of us. I thank Jordan and Sweden for their efforts to mobilize support for the Agency, including yesterday's pledging conference, which they co-chaired, with the participation of the Secretary-General. I welcome the pledges that were announced, although they fall well short of the needs, and UNRWA's funding gap remains extremely serious. I encourage Member States to support the Agency to ensure its operations can continue throughout 2020.

In closing, I would like to again highlight the immense risks we face over the coming weeks and months as we confront the very real possibility of annexation and its consequences. If implemented, these steps could dramatically alter local dynamics, triggering instability across the occupied Palestinian territory and maybe beyond. This conflict has been marked by periods of extreme violence, but never before has the risk of escalation been accompanied by a political horizon so distant, an economic situation so fragile and a region so volatile.

It is crucial for all stakeholders to take action that will enable the parties to step back from the brink. The goal must be to urgently re-engage in dialogue that will halt unilateral steps, chart a positive way forward and avoid a descent into chaos. Everyone must do their part in the coming weeks to preserve and promote the prospect of ending the occupation and achieving a negotiated two-State solution, based on international law, United Nations resolutions and bilateral agreements.

Annex 3**Statement by the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States,
Ahmed Aboul Gheit**

It is the duty and responsibility of the Council to address any situation that threatens international peace and security. The League of Arab States firmly believes that the possible move by the Israeli Government to annex parts of the occupied Palestinian territory would constitute, if implemented, a serious threat to regional stability, with broader ramifications for international security.

Since 1993, the Palestinians have wisely chosen the path of peace and coexistence. They signed interim agreements with Israel in the hope that this would pave the way for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the 4 June 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Yet for three decades real peace and the creation of an independent Palestinian State have remained elusive. Israeli settlement activities have expanded, and the logic of perpetual occupation and domination has become entrenched. Negotiations stumbled, were suspended numerous times and have led nowhere. Despair is dominating the Palestinian mood.

Despite these setbacks, the two-State solution remains the only paradigm accepted by both parties and endorsed by the international community. The ambitious Arab Peace Initiative was launched in 2002, adopting the same parameters as a means to achieve regional peace and normalization with Israel.

If implemented, Israeli annexation plans will not only be detrimental to the chances of peace today but destroy any prospects for peace in the future. Palestinians will completely lose faith in a negotiated settlement. I am afraid that Arabs, too, will lose interest in regional peace. A new dark reality will set in vis-à-vis this conflict and in the region at large.

Israelis wrongly believe that the status quo is sustainable. It is not. If the two-State solution is removed from the table, a one-State reality will take its place. This is going to create a reality and dynamics that are completely different.

What is also at stake here is the effectiveness of the Council. I hope that it recognizes the urgency of the matter and the gravity of the Israeli policies. It is incumbent upon the Council to exert its influence on Israel so that the country refrains from any unilateral measures that will further inflame tensions and endanger stability and peace in the Middle East. We should be united in our condemnation and rejection of this provocation, which is uncalled for, and Israel must be made to recognize that its nefarious, self-centred plans will remain inadmissible and will never gain any international acceptance.

Annex 4

Statement by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Regional Integration of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sir Louis Straker

Let me begin by thanking Secretary-General António Guterres and the briefers for their remarks on the evolving situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The long-cherished dream of peace in the Middle East is one for which we must continue to toil, with the hope that future generations of Palestinians and Israelis can work, play, study and pray alongside each other in a tranquil and tolerant atmosphere.

Security is at its very core a collective project. It denotes a lasting relationship based on the foundational values of trust and respect, where the parties concerned choose peaceful coexistence over fear and coercion. It is in this regard that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines stands firm in its condemnation of the ongoing settlement activities across the West Bank, which constitute clear violations of international law that gravely imperil the peace process. The internationally agreed two-State solution based on the pre-1967 border lines remains the most credible path in our painstaking quest for peace between Israel and Palestine. We implore the State of Israel to adhere to the provisions of all relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), which reflect the international community's posture on the occupied Palestinian territories.

Only through dialogue and compromise, respectful of the principles of international law, can security for Israel be assured, as Palestinian claims to dignity, equality and human rights are honoured. History has taught us that lasting peace can be achieved only through sincere attempts at reconciliation, and reconciliation is only possible when justice and fairness pave the way for mutual satisfaction and harmony. As unilateral annexation of the West Bank looms, the narrow window for a sustainable peace is rapidly closing. Annexation would permanently alter the security landscape and destabilize the region. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines urges all parties to let good judgement and pragmatism prevail. We call on the State of Israel to immediately cease all plans for annexation and return to the bargaining table to negotiate with their Palestinian neighbours in good faith. To that end, we encourage all members of the international community to facilitate this much-needed dialogue as the critical first step towards an equitable solution. We also encourage renewed international financial support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which provides vital humanitarian assistance and social protection to millions of Palestinian refugees. As such, we welcome the recently convened pledging conference to mobilize political and financial support for UNRWA.

Today we stand at a dangerous crossroads. The core principles upon which our United Nations was founded are gradually eroding. On issues as complex and consequential as the fragile peace process in the Middle East, we can ill afford the ongoing repudiation of the bedrock principles of our multilateral system. The political independence and territorial integrity of all States must be safeguarded as we cast our collective gaze towards the urgent challenges of the coronavirus disease and the ever-growing climate crisis. During this seventy-fifth year of our United Nations, we must remain candid and upright in our pronouncements. Continued silence in the face of grave injustice, wheresoever and by whomsoever committed, is in itself the blank canvas upon which immense human suffering is rendered. At this critical juncture, we cannot be separated in interest or divided in purpose; we must stand together resolutely and demand peace and justice for all.

Annex 5**Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi**

Although the Council regularly meets to discuss the situation in Palestine, it is clear that our meeting today is far from a regular one. The fact that some Ministers and Deputy Ministers are participating in this meeting is clear evidence that the situation is very concerning.

In his new report (S/2020/555), the Secretary-General warns us of the crucial situation at hand posed by the occupying Power and the threat of its annexation in Palestine. The Palestinian people have suffered injustice, grave violations of human rights and a deteriorating humanitarian situation for far too long. With the looming threat of annexation, the future of Palestine is at stake.

It is now up to us whether we want to stand on the side of international law or to turn a blind eye, stand on the other side and allow acts against international law and principles to continue to take place.

We must, and should, reject the plan of annexation based on the following points.

First, the formal annexation would constitute a clear violation of international law. The de facto annexation, or the creeping annexation, has breached international law. If we allow de facto annexation to manifest as formal annexation, we are setting the dangerous precedent that somehow occupying the land of others by way of annexation can be lawful under international law. It is an impunity in itself and our silence signals approval. Let us all show our strong objection in all forums, by both words and action, that annexation is illegal.

Secondly, the formal annexation is an open challenge to the Security Council. It tests the credibility and the legitimacy of the Council. The official declaration of annexation in May justified the Security Council to swiftly act under the Charter of the United Nations. My question now is: Why should the Council wait for the annexation to happen in order to assume its functions? In short, no matter who poses a threat to international peace and security, they should be held accountable before the Council. There should be no double standards.

Thirdly, and most important, the formal annexation will destroy all prospects for peace. It will also create instability in the region and beyond. There is an urgent need for a credible peace process that allows all relevant parties to work on an equal footing. Hence, it is high time to start a credible multilateral peace process based on the internationally agreed parameters. For Indonesia, lasting peace can be achieved only on the basis of the two-State solution.

My final point is the necessity to address the humanitarian needs in Palestine. The pandemic has worsened the hardship faced by the Palestinian people. It is crucial to enhance our support for international humanitarian agencies, particularly the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Just yesterday, I announced Indonesia's increased contribution to Palestine, as well as UNRWA, during the pledging conference. Our support to Palestine will also be channelled through the Palestine Authority and humanitarian agencies.

In conclusion, injustice prevails not because of the absence of justice, but because we allow it to do so. It is time to put a stop to it.

Annex 6

Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, Nouredine Erray

At the outset, I would like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his introductory remarks and the presentation of his fourteenth report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). I take this opportunity to reiterate Tunisia's commendation of his tireless efforts to advance the peace process in the Middle East.

I also thank the French presidency of the Security Council for its positive response to the request to hold this meeting at the ministerial level, and I would like to warmly welcome my counterparts, Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Vice-Ministers and all representatives of the brotherly and friendly countries. Our thanks also go to Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, for his extensive briefing and to Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his exhaustive briefing, as well as for their efforts to promote peace.

This important meeting is taking place alongside the United Nations preparations to celebrate its seventy-fifth anniversary, with all the deep connotations and significance of this event, which represents a renewed opportunity to affirm our adherence to the Charter of our Organization and to emphasize the crucial and renewed importance of international law and covenants in regulating international relations and maintaining international peace and security.

Paradoxically, in return our meeting comes a few days ahead of another sequence in the course of Israel's disdain for international legality, with the announcement by the country's Prime Minister to start implementing a plan to annex parts of the Palestinian territories in flagrant violation of international law and United Nations resolutions and in a blatant challenge to the international community, which has expressed, at different levels, its clear rejection of these aggressive policies.

For more than seven decades, Israel, the occupying Power, has pursued and still pursues its aggressive practices against the brotherly Palestinian people. The front runners of these practices, which have never ended, are the confiscation of land, the demolition of homes, the settlement expansion, the violation of human rights, the desecration of holy sites, coupled with restrictions on movement and tightening the unfair siege on Gaza, the economic strangulation and all other forms of collective punishment.

In the same vein, despite the international efforts, the multiple United Nations resolutions and the agreements concluded, successive Israeli Governments not only have ignored and violated those references, but rather have taken a series of unilateral decisions and measures, within a fait accompli policy, to change the legal and historical status of the Arab lands and implement the Israeli expansionist plans.

These include the decisions to annex East Jerusalem and impose Israeli sovereignty over it, changing its demographic composition and Judaizing the city, the decision to impose sovereignty on the occupied Syrian Golan, the so-called Jewish nation-State law, the never-ending projects to build thousands of settlement units and, recently, the plan to annex parts of the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea.

The intended Israeli annexation represents a grave violation of international law, including the relevant United Nations resolutions, and yet another aggression against the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. It constitutes a serious threat to any efforts to advance the regionally and internationally desired peace, and it would have extremely dangerous repercussions on the whole situation in the region.

In that regard, Tunisia renews its call upon the international community to assume its responsibilities at this decisive stage by opposing this plan and preventing its implementation as an urgent priority in order to uphold international law, preserve the prospects for peace and prevent the escalation to a new cycle of violence and chaos.

Tunisia also stresses the need to send a strong and clear message to Israel that the international community rejects the annexation plan and stands against the continuing violation of international law, putting at risk the security, peace and stability of the region and the world.

Based on the principles of its foreign policy, Tunisia reiterates its firm and principled support to the brotherly Palestinian people in their struggle to regain their legitimate rights, establish their independent and sovereign State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and resolve all final-status issues through a just, durable and comprehensive solution in accordance with the resolutions of international legality, the two-State vision and the Arab Peace Initiative. Tunisia also affirms that the Palestinian rights are not time-bound and that the Israeli measures are null and void and with no international legal effect.

Our absolute rejection of the annexation plan and our call for concerted international efforts to oppose it and prevent its ultimate implementation are equally matched by our demand for an end to the Israeli occupation, which constitutes the root cause and the most prominent embodiment of the Palestinian tragedy that has been going on for more than 70 years, with all the aggressions and violations to which the brotherly Palestinian people are still subject, continuously and systematically.

In this connection, we renew our call on the Security Council to compel Israel to end the occupation and withdraw from all Palestinian and Arab lands to the borders of 4 June 1967, according to a specific timetable. We also stress the importance of intensifying efforts to revive the peace process in accordance with the internationally agreed parameters.

Tunisia stresses, in the meantime, the importance of providing international protection to the Palestinian people, lifting the unjust blockade imposed on Gaza and ending all other forms of discrimination and collective punishment. We call upon the international community to continue to support the Palestinian Authority's efforts to confront the growing economic, social and humanitarian challenges as a result of the continued occupation and the novel coronavirus pandemic threat.

In closing, Tunisia reaffirms that stability and security cannot be restored in the region, and that peace and calm cannot be guaranteed to its populations, unless a just and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict is reached.

I renew my thanks to Secretary-General António Guterres, to the French presidency of the Security Council and to all the brotherly and friendly nations that have expressed their support for upholding international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the universal values of peace.

Annex 7**Statement by the Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, James Cleverly**

I thank Special Coordinator Mladenov and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States for their respective briefings.

I address the Council today at a critical juncture. Like many, I am troubled and frustrated by the lack of progress towards a two-State solution.

In 1947, at the end of the British Mandate over Palestine, the General Assembly confirmed the international community's view of the need for partition into two States. In 1993, the Palestine Liberation Organization recognized Israel and accepted the 1967 lines as the basis for the future boundary between Israel and the Palestinian territories. It was a moment of great optimism. It marked Palestinian agreement to the solution Israel itself had accepted in 1947, and confirmed the only solution that the world could see.

Despite moments of optimism, both parties have struggled to find the common ground needed for a lasting, peaceful settlement. It has always been true that any peace settlement needs the support of both peoples — because a settlement, and peace, must be agreed and not imposed. But it also needs pragmatism and flexibility from both sides.

The Secretary-General, in his report (S/2020/555) on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), and the Special Coordinator, in his briefing to the Council today, have outlined the many elements that have stalled the peace process. We have heard about settlement expansion, increases in demolitions and seizures, and worsening settler violence. The United Kingdom has long urged Israel to end these counterproductive activities.

Meanwhile, Palestinian militants have fired rockets and launched incendiary devices from Gaza, threatening Israel's security. Israelis have suffered from the scourge of terrorism and anti-Semitic incitement. Let me be clear. The United Kingdom is committed to Israeli security. We condemn all forms of incitement and anti-Semitism wholeheartedly.

Most critically, Israel's plans to annex parts of the West Bank pose a significant and possibly existential threat to the peace process. The United Kingdom has been clear, in this Council and beyond, that unilateral action is unacceptable. Annexation risks signalling Israeli rejection of the very solution Israel and the international community agreed in 1947.

As my Prime Minister said on 16 June, the United Kingdom strongly opposes annexation, which would breach international law. The United Kingdom will not recognize any unilateral attempt to change the border. Such a step would go against the rules-based international order and the Charter of the United Nations. Annexation could not go unanswered, and we implore Israel to reconsider.

Such a step has the potential to trigger regional instability, threatening Israel's own security. It could have a real impact on Israel's relations with the region, as well as the international community. And let us not forget the consequences for those most directly affected: the Palestinian people. We cannot predict the implications as a loss of hope. But we can say with some degree of certainty that it is the extremists who would benefit most.

We have to find another way. A lasting agreement will be achieved only by real movement towards renewed peace by negotiation — negotiations that create a

viable and sovereign Palestinian State, living in peace and security, side-by-side with Israel, based on the 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both States, and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees.

I address the Council today to express the United Kingdom's willingness to stand with the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships in choosing the path of dialogue. We do not underestimate the challenges, but firmly believe that with bold leadership, peace is possible. The United Kingdom stands ready to support all efforts to achieve a lasting and peaceful solution.

We recognize that the United States retains a key role in the Middle East peace process. We therefore urge the United States, Israel and the Palestinian leadership to find a means of restarting discussions, supported by the international community.

As I have said, flexibility, pragmatism and, indeed, compromise will be needed on all sides. We understand this path is not easy, but we must do all we can to pursue a negotiated outcome. A peace imposed is no peace at all. It will achieve no more than to sow the seeds of future mistrust and instability. Both Israelis and Palestinians deserve better.

Despite the setbacks, the United Kingdom continues to believe profoundly that a negotiated, genuine two-State solution is the only viable means of bringing peace and stability to Israelis and Palestinians. It is the only way to preserve Israel's Jewish, democratic identity and realize Palestinians' rights, including to self-determination. And it is the only way to permanently bring an end to this conflict.

Annex 8

Statement by the Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, Alvin Botes

Allow me to express my gratitude to you, Sir, for calling this meeting today. Our deliberations should by no means be seen as business as usual. In this regard, I would like to thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov for his insightful yet perturbing account of the situation in the Middle East — more specifically, the question of Palestine.

Seventy-two-years ago, we spoke of a catastrophe — a period in Palestinian history known as “Al-Naqba” — when more than 700,000 Palestinians were forced to abandon their homeland and seek refuge in neighbouring countries and abroad as a Jewish State came into being on Palestinian soil.

Today, 72 years later, it would seem that Palestinians are facing another imminent catastrophe as Israel is set to advance legislation to annex parts of the West Bank and the Jordan valley from as early as 1 July. These threats and pronouncements of annexation are in stark violation of international law, disregard international humanitarian law, Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 446 (1979) and 2334 (2016), and agreed-upon parameters for peace, and further undermine any prospect of peace between the parties.

For more than half a century, the world has stood by and watched as Palestinian land — olive grove by olive grove, village by village, town by town — has been lost. We have witnessed the daily suffering of Palestinians as they are subjected to the continued construction and expansion of illegal Israeli settlements on their rightful land. We have watched as Palestinians have endured systematic discrimination, as opposed to settlers, who are provided services and allowed civil liberties such as freedom of movement and the issuance of building permits, a right denied to Palestinians living in the occupied territories. Moreover, we have observed as Palestinian land and property was seized and livelihoods snatched away and destroyed, despite being on the right side of the law, as determined by international law and numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

We have borne witness as violence, riots and civil disobedience campaigns have swept across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as Palestinians have engaged in their struggle for their inalienable rights to freedom and self-determination. We have looked on as men, women, the elderly and children have been victimized, assaulted and detained.

We have looked on as the humanitarian situation has continued to deteriorate in the Gaza Strip, with Palestinians continuing to live in unacceptable, precarious circumstances, where their movement has been restricted, where they have been given limited access to water and electricity, and deprived of the basic human rights you and I take for granted on a daily basis. We have also witnessed the occupying Power restrict access to educational and economic opportunities. Additionally, at a time when the world is facing a global pandemic with the spread of the coronavirus disease, the Palestinians have to contend with a severely overburdened and fragile health-care system. We have also, unfortunately, seen the reduction of contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which, for decades, has been providing basic social and humanitarian services to Palestinians.

It is said that history has a way of repeating itself, yet it would appear that we do not learn from these turbulent and painfully unjust historical events which continue to shape our present. My own country has in its past not been spared these injustices, where one people is assigned a higher value, above another. This, unfortunately,

runs to the core of the occupation of Palestine and it threatens peace, stability and security, a collective value that is at the very core of the United Nations, which is commemorating its seventy-fifth anniversary this year.

Yet, we ask ourselves, what is the *raison d'être* of the Security Council if we continue to look the other way, adopt hollow resolutions, ignore existing resolutions and fail to act against those who so arrogantly defy the very principles on which the Organization was founded?

Israel, the occupying Power in Palestine, has consistently demonstrated, through its actions, total disrespect for legality and justice. This is, once again, evident in the Secretary-General's fourteenth quarterly report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) (S/2020/555), which contains detailed accounts of continuous settlement activity by the occupying Power despite the intentions set out in resolutions adopted by the Security Council, such as resolution 2334 (2016). In this regard, South Africa concurs with the observation by the Secretary-General that

“[t]he establishment and expansion of settlements fuel resentment, hopelessness and disillusionment among Palestinians, are key drivers of human rights violations and significantly heighten Israeli-Palestinian tensions” (S/2020/555, *para.* 57).

Therefore, the intention to annex more Palestinian land should be regarded as the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. It is time that Israel, as the occupying Power, be held accountable for its illegal actions and consistent violations of international law and resolutions of this Council.

To date, the Security Council has taken no action to stop the building of settlements on illegally occupied land; to stop the confiscation and destruction of Palestinian land and property; or to stop the illegal blockade against Gaza. The Security Council's inaction has carried on for far too long and, in so doing, has failed the people of Palestine. How can we expect to remain credible and call on parties in other conflicts on the Council's agenda to abide by and implement resolutions or force further Council action when we seemingly condone the actions of the Israeli Government by failing to act against its violations?

We should be ashamed of ourselves. We should be ashamed that, on our watch, we have ignored Palestinians and denied them their basic human rights and aspirations. We should be ashamed that, by our silence, we have protected the oppressor instead of the oppressed. We should be ashamed that, decades later, a lasting and just peaceful resolution of the continued occupation remains as elusive as it did in 1948, when this matter was first brought to the Security Council. We should ask ourselves what message is sent to those fighting for their inalienable rights to freedom, self-determination and sovereignty, and to those who oppress and deny those rights?

Allow me to reiterate that South Africa will continue to support all efforts aimed at the establishment of a viable, contiguous Palestinian State, existing side by side and in peace with Israel, within internationally recognized borders, based on those of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with all relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and internationally agreed parameters.

In this regard, peace can prevail only once both parties engage in inclusive dialogue and constructive negotiations without preconditions as this is the only means to ensure lasting peace, security and stability. Additionally, there must be an accountability mechanism in place to ensure that commitments made are implemented. To this end a viable and sustainable peace plan for the Middle East must ensure that Palestine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and economic viability are guaranteed, with sovereign equality between Palestine and Israel.

Annex 9**Statement by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam, Dang Minh Khoi**

At the outset, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the French presidency of the Council for organizing this important meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. My delegation also wishes to thank the Secretary-General and the other briefers for their comprehensive briefings.

The Middle East is a region of great geopolitical significance that has attracted much international attention in recent years. Needless to say, instabilities in the region can pose multifaceted and complex implications for international peace and security. Among those, perhaps the situation most desired to be addressed is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Unresolved historical, religious and territorial issues have contributed to the protraction of tensions and conflicts ever since the early years of the United Nations, causing tremendous losses and casualties, especially to the Palestinian people.

Viet Nam joins the international community in its unwavering support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people and their inalienable rights. We strongly support the two-State solution, including the establishment of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, in peaceful coexistence alongside the State of Israel, with secure and internationally recognized borders on the basis of the pre-1967 lines and negotiated settlement, and in accordance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016).

Viet Nam has closely followed the situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. We share the international community's concerns over the information on Israel's possible annexation of parts of the occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank, which, if it happens, may have serious and irreversible impacts on the viability of the two-State solution as well as on peace and stability in the Middle East region. Viet Nam therefore calls on the parties concerned to refrain from any unilateral action that could complicate the situation or escalate ongoing tensions. We further urge the parties to continue to exercise self-restraint and to refrain from the use of force or any incitement to violence. As the coronavirus disease pandemic continues to spread in the Middle East, we call on the relevant parties to facilitate humanitarian activities aimed at supporting the Palestinian Authority's response and preventing the creation of further economic, social and humanitarian burdens for the Palestinian people.

Viet Nam supports the continuing efforts aimed at reaching a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through dialogue and negotiation, thus helping to protect the lives of peoples and ensure the legitimate interests of the parties concerned, as well as to promote peace, stability and development in the Middle East. To that end, Viet Nam welcomes all initiatives and efforts by international stakeholders and the Palestinian people to restart the Middle East peace process. We will actively contribute to fostering direct discussions between Israel and Palestine within and beyond the United Nations framework.

Viet Nam also wishes to take this opportunity to express its appreciation and strong support for the role played by and the endeavours of the United Nations, the Secretary-General and the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. To the best of its ability, Viet Nam has continued to make financial contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and calls on the international community to strengthen budgetary support for the Agency in order to provide adequate and timely humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people.

Annex 10**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve**

I thank the Secretary-General for his introductory remarks. I also thank the Special Coordinator, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, for his briefing. I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and the many ministers present today.

We welcome the written report (S/2020/555) and fully subscribe to its observations.

We share the deep concern expressed here today by the Secretary-General regarding the stated intention of the Government of Israel to annex parts of the occupied West Bank. It is a concern largely shared by the Council and the wider international community, as was also stated in the report.

A unilateral decision formalizing an annexation, even limited in scope, would constitute a clear breach of international law, as the Secretary-General said, including the United Nations Charter, the Fourth Geneva Convention and the resolutions of the Council. Belgium will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including Jerusalem, other than those agreed upon by the parties through direct negotiations. The West Bank will remain an occupied territory under international humanitarian law. We will continue to distinguish between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967.

In view of our obligations under international law and European Union law, annexation will have an impact on the bilateral relations between Belgium and Israel and will also inevitably have significant consequences for the relationship between Israel and the European Union, as stated by the High Representative and Vice-President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell. In addition to its legal, political and economic consequences, annexation also risks gravely imperilling the security situation on the ground and in the wider region, thus undermining efforts to achieve regional peace and stability.

Belgium is equally concerned by the negative impact of such a move on human rights and the humanitarian situation in the occupied territory, including through the potential imposition of a two-tiered system of unequal political, social and economic rights based on ethnicity. Not only will it further exacerbate issues related to the occupation — such as movement and access restrictions, basic service delivery and land property — it will also further affect communities that are already among the most vulnerable in the Palestinian population, leading to an increased coercive environment that would further fuel instability. Furthermore, annexation would deliver a devastating blow to the viability of a Palestinian State and the two-State solution and would close the door to future negotiations.

We therefore strongly urge Israel to refrain from any unilateral decision that would lead to the annexation of any parts of occupied Palestinian territory. We also call on the international community, especially those States with influence, to exert all efforts to prevent any such steps.

The intention of the Israeli Government to annex parts of the occupied West Bank has led the Palestinian Authority to consider itself absolved of the agreements and understandings with Israel and the United States in the security and civilian areas. On 3 June, the Palestinian Authority announced that it would refuse to receive the clearance funds collected by Israel on its behalf. We are concerned about the consequences of those developments, specifically their socioeconomic and humanitarian impact.

Only through meaningful and direct negotiations will it be possible to arrive at a two-State solution that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations to statehood and sovereignty.

We have taken note of the Palestinian leadership's willingness to achieve a just and comprehensive peace, as mentioned in the report. Against that backdrop, it is all the more important that all Palestinian factions invest in the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under a single, democratic national Government. We strongly encourage the holding of elections once conditions permit it.

It is important that the international community put its weight behind efforts to restart meaningful negotiations. In that regard, we welcome the conference call held on 22 May at the level of Envoys of the Middle East Quartet. We hope that efforts within this format or an enlarged format can continue.

We are convinced that only through a negotiated solution based on internationally agreed parameters and respect for international law can just and lasting peace be achieved. The fulfilment of the aspirations of only one side will lead only to more instability in Israel and Palestine and the wider region as well as to the perpetuation of conflict.

Annex 11**Statement by the State Councilor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, Wang Yi**

China welcomes this open video-teleconference of the Security Council on the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

The question of Palestine, still unresolved after 70-plus years, continues to challenge the human conscience and international justice. Despite flare-ups in other regional hotspots, the Palestinian question remains at the heart of the Middle East situation. Its just and equitable settlement is a prerequisite for lasting peace and security in the region.

Recently, the persistent tension between Palestine and Israel has put the peace process in jeopardy and heightened the risk of regional conflict.

This development is deeply unsettling. The situation has further highlighted the significance of the four-point proposal on the Palestinian question put forth by President Xi Jinping in 2017. Building on this proposal, I wish to emphasize the following four points.

First, the international consensus must not be contravened. The two-State solution is a bottom line of international justice on which there should be no backtracking. China supports the establishment of an independent State of Palestine that enjoys full sovereignty on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. That is an inalienable right of the Palestinian people, one that cannot be compromised on or bargained away. At the same time, Israel's right to survival and its legitimate security concerns should be fully respected. The relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the two-State solution set out the overall direction of the final settlement and embody the wisdom and hard work of several generations of people. They are important milestones in the Middle East peace process and, more importantly, the very foundation for resolving the Palestinian question. As such, they should be duly observed and reaffirmed.

Secondly, the peace talks must not be abandoned. Palestine and Israel are and will remain each other's neighbour. Seeking one's own absolute security through unilateral actions will only aggravate tensions and undermine mutual trust. The only viable way is for Palestine and Israel to resume dialogue on an equal footing as soon as possible in order to rebuild trust, de-escalate disputes and work out a way to live in peace as neighbours. The issue of settlements is a key item of the final-status talks. The Security Council has long made it clear that the establishment of such settlements constitutes a violation under international law. The question of the occupied territories in the West Bank should be resolved as early as possible based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, and the final Palestine-Israel border delineated through peace talks. China calls on all relevant parties to remain committed to the strategic choice of peace talks, cherish the outcomes of previous talks and refrain from any actions that may intensify tensions between Palestine and Israel.

Thirdly, international support must not slacken. The Palestinian question, instead of being marginalized, should remain front and centre on the international agenda. The global community, especially countries with influence on Palestine and Israel, should stick to an impartial and just position, actively promote peace talks and push forward the Middle East peace process with sincere efforts. Only when the voices of countries in that region, Palestine in particular, are heeded and all parties' concerns are accommodated will the broadest consensus be achieved. Solutions that depart from the track of peace will never bring enduring peace to the Middle East.

China supports President Abbas's call for an international peace conference and an enlarged multilateral mechanism for peace and will positively consider participating in appropriate ways.

Fourthly, humanitarian issues must not be ignored. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has further deepened Palestine's economic and humanitarian plight. It is imperative to end the blockade on the Gaza Strip as soon as possible and earnestly fulfil the obligations undertaken under the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization and other international treaties. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has been working to ease the humanitarian situation for Palestinian refugees and the pressure on host countries. China appreciates its efforts and calls on the international community to support Palestine in growing its economy, facilitate the work of UNRWA and help improve the humanitarian situation in Palestine. We oppose using the threat of cutting off assistance as a tool to exert pressure.

China is a sincere friend of the Palestinian people. We have all along followed the Middle East peace process with concern and remained a staunch force for international justice and fairness and for all efforts conducive to de-escalation. To help the Palestinian people fight COVID-19, China has provided medical supplies such as testing kits, masks and protective suits and recently sent a team of Chinese experts to Palestine to comprehensively share experiences on containment, diagnostics and therapeutics.

China values the role of UNRWA. This year, China will donate \$1 million to the Agency, provide anti-epidemic supplies to UNRWA-affiliated medical institutions and, through it, personal protective equipment to Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Going forward, China will continue to support and help Palestine to the best of its ability.

The Middle East is again at a crossroads between peace and turbulence. In shouldering the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council should and must stand with peace and justice, with righteousness and conscience, and play its due role in bringing about a comprehensive, just and enduring solution to the Palestine question.

Annex 12**Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations**

We thank Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov for his briefing on the current situation in the region.

We welcome the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, as well the Ministers that are honouring us with their presence.

Allow me to take a brief moment to express our heartfelt condolences to the family of Sergeant Major Rama Wahyudi, the Indonesian official whose life was lost in the line of duty during the recent attack on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We condemn that attack in the strongest terms. We also wish a speedy recovery to the officer who was injured.

We were deeply concerned to hear the latest details about the marked deterioration of the Israeli-Palestinian situation. The dangerous path that the conflict is taking is eroding the prospect of the achievement of any sustainable peace.

As we were given plenty of warning about, the unilateral actions in violation of international law systematically carried out by one of the parties are undermining the foundations for achieving such peace and prolonging the conflict and will cause further deterioration in the humanitarian situation of many Palestinians. The continual violence, incitement and provocations, coupled with financial pressures and the lack of internal reconciliation as well as a deep humanitarian crisis, are elements that close the door to any prospect for renewed negotiations and will likely trigger more instability and suffering.

No amount of humanitarian or economic support on its own will address the challenges that the Palestinians are experiencing. These will ultimately require real political solutions in order to tackle them.

The Dominican Republic's fundamental principles include respect for human rights and international law; it is committed to peaceful coexistence and solidarity among nations. We therefore reaffirm our full support for a two-State solution, as set out in various United Nations resolutions, and remain committed to the framework based on previous bilateral agreements between Israelis and Palestinians. We encourage the parties to foster real dialogue and relaunch negotiations towards a peace plan based on internationally reached agreements.

We commend the continued delivery of humanitarian and development assistance to the Palestinians by the United Nations and other organizations, and we encourage others to urgently support those efforts.

Unfortunately, the actions that have been taken to address the coronavirus disease pandemic have created a negative shock for both the Israeli and Palestinian economies and have the potential to have profound repercussions on public welfare, employment, social cohesion and financial and fiscal stability.

In that regard, we call for the immediate release of Palestinian children from Israeli detention facilities and for them to be allowed to return safely to their families and communities, and urge that new admissions to such facilities be halted. We also urge the Israeli authorities to ensure that children in their jurisdiction enjoy the highest attainable health standards and that they are protected from violence, abuse and exploitation.

Damaged infrastructure, reduced services, food insecurity, discrimination and displacement caused by the conflict have affected women in particular, notably those in the marginalized Palestinian territories.

As the international community, we must understand that our collective action must be aimed at contributing, in an impartial and effective way, to the search for real solutions. We must collectively reaffirm the need to increase efforts and continue working until we achieve constructive dialogue that paves the way to a new stage in building true peace between Israel and Palestine.

In conclusion, we urge against any unilateral action that undermines the mutual respect, solidarity and justice needed in the common search for peace. The current path will only push Palestinians and Israelis further apart, deepen the occupation and jeopardize the future viability of the two-State solution.

Annex 13**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson**

I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit for his presence and his briefing. I also thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his briefing.

We welcome the initiative taken by the United States, which has provided us the impetus to revive the Middle East peace process.

The counterproposal submitted by the Palestinian Authority to the Middle East Quartet is a step in the right direction. It is essential that both parties take steps to engage in a constructive dialogue with the aim of achieving a negotiated two-State solution that takes into account the legitimate aspirations of both parties and Israeli security concerns.

In order to maintain the current momentum towards peace, it is vital to refrain from any unilateral steps that would undermine it. A unilateral annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank would undermine the prospects of a negotiated two-State solution and threaten the stability of the region. We are also concerned about Israel's continued settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.

I would like to recall an important element of resolution 2334 (2016) — the prevention of all acts of terror, incitement, provocation and violence against civilians. Although in recent months the situation in Gaza has remained relatively calm, we stress that firing rockets from Gaza into Israel, as well as any other form of violence targeting civilians, is unacceptable.

We are worried about the announcement by the Palestinian leadership regarding terminating all agreements with Israel and the United States, including those involving security cooperation. We call on the Palestinian Authority to reconsider that decision and remain committed to the Oslo Accords.

In order to engage in direct negotiations, both parties need Governments with legitimate and democratic mandates. We encourage the Palestinian Authority to set a date for the holding of elections throughout the occupied Palestinian territories.

Finally, we reiterate the important role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in supporting efforts to prevent a major coronavirus disease outbreak in the occupied Palestinian territories. We commend Jordan and Sweden for organizing the UNRWA Pledging Conference to raise funds for the Agency's needs, which took place yesterday. Estonia has been a long-standing contributor to UNRWA, with an annual core funding of €80,000. For the current year, we have already allocated an additional €200,000 to support UNRWA's activities.

Annex 14**Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: French]

I thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his introduction, as well as the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and the Special Coordinator for their briefings. I also welcome the participation of the Ministers of Palestine, South Africa, Indonesia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, Viet Nam and the United Kingdom.

We are at a turning point in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Almost 30 years ago, the signatories to the Oslo Accords had the courage to take the first steps towards resolving the oldest conflict on the Council's agenda. With one week to go before the deadline of 1 July, the hope of achieving comprehensive peace in the Middle East has never seemed so remote.

France shares the deep concerns expressed today by the members of the Council and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, as well as those shared on several occasions by the High Representative of the European Union regarding the Israeli Government's declared threat to annex parts of the West Bank after 1 July. That would be a serious breach of international law, in flagrant violation of the principle of non-acquisition of territory by force, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Any annexation of territory in the West Bank, regardless of its size, would also irreversibly undermine the peace process and the two-State solution. Such a decision would further undermine the stability of a region beset by crises and Israel's relationship with its Arab neighbours.

Our mobilization is therefore essential to prevent any annexation decision, which would be in the interests of neither the Palestinians nor the Israelis. France calls on the Israeli Government to refrain from any unilateral measures that could lead to annexation. France will not recognize any modification of the June 1967 lines except those agreed by the two parties, in accordance with international law, the resolutions of the Council and the parameters on which the two-State solution is based. As Minister Le Drian said, given its gravity, annexation cannot go unanswered. Specifically, it would adversely affect the European Union's relations with Israel.

Unless we are able to relaunch a peace process immediately, our collective responsibility — and first and foremost that of the Council, which has defined and endorsed the parameters for resolving the conflict — is to preserve the conditions for future negotiations and the possibility of an agreement between the parties.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict will not be resolved through unilateral decisions. Together with its European partners, France will continue to promote the path of negotiations and, more broadly, multilateralism and the defence of a rules-based international order. We stand ready to play our full part in relaunching an ambitious political process and resuming credible negotiations based on international law, the relevant resolutions of the Council and internationally agreed parameters.

Those parameters are clear and well-known — two States, living side by side in peace and security along secure and recognized borders, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States. Any annexation, regardless of its size, would undoubtedly be an irreversible step in the opposite direction — that of a single State — which would put an end to the national aspirations of the Palestinians and to the Israeli democratic project.

We must collectively warn against that prospect and reaffirm our readiness to accompany the parties along the two-State path, which is the only one likely to lead to a just and lasting peace in the region.

Annex 15**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, Christoph Heusgen**

We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2020/555). I want to make four points today.

We share the grave concerns set out in the Secretary-General's report about the Government of Israel's stated intention to annex parts of the occupied West Bank. We also share the Secretary-General's assessment that Israeli annexation of any part of the occupied Palestinian territories would constitute a clear violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and relevant Council resolutions, irrespective of the size of the territory and the terminology applied to enact a formal annexation.

Any such annexation would not only have serious negative repercussions for the viability of a two-State solution and the entire peace process, but also for regional stability and the rules-based international order as a whole. It would severely complicate, if not render impossible, the resumption of direct negotiations between the parties towards the objective of a negotiated two-State solution that is acceptable to both sides.

While we wish to intensify and further deepen our cooperation with Israel, we are concerned that annexation would instead harm Israel's standing within the international community, as well as its close bilateral relationship with the European Union and its member States.

As a close partner and friend who deeply cares about the security of Israel, Germany has strongly advised the Israeli Government against the implementation of any unilateral measures aimed at the annexation of occupied Palestinian territories. We are concerned that annexation may not yield security gains for Israel, but could rather achieve the opposite.

On 10 June, Foreign Minister Heiko Maas openly conveyed the German and European concerns regarding the annexation plans in his meetings in Israel with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Alternate Prime Minister Benny Gantz and Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi.

Foreign Minister Maas also met with Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi and Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayeh during a joint video-teleconference, in which the participants confirmed the urgency in preventing an annexation. Today we echo the Secretary-General's call for Israel to abandon its annexation plans.

Germany's position is clear. We will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, unless agreed to by Israelis and Palestinians, and we will continue to distinguish between the internationally recognized territory of the State of Israel and the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, in accordance with our obligations under international law.

A possible annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank would raise serious questions about prospects for a two-State solution and implications of a potential one-State alternative, not least of which is how to address the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians to their own State. What would it mean for Palestinians living in annexed areas? Would they enjoy equal rights?

Germany remains convinced that a negotiated two-State solution based on international law and on the internationally agreed parameters is the only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that meets Israeli and Palestinian security

needs, fulfils Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967, resolves all permanent-status issues and guarantees equal rights for all inhabitants.

We must find a way to revive the political process and resume direct and meaningful negotiations between the parties in order to resolve the final-status issues and achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. Any future discussions or negotiations to reach a final-status agreement should be based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and the internationally agreed parameters.

The format of such direct and meaningful negotiations must be agreed by both parties. We reiterate our support to reviving the Middle East Quartet and call upon all members of the Quartet to demonstrate flexibility in order to overcome any differences and move forward.

In the absence of such negotiations, the parties to the conflict must refrain from taking any measures that could further deteriorate the situation on the ground and undermine the viability of a negotiated two-State solution, especially when such measures would bring closer a de facto one-State reality with unequal rights for Israelis and Palestinians.

As stated in the Secretary-General's report, the establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements fuels resentment, hopelessness and disillusionment among Palestinians, and significantly heightens Israeli-Palestinian tensions.

We reiterate our position that Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories are illegal under international law and severely undermine the prospects for ending the occupation and achieving a negotiated and viable two-State-solution.

We call upon Israel to end the expansion of settlements, the legalization of settlement outposts, the confiscation of Palestinian land and the demolition and seizure of Palestinian-owned structures.

We reiterate our call on the Israeli Government to halt settlement construction plans for Har Homa and Givat Hamatos, as well as for the so-called E-1 area. Disconnecting East Jerusalem from the West Bank would severely undermine the prospects for a viable and contiguous Palestinian State within the framework of a negotiated two-State solution.

Finally, resolution 2334 (2016) needs to be fully implemented — not only with regard to settlement activities but also with regard to acts of terrorism, violence against civilians, incitement, provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric.

We welcome that the Secretary-General's report highlights that continuing violence, terrorist attacks against civilians and incitement to violence also exacerbate mistrust between Israelis and Palestinians.

Germany condemns all attacks on Israel in the strongest possible terms, including attacks against Israeli security forces and the repeated firing of rockets from Gaza into Israel by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Israel has a right to defend itself and respond adequately and proportionally to attacks.

Incidents in which unarmed civilians, in particular children and persons with disabilities, are targeted or subjected to violence must be thoroughly and independently investigated, and perpetrators of crimes must be held accountable.

Annex 16**Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Niger to the United Nations**

The Middle East, cradle of millenary civilizations and the melting pot of three great religions, has for some decades been the scene of conflicts with unspeakable consequences. From Palestine to Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen and the Islamic Republic of Iran, there are countries and peoples exposed to violence, desolation and despair, even though everything predestines them to peace, harmony and prosperity.

My delegation duly followed the statements made today by Secretary-General António Guterres, Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov and Mr. Ahmed Abdul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, all describing the prevailing situation in the Middle East. I thank them most sincerely.

One briefing after another, the Council has pronounced itself on various aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since 1993, despite the Oslo Accords, Israel, the occupying Power, has accelerated rather than halted its policy of building settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, expropriating land and ignoring the legitimate Palestinian demand for a State — a demand that is also supported by the international community.

Many peace processes and plans have been adopted by the international community in order to find a lasting solution to this protracted conflict. Regrettably, the peace processes have been merely processes, but without peace. Yet benchmarks have been set, including by the Council, to pave the way for dialogue and peace.

The occupation by force and seizure of Palestinian land, which are contrary to international law, should end, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016). The Gaza Strip, the only territory spared, is under a blockade that has made it an uninhabitable place, in the words of the United Nations itself. Israel's assertion of sovereignty over the whole of Jerusalem is also a violation of international law. It is also a war crime for Israel, the occupying Power, to settle its own civilian population in an occupied zone. It cannot be said often enough: the settlement policy violates both the principle and the spirit of the peace accords.

Another principle that should underpin the momentum for peace was set out in resolution 1515 (2003), in which the Security Council, together with the international community, enshrined the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security, in strict compliance with the 1967 borders, as the basis for the settlement of this conflict. Twenty-seven years after the signing of the first peace agreement, the Palestinians, sadly, are no closer today to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State than they were yesterday. For instance, a Palestinian youth of 27 years today would have lived only under occupation, with its associated violence and deprivation of all kinds. She would have experienced only detention and the disproportionate use of force, which has also been meted out against women and children.

And yet it is my country's conviction that both Israelis and Palestinians are peoples capable of overcoming this suffering, which afflicts them and distresses us. They have proved it by pooling their efforts in the face of a common enemy, the coronavirus disease, both in Gaza and in the West Bank. Israel, whose genius is known to all, must build peace by renouncing the annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank. Such action, if carried out, would constitute a serious violation of international law and a grave threat to international peace and security. In this regard, my country supports the Secretary-General's call to all stakeholders — Israelis, Palestinians, States of the region and the international community at large — to take immediate

steps to allow the parties to step back and begin the process of re-engaging in a dialogue that will put an end to unilateral action, chart a positive course and avoid falling into chaos.

I would like to conclude by saying that the time has come for us to put an end to this optical illusion, which has paved the way for the triumph of peace of the strongest, a peace of the victors. It is therefore high time to prevent the Council's paralysis on the Israeli-Palestinian question from causing the death by asphyxiation of the two-State solution, which we must save at all costs. I sincerely hope that, through their statements, Mr. Riad Al-Malki, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Palestine, and Mr. Dany Danon, Permanent Representative of Israel, will guide us on the road to reconciliation and peace between their peoples.

Annex 17**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

I would like to begin by joining others in expressing condolences to Ambassador Djani, Foreign Minister Marsudi and the Indonesian people over the tragic loss of an Indonesian peacekeeper.

We welcome high-level representatives participating in today's Security Council video-teleconference on the situation in the Middle East. We thank the Secretary-General, Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, for their briefings.

I now have the honour to read out a statement from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Russia, Mr. Sergey Lavrov, who could not be present at this meeting in person because, as is well known, we are celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the end of the Great Patriotic War today, and Mr. Lavrov is personally participating in commemorative events:

"In this challenging time, as the world struggles to find ways to counter and overcome the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, the international community should not forget about a problem that, despite decades of efforts, is still awaiting its just solution. A Palestinian-Israeli settlement is the key to resolving many other problems in the Middle East and to establishing a just, sustainable, comprehensive and lasting peace in this region. The Palestinian question, which is almost the same age as the United Nations, requires our special and urgent attention.

"We are at a doorstep — in fact, just a few days away from a decision that could undermine efforts to achieve a just and sustainable Middle East settlement. Starting on 1 July, the process of annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank of the Jordan River may be launched by the Israeli Parliament. This is perhaps one of the most serious challenges for the Palestinian cause and for the whole region.

"As a permanent member of the Security Council and a member of the Quartet of international mediators, Russia has always stood, and stands now, against unilateral actions or plans that, as history has shown, are not capable of bringing peace to the Middle East and which prejudice a final settlement. This understanding is shared by the vast majority of the international community.

"The implementation of the aforementioned unilateral plans may erase the prospects for the two-State solution. And we see no alternative to the two-State solution. We see no alternative to the two States — Palestine and Israel — coexisting in peace and security. But the issue of statehood is not the only one. Other aspects of the final status — Jerusalem, refugees, borders, water and settlements — are also pending, but annexation may permanently block the path to their solution and to direct dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis.

"The implementation of plans for the annexation will entail negative and even dangerous consequences for the entire Middle East region. It will directly affect the neighbours of Israel and Palestine — Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. It will affect the destiny of Palestinian refugees around the world. Given the significance of Jerusalem for the three world monotheistic religions, the entire Muslim Ummah, as well as millions of other believers, will be involved in the problem. Irreparable damage will be caused to the prospects for normalizing relations between States of the region.

“Enumerating problems that we encounter is not enough. It is necessary to anticipate, forestall and solve them. Today, as never before, international cooperation and joint steps are required to advance the Middle East peace process. As an active member of the Quartet, Russia stands ready to make every effort to launch direct Palestinian-Israeli negotiations in the interests of achieving a settlement on an internationally recognized basis — United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative — which provides for the creation of an independent, sovereign and territorially contiguous Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We are also ready for a dialogue in other formats with key regional players and for their involvement in the efforts of the Quartet. In this regard, we are in constant contact with Middle East countries and the League of Arab States.

“The task of restoring Palestinian unity on the Palestine Liberation Organization platform is extremely urgent. For our part, we continue contacts with Palestinian representatives and support the efforts of our Egyptian friends in this regard.

“The cessation of aggressive rhetoric, settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories, destruction of Palestinian property, armed clashes and the prevention of terrorist actions are important factors for creating an atmosphere of trust in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations.

“On 23 June, Jordan and Sweden hosted an international video-conference in support of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. We are grateful to the organizers for their initiative. The number of participants and statements made in the video-conference once again confirmed the relevance of the Agency and its stabilizing role.

“In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the need to abandon the annexation steps and launch the Palestinian-Israeli negotiation process as soon as possible in order to achieve a just and sustainable Middle East settlement and peace in the region.”

Annex 18**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Kelly Craft**

I thank the Secretary-General for his opening remarks and Mr. Mladenov for his briefing. We appreciate all the hard work Mr. Mladenov and his team are putting in to address this continued conflict. I would also like to welcome the Ministers and the representative of the League of Arab States to our virtual discussion today.

Peace between the Israelis and Palestinians is the primary reason we are gathered together today, and President Trump has dedicated much time and energy into developing the Vision for Peace. The United States cares deeply about the people of the region, and we believe that the status quo hurts both the Israelis and the Palestinians, and that no one benefits from the existing situation — a perpetual limbo of suffering, lost opportunities, reliance on foreign assistance and repeated cycles of violence, war and destruction.

That is why our team has dedicated three years to finding a way forward from the past failed attempts to an alternative path towards peace and resolution of the conflict. President Trump's Vision for Peace is a genuine effort at peacemaking. It is designed to lead the sides to a realistic two-State solution, offering a viable path to Palestinian statehood, in which Palestinians' legitimate aspirations for independence and national dignity can be realized in a peace agreement with Israel. President Trump stated on 28 January that

“[he] was saddened by the fate of the Palestinian people. They deserve a far better life. They deserve the chance to achieve their extraordinary potential.”

It takes courageous Israeli leadership to make the tough decisions and compromises to reach a settlement. This is the path to peace we must support with respect and understanding in an effort to make this happen.

Without dismissing the hard work put in by dedicated peacemakers over the years, I think we can all agree that past efforts have not brought the sides closer to peace. There have been countless dollars spent, international conferences and United Nations resolutions and statements on the issue, but there has been little real progress. We believe that only bold thinking at this juncture — as laid out in the Vision for Peace — will ultimately be to the benefit of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

We understand that there are elements of our Vision for Peace that some believe should be adjusted, and, as we have clarified on many occasions, it has never been our intent to impose a solution. Again, I ask that the international community and the Palestinian leadership not dismiss our Vision for Peace out of hand and revert to past statements and arguments that have not led to real peace. I believe it is our collective responsibility, for both the people of Israel and the citizens of a future Palestinian State, to keep an open mind and be willing to break with existing paradigms in order to seek resolution to this conflict.

I understand that many participants in today's meeting have concerns with the issue of the potential extension of Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank. At the same time, we ask that that people with this concern also hold the Palestinian leadership accountable for acts for which it is responsible. It does not help anyone to only look backwards and point to what could have been. The Palestinian leadership has a responsibility to pursue the prosperity of its people.

At the end of the day, is reverting to old talking points the best we can do as an international community? The United Nations television archives contain recordings of multiple gatherings like today's. I think we can do better. Actually, I know we can

do better, and I think we owe it to future generations of Palestinians and Israelis to break this cycle and be the catalysts for change.

We therefore again urge the Palestinian leadership to look closely at our Vision for Peace and engage us. As we have said before, our plan is not a “take it or leave it” proposition. It is not set in stone. It is an opening offer. It is the beginning of a conversation — not the end of one.

All the diplomats lined up here today have presented, or will present, their passionate speeches, without however addressing the core issue here: the need for Palestinians and Israelis to work together. Whether it is condemning settlement activity or advancing any other common criticism, the repetitive rhetoric we see in these meetings only inflames tensions, antagonizes the parties and undercuts any chance of real lasting peace.

The hard truth is not that there will never be a judicial resolution to the conflict; arguments about who is wrong as a matter of international law will not bring about peace. This is a complex political problem that can be solved only by negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. The United States, under the leadership of President Trump, is addressing this core issue by offering the beginning of a conversation — I reiterate: the beginning of a conversation. We remain open to speaking with anyone about how to bring the parties to the table, and we both urge and welcome any and all engagement.

Annex 19**Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, Riad Al-Malki**

We often use the image of a crossroads to explain how significant a moment in history is. It means that the next decisions and actions to be taken will determine the course of history and the fate of nations. There is no doubt that this is such a moment.

For now, the driver is Israel, and it seems it will not stop at the crossroads to assess the implications of its choices because it is drunk on power, propelled by infinite impunity, motivated by one single thought under whose influence it has been operating for decades: grabbing a maximum amount of Palestinian land with a minimum number of Palestinians on it.

Israel is under the illusion that that is the destination and that, once it reaches it, it will be able to enjoy the view. It ignores that the road cannot end there and continues downhill towards an escalation of the conflict resulting from an oppressive regime combining colonialism and apartheid. It does not care that humankind has been down this road before, or that former colonial Powers and liberation movements alike have all reached the same conclusion: such a regime cannot prevail and will lead only to more injustice, instability and insecurity.

As many times before, Israel seems determined to ignore that big red stop sign the international community erected to save lives. Israel thinks, as has been its experience so far, that it will not be fined or arrested. It believes that Security Council resolutions are binding for others, that international courts have jurisdiction over others and that sanctions are for others. Israel judges, but cannot be judged. The only true bias towards Israel is the one shielding it from accountability and emboldening it by considering its illegal actions as so-called realities that need to be endorsed rather than reversed. Israel is testing the resolve of the international community, thinking its colonial appetite will prevail over the collective international will to advance regional peace and security and preserve the rules-based multilateral order. We must prove it wrong.

The international community remains committed to the rule of international law and to the international consensus on a just solution to the Palestine question. It opposes annexation in no uncertain terms, as reaffirmed in recent weeks in statements made from capitals from every corner of the globe. The global position also remains unwavering on the illegality of Israel's policies, including settlements. That wide international front, reflected in the gathering in the Jordan Valley just two days ago, with broad Palestinian and international mobilization, in the ministerial meeting of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees held yesterday and in this high-level Security Council meeting, is strong and remains our best hope.

Israel needs to know that annexation will have immediate and tangible repercussions. That is why we have called on the international community to adopt effective measures, including sanctions, to deter annexation and all the other unlawful policies that have prepared the ground for annexation. It must also be made clear that annexation will irreversibly impact Israel's relations with Palestine and the region. The Oslo Accords were supposed to transform us into peace partners, but, regrettably, Israel has continued waging a war against Palestinian lives and rights. It has violated the letter and spirit of the agreements and, with annexation, is taking a decision that will defeat their very purpose. The interim accords were supposed to pave the way for an end to occupation and a final peace agreement. They cannot survive annexation.

As we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Charter of the United Nations, let us honour the purposes and principles of the United Nations — respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction, the suppression of acts of aggression and the prohibition of the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State. Annexation, whether partial or total, gradual or immediate, is the ultimate breach of the United Nations Charter and cannot go unchallenged.

From a legal perspective, annexation is not only unlawful, it is a crime under the Rome Statute. From a political perspective, it will ruin the chances for Palestinian-Israeli and regional peace. From a security perspective, it is utter nonsense, as it replaces internationally recognized, defensible borders with a system of military control and subjugation that only fuels conflict and violence. It is, as stated in the Secretary General's report (S/2020/555), calamitous for Palestinians, Israelis and the region. The only explanation for it is an extremist ideology rooted in denial of the Palestinian right to this land, disregard for international law and negation of history.

It is this ideology that has undermined negotiations time and time again, with Israel using negotiations as cover for its continued colonization. This ideology has fostered a narrative that Palestinians should be grateful that Israel was ready to give them back any part of our own land, fragmented and besieged enclaves, Bantustans, which Palestinians may even be allowed to call a "State". Genuine negotiations must aim at ending occupation to achieve peace, not at perpetuating occupation and calling it peace.

We remain committed to peace. We have presented to the Quartet our position in writing on all final-status issues. We have never retracted any proposal we have made to find a compromise, unlike Israel, which says we must renegotiate all over again with each new Government. We have accepted the long-standing terms of reference and international law as the basis for negotiations, while Israel has rejected and violated them. We accepted the pre-1967 borders, thus agreeing to a historic compromise encompassing only 22 per cent of historical Palestine; yet Israel has spared no effort to undermine those borders. The entire world recognizes the significance of the Arab Peace Initiative and the promise it holds for our region. Where is the Israeli peace initiative? Even with the United States plan, Israel said it is ready to grab immediately whatever parts of our land the plan unlawfully grants it, while expressing readiness to negotiate the rest indefinitely.

That is why we call for an international peace conference and a multilateral mechanism that will help advance peace by holding the parties accountable and ensuring that negotiations are neither a smoke screen nor a time-wasting exercise while Israel finalizes its colonial plans but, rather, that they are the path to just and lasting peace.

While Israel spares no effort to erase the pre-1967 borders, the Green Line, the world must consolidate them, including by recognizing the State of Palestine and by making any unilateral encroachment over the Green Line a red line. Every State has the power to help us change course before it is too late, the power to help end the Israeli occupation and salvage the two-State solution, the power to save lives, the power to preserve our global order. In fact, they have a legal and moral obligation to use that power through non-recognition of, and non-assistance to, illegal actions and through distinction and accountability. Upholding their obligations is the only path to ensure Israel abides by its own obligations.

At the end, allow me, Mr. President, to thank you for convening this important meeting. I also wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his

report and relentless efforts, and those of his envoy, to advance peace. If Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), were implemented today, peace would be a reality tomorrow.

Allow me also to seize this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary General of the League of Arab States and the Ministers for their participation today as a clear signal of the urgency and gravity of the matter. I also wish to thank France and the Council members — past, present and incoming — for their consistent, principled stances, including against annexation. Allow me, finally, to thank the countries and groups, including the Group of Arab States, which has been fully mobilized in the lead-up to this meeting, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the European Union, which continue working to advance freedom, justice and peace, conscious of how this could transform our region and the world.

The Secretary-General highlighted in his report the urgency of reversing the dangerous trajectory we are on. We are at a crossroads, and to reverse course, before it is too late, the international community must take hold of the steering wheel.

Annex 20**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, Danny Ben Yosef Danon**

Since the beginning of the conflict, the Palestinians have chosen rejectionism over realism. They reject the idea of a Jewish State. They do not want a Palestinian State beside a Jewish State except at the expense of a Jewish State. They rejected the United Nations partition plan in 1947 and have rejected every Israeli offer for peace since. In recent decades, they have come to even reject every offer of negotiations. Instead of working towards peace, they have promoted rejectionism and the glorification of terrorism.

The decision we face today is between realism and rejectionism. The reality is that Israel wants peace and security. Unfortunately, the Palestinians, time and again, choose rejectionism over any realistic solution.

There are currently significant regional opportunities, most notably President Trump's peace initiative. It is an important milestone for the region and represents a significant opportunity. As Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated during his White House visit in January this year, Israel has agreed to negotiate peace with the Palestinians on the basis of that peace plan. Israel will pursue the plan responsibly and in full cooperation with the United States, while maintaining Israel's peace agreements and strategic interests. We expect the international community to make it clear to the Palestinians that their refusal to engage will not advance Palestinian interests.

As the decades have gone by and the conflict has continued, reality has changed. Solutions that may have been relevant many years ago are no longer realistic. But the Palestinian leadership refuses to accept the consequences of their rejectionism. They have built a false narrative of the conflict and continue to fight for unrealistic solutions that do not include a Jewish State. Unfortunately, the Palestinian leadership is encouraged to do so by some in the international community who have chosen to reward the Palestinians' rejectionism and ignore reality. They have adopted the Palestinian narrative and believe that tried-and-failed solutions from years ago are somehow still relevant.

The truth is that, even decades later, some in the international community are still unwilling to admit that the Palestinians were never really interested in a genuine, practical solution to the conflict. Instead of confronting the Palestinian leadership, they have tried to appease them by buying every rotten bill of goods the Palestinians were selling. This approach of blindly accepting the Palestinian narrative and demands has not, and will not, lead to a lasting and sustainable end to the conflict.

There is a strong and undeniable connection between the Jewish people and their historical homeland of Judea and Samaria. This has been true for over three millennia, and no Palestinian propaganda can change that. Through official statements and policies, as well as educational textbooks, the Palestinian Authority tries to erase the Jewish people's ancient claim to the land of Israel. It wrongfully tries to paint Jews as European colonists who must be expelled.

Many in the international community have adopted this false narrative, which stands in complete contradiction with history and international law. Should Israel decide to extend its sovereignty, it would be doing so with respect to areas over which it has always maintained a legitimate historical and legal claim.

The Bible is the cornerstone of the religions of the estimated 14 million Jews, 1.9 billion Muslims and 2.3 billion Christians around the world; therefore, let us go

back to it. The Bible describes how God said to Abraham: “For all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever” (*The Holy Bible, Genesis 13:15*). After being promised all of the land, Abraham chose to build a home in Hebron, in the heart of Judea.

The Jewish claim to the Land of Israel is also rooted in history. Ever since Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt, through the Sinai Desert, to the land of Israel, returning to the land that God had promised Abraham, Jews have lived and exercised sovereignty in the Promised Land. Even when the Romans destroyed the Second Temple in the year 70 and the Jews were exiled from their home, Jewish communities survived in Jerusalem and elsewhere in our homeland.

Historic artefacts are scattered across our land and around the world, including right outside the Security Council Chamber, attesting to the Jewish connection to the land. On the Arch of Titus in Rome, one can find “The spoils of Jerusalem”, an image of Roman soldiers carrying the spoils they took from the Holy Jewish Temple as they exiled Jews from their home. Those artefacts are not 50 or 100 years old, but thousands of years old. So, too, is our history in the land of Israel. And throughout that time in the diaspora, the Jewish people never once relinquished our claim to our homeland.

The story of the Jews returning to the land of Israel in the late nineteenth century to join their brothers and sisters who had never left is not a story of a foreign people colonizing a foreign land, but one of a native people reuniting in their ancient homeland.

Long before the founding of the Palestinian Authority and its propaganda machine, the international community recognized the rights of the Jewish people to their land — I heard my colleague from Germany speaking of international law. In the 1917 Balfour Declaration, the British stated their objective of achieving “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people”. That national home encompassed the entire land of Israel, including Judea and Samaria. During the San Remo Conference, which formed the basis for the League of Nations Mandate system, the allies adopted Britain’s Balfour Declaration. In 1922, the League of Nations designated the land west of the Jordan River in its entirety to be the territory allotted to a Jewish homeland.

In 1945 the Charter of the United Nations, the Organization’s founding document, was signed. Article 80, paragraph 1, of the Charter specifies that

“nothing in this Chapter shall be construed in or of itself to alter in any manner the rights whatsoever of any states or any peoples or the terms of existing international instruments to which Members of the United Nations may respectively be parties.”

In other words, the League of Nations recognition of the right of the Jewish people to a State in their homeland was embraced once again in one of the main sources of international law, the United Nations Charter.

Those who oppose Israel’s legal claims to that territory also wrongly mischaracterize any potential decision by Israel to extend its sovereignty to that territory as so-called “annexation.” These objections are the result of embracing a Palestinian false narrative, rather than of an assessment of the historical and legal facts. Let us be honest and clear: the Palestine Liberation Organization is not, and never was, a State and has never been the sovereign in that territory — never.

Another objection we hear is that applying sovereignty will harm regional stability. We have heard this argument many times before. In 1948, before Israel declared its independence, we were warned not to do so because the response would

mean the end of the dream of a Jewish homeland. In 1967, after the Six Day War and the liberation of Jerusalem, Israel was warned of the repercussions of extending sovereignty to the united city of Jerusalem. In 1981, despite opposition similar to what we hear today, Prime Minister Begin declared the application of Israeli law in the Golan Heights, thus ensuring Israel's ability to protect itself from many threats in the region. Even as recently as 2018, all of us were in the Security Council Chamber when the United States moved its Embassy to Jerusalem and we were warned of the danger that would pose to the stability of the region.

Israel will continue to promote its important interests, which include a realistic and secure peace between Israel and all its neighbours, and will not allow some in the international community to try and intimidate us with threats of violence.

The final objection is one that we have heard today — that applying sovereignty will end any chance of negotiations, and I ask: what negotiations? Where are the negotiations? Instead of speaking with us directly, Minister Al-Maliki comes to the Security Council. Why can we not meet in Ramallah or in Jerusalem?

Israel has repeatedly invited the Palestinian Authority to the negotiating table. Even the few times when they replied to the invitation, it was only to reject it. President Abbas has refused every deal that has been offered to him. He even condemned President Trump's peace plan before it had been published.

Blaming Israel for the lack of negotiations is not only wrong, it is destructive to peace. By blaming Israel, Member States actually arm President Abbas with the last in a long line of excuses not to come to the negotiating table. A solution can come only through direct negotiations between the parties.

The discussion over the extension of Israeli sovereignty to certain areas in Judea and Samaria does not stand in the way of peace. What stands in the way of peace are Palestinian rejectionism and the encouragement that they get from some in the international community. It is time that the Palestinians realize that rejectionism is a losing strategy. It is time that the international community choose realism over rejectionism.

Annex 21**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations, Rodrigo Carazo**

We thank France for including this issue on the agenda and for the opportunity to participate in today's open debate. We also thank the Special Coordinator, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, for his briefing.

On Sunday, 17 May, a new Israeli Government was sworn in. Costa Rica is eager to work with the new Israeli Government based on a long-standing friendship that unites us. We hope that the Government will relaunch and strengthen the peace process in the region through direct and meaningful negotiations between the parties based on international law.

Nevertheless, Costa Rica would like to raise its voice and reiterate our profound concern, in particular over certain provisions stated in the coalition agreement among the political parties that formed the incumbent Government regarding the prospect of the annexation by Israel of parts of the occupied Palestinian territories. The agreement to annex significant parts of the West Bank in the occupied Palestinian territory after 1 July would constitute a serious violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, the Geneva Conventions and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, negatively impacting the two-State solution, while also halting the renewal of negotiations and threatening the efforts to advance regional peace and security. In that regard, Costa Rica would like to stress four important aspects.

First, Costa Rica reiterates that all unilateral actions should be stopped. These measures will only create deeper wounds and further increase the already profound resentment and mistrust that prevail in this conflict. Costa Rica will not recognize any changes to the June 1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed upon by the parties through direct negotiations.

Secondly, we call on Israel and Palestine to take steps towards resuming direct, meaningful and fair negotiations, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions and taking into account the legitimate aspirations and concerns of both parties. Only a solution that is acceptable to both sides will pave the way for sustainable peace, not only for Israel and Palestine but for the whole region.

Thirdly, we reiterate our concern about the human rights violations, as well as the acts of terror, violence against civilians, incitement, provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric among the parties. Costa Rica also condemns all acts of violence and the deaths and injuries on both sides. These crimes should be thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators should be held accountable.

Finally, we call on the Security Council to fulfil its mandate to maintain international peace and security. On two previous occasions, Israel annexed occupied land: East Jerusalem in 1980 and the Syrian Golan Heights in 1981. On both occasions, the Security Council immediately condemned the annexations, but it did not take measures to oppose Israel's actions. We, the international community, have a legal and political responsibility to defend a rules-based international order and to oppose violations of human rights and of the fundamental principles of international law.

In conclusion, Costa Rica remains committed to a negotiated two-State solution that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs. We also remain committed to supporting the Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty and to an end of the occupation that began on 4 June 1967. The two-State solution will resolve all protracted issues, including those related to borders, the status of Jerusalem as the capital of both States and guarantees of equal rights for all inhabitants.

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

[Original: Arabic]

First and foremost, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on the assumption by France of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of June. I am grateful to you for agreeing to convene this meeting at the ministerial level in the light of the delicate situation with regard to the question of Palestine.

I appreciate the briefing concerning the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of 2334 (2016). Egypt associates itself with the statement made in that regard on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The unfolding repercussions of the coronavirus crisis have made it necessary for all States and peoples to show solidarity and mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the most affected societies. However, the crises affecting the Middle East continue to fester, even though the Secretary-General has called for a ceasefire in all international conflicts with a view to creating conditions conducive to their resolution.

The Palestinian cause continues to lose ground and the situation in the occupied territories is deteriorating. Yet the Palestinian cause continues to be the crucial Arab cause; it is pivotal for stability in the region. It is inconceivable that the Middle East region could enjoy any degree of stability so long as the Palestinian people is unable to exercise its legitimate rights, particularly the right to self-determination and the establishment of its independent State.

Even as the Palestinian cause has lost momentum, the practices of Israel on the ground have gained pace. Such actions are intended to impose a fait accompli and undermine the two-State solution, making it impossible to establish a Palestinian State. The settlement activities of Israel 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.

Egypt has consistently emphasized that those practices must be curbed and must come to an end in order to create conditions conducive to the resumption of negotiations between the two sides on the basis of the two-State solution, the Arab Peace Initiative and international law and decisions. However, the agreement for the formation of the new Israeli Government provides for a move towards annexing parts of Palestinian territory in the West Bank, starting in July 2020. That measure would contravene international law, the resolutions of the United Nations and all terms of reference of the peace process; indeed, it would destroy the two-State solution and undermine any prospect of resumed negotiations between the two sides.

Egypt wishes to emphasize that the move by Israel towards the unilateral annexation of Palestinian territories will further aggravate the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, not to mention adversely affecting the security and stability of the region as a whole, in spite of regional and international endeavours to resolve the crises in the region. Moreover, by annexing Palestinian territory, Israel would allow extremist voices to claim that negotiations had failed to secure even a modicum of the Palestinian people's rights, particularly its legitimate right to self-determination. The resulting situation would fuel calls for violence and terrorism in the region, which has endured those scourges for decades. By the same token, it would undermine moderate voices that have consistently endeavoured to uphold the principles of peace and coexistence among all peoples.

Egypt reaffirms its long-standing position that the Palestinian people has the right to exercise self-determination by establishing its independent State on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and that all unilateral practices that undermine peace and stability and endanger the two-State solution must come to an end. Egypt has supported every endeavour to relaunch Palestinian-Israeli negotiations as soon as possible on the basis of the authoritative international decisions and agreed terms of reference for the peace process.

Egypt endorses the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of the region to live in peace and security. Accordingly, it urges that, in order to safeguard the capacities of the region and its peoples, the voice of reason and wisdom must prevail, and any course of action that could undermine stability must be avoided. Egypt hopes that security, stability and peace will prevail in the Middle East region, as both an ideal and a reality, for the sake of a better future for the peoples of the region and generations to come.

Annex 23**Statement by the High Representative and Vice-President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell Fontelles**

I am writing to you, Mr. President, on the occasion of this week's Security Council meeting on the Middle East. As you know, the European Union (EU) remains firmly committed to a negotiated and viable two-State solution that takes into account the legitimate aspirations of both parties and respects the international parameters and all relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016).

As a member of the Middle East Quartet, the European Union has spared no effort to revive a process leading to direct and meaningful negotiations between the parties. In recent days, I have had open, friendly and constructive conversations with a number of senior Israeli interlocutors, including Alternate Prime Minister Benny Gantz and Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi. In addition, I am in close contact with the Palestinian leadership and with other key Arab representatives and, together with EU Foreign Ministers, I also held a useful discussion on the Middle East peace process with United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

In these discussions, I emphasized the EU's opposition to any unilateral steps by the parties, in particular the possible annexation by Israel of any parts of the West Bank. I am firmly convinced that such steps would endanger the continuous efforts of the Security Council and the wider international community to achieve the vision of a region where two States — Israel and Palestine — live side by side within secure and recognized borders.

In March this year, at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, the EU delivered a statement to that effect, noting clearly that “any annexation would constitute a serious violation of international law”. Indeed, a core legal provision of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, is that the acquisition of territory by force is prohibited.

Importantly, unilateral annexation would cause real damage to the prospects for a viable two-State solution. It would also likely cause major difficulties in terms of regional stability and make it more difficult to normalize the relations between Israel and the Arab States in the future.

Unilateral annexation would inevitably have legal consequences for the international community's relations with Israel. In that regard, it is already clear that the EU has responsibilities under international and EU law, including the obligation — as set out by the Security Council — to distinguish between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967. The unilateral annexation of any parts of the West Bank would create further legal and practical problems in that regard.

The EU and its member States have repeatedly reiterated their fundamental commitment to Israel's security, including with regard to the vital threats it faces in the region. This is not something on which we will compromise. I am also convinced that only a negotiated and viable two-State solution will bring long-lasting security and peace to both the Israeli and the Palestinian people.

Resolving the conflict is in the fundamental interest of the EU. This can be achieved only through a comprehensive peace agreement, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Quartet road map, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative.

We should take advantage of the new momentum to revive the process. Let me assure the Security Council that I, as the EU representative of the Middle East Quartet, will continue to engage with both parties, with the other members of the Quartet and with the wider international community in support of a negotiated two-State solution based on the international parameters described above, which ensures equal rights for all.

Annex 24**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, Majid Takht Ravanchi**

While the occupation of Palestine is the main cause of the Middle East crisis, by implementing its plan to annex significant parts of the occupied Palestinian territory, the Israeli regime will open a new chapter in its continued oppression and crimes. Such an expansionist policy will further deteriorate and complicate the already tense situation in the Middle East and will have far-reaching consequences for regional and international peace and security.

The occupation and acquisition of territory by force are prohibited and inadmissible under international law. This is a peremptory norm of international law, from which no derogation is permitted. The annexation of parts of the occupied Palestinian territory would be a gross violation of the basic principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Such an oppressive plan is, in the first place, the result of continued, all-out, unreserved support for the expansionist policies and unlawful practices of the Israeli regime by the United States over the past seven decades. Such support has continued unabated in flagrant violation of the basic principles of international law, disregarding all standards of international conduct and breaching all principles of humanity and morality.

Moreover, by abusing its status as a permanent member of the Security Council, the United States has completely and systematically shielded the Israeli regime and, in practice, rendered the Council ineffective in countering the crimes of that regime. This has emboldened Israel to commit more crimes with total impunity and more brutality, the living examples of which are the continued construction and expansion of settlements, the sustained inhumane blockade of the Gaza Strip and systematic violation of the sovereignty of Syria and Lebanon, in full contradiction of the United Nations Charter and international law.

Therefore, the unequivocal support of the United States for the unlawful acts of the Israeli regime and the inaction of the Security Council in preventing such crimes have led to decades of crimes, aggression, death and destruction in Palestine, the systematic invasion of other regional countries and endangering regional stability and security.

They have also led to persistent erosion of trust and confidence in the Security Council and the United Nations in general.

At this juncture in international relations, which is marked by an alarming trend of regression from a rules-based multilateralism into an unbridled power-based unilateralism, the United Nations and its Member States have an explicit legal obligation and a heavy moral and ethical responsibility to do everything in their power to immediately reject the planned annexation of parts of the occupied Palestinian territory and to hold the Israeli regime accountable for all crimes it has committed during the past 72 years.

This should not be confined to mere verbal rejection and condemnation. All States, in fulfilment of their legal obligations under international law, must avoid granting any recognition to such annexation.

The Israeli regime must also be compelled to end the occupation of all the Palestinian territories as well as the occupied Syrian Golan and parts of Lebanon, to terminate over a decade-long cruel blockade against Gaza, and to put an end to all its destabilizing activities in the region.

As we approach the seventy-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations, the international community must demonstrate its determination to uphold the noble values, ideals and purposes contained therein.

While the United Nations has catalysed the decolonization of many nations, it must fulfil its responsibilities in realizing the inherent rights of the Palestinians to self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State in all of Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. In this context, the Security Council must live up to its responsibilities to prevent the crimes and threats of the Israeli regime and to support, in practice, the full realization of all the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Annex 25**Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan, Ayman Safadi**

Since the beginning of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Security Council resolutions have recognized the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people living under Israeli occupation. Today, our collective and joint efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace for the Palestinians on the basis of the two-State solution stand in jeopardy. Preventing the annexation of the occupied Palestinian lands and creating horizons for re-engagement through direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians towards achieving two States, living side by side in peace and security, are urgent priorities.

In this regard, allow me to voice Jordan's full support to the appeal by the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and of the League of Arab States warning against the ramifications of any unilateral annexation of parts of the Palestinian occupied territories, which would constitute a violation of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

Annexation must not happen. Annexation would be a blatant violation of international law, the cornerstone of our world order. Any unilateral step would violate international law, international resolutions and the foundations of the United Nations. Annexation would deny the right of all peoples of the region to live in peace. Annexation must not go unanswered, for if it does there will only be fiercer conflict; it will make institutionalized apartheid an inevitability; it will diminish all chances for lasting and comprehensive regional peace.

We cannot turn a blind eye to unilateral Israeli measures, such as the threat of annexation to Palestinian lands, the building and expansion of illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian occupied lands and encroachments on the holy sites in Jerusalem, which are aimed at imposing new realities on the ground. Jordan condemns such measures as a violation of international law and provocative actions that will push the area towards more conflict and tension.

The achievement of a just and lasting peace, which meets all legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, is a strategic Jordanian, Palestinian and Arab choice. Any other scenario is a threat to peace and to all of us in the region. We stand at a defining crossroads — either we fall deeper into the abyss of conflict and hopelessness, or we save the peace that is a regional and an international necessity. Jordan will continue to work with Arab countries and the international community towards realizing lasting and just peace.

I reaffirm Jordan's support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State based on the lines of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living in peace, side by side, with Israel, on the basis of the two-State solution, fulfilling the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, in accordance with international law. This is the only path to a comprehensive and lasting peace.

We stress the urgency of launching serious and direct negotiations to solve all final status issues within a comprehensive solution in accordance with established terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and international law.

Those who believe in peace must speak against annexation. All those who want an end to the conflict must act to prevent annexation. Preventing annexation is protecting peace. We must act, and we must act now, before it is too late. And the Kingdom will continue to work with all of Council members, partners and friends to achieve just and lasting peace, on the basis of international law and the two-State solution. This just peace is the right of all peoples of the Middle East, the key to regional stability and a must for global security.

Annex 26**Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of Lebanon, Nassif Hitti**

[Original: Arabic]

This meeting of the Security Council is being held at a pivotal moment. The Israeli occupation authorities are intent on carrying out their oft-stated plans to annex parts of the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley, the northern shore of the Dead Sea and the territories on which settlements have been built, along with their surroundings. In so doing, they seek to implement their expansionist policies, to the detriment of the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the borders of 4 June 1967. Council members are well aware that the establishment of that State is the fundamental condition for the realization of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Annexation would be a flagrant violation of international laws and the principles and resolutions of the United Nations. It would be a blow to the prospects for peace in the region and the credibility of the international community. It would be a new Nakba for the Palestinian people, its security and its future, and would amount to the plain theft of its land, water and economic resources — something that would have an adverse impact on all concerned.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/555) underscores today's reality. It denounces the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem. As is stated in resolution 2334 (2016), such settlements have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation under international law. They are a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. The report also warns that the annexation plan has dire consequences for peace and security.

Lebanon supports the Palestinian cause because it is just, however much time may have passed. Lebanon defends the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and, first and foremost, the right of return enshrined in General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Despite its own difficult domestic situation, Lebanon has hosted hundreds of thousands of Palestine refugees. It has provided them with basic humanitarian care in cooperation with the United Nations Relief Fund for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which is now facing a targeted campaign for its abolition as a way to dispose of the Palestine refugee issue. We must warn against any attempt to undermine the mandate of UNRWA. The Agency is not only a lifeline for more than 5 million Palestine refugees; it also plays a vital role in maintaining stability in the region.

The present moment calls for mobilization of the United Nations and all international forums at all levels. Stakeholders should communicate with global Powers and allied States to rescue the peace process and relaunch it on the basis of the principles of international law, the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the Arab Peace Initiative, adopted in Beirut in 2002, which calls for an end to the Israeli occupation of all occupied Arab territories within a specific time frame. In that connection, I recall that the international Quartet should immediately convene an urgent meeting and assume its responsibility to oversee the resumption of the peace process on the bases to which I referred.

Time is working against peace, and Israel is taking advantage of that reality to create fundamental changes at every level in the occupied Palestinian territory in order to prevent the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, which is the fundamental condition for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle

East. The present moment requires us all to take urgent, continuous and effective action to realize peace on the basis of the terms of reference, both in principle and in law, to which I referred. Peace is not only a Palestinian or Arab interest; it would benefit the region and the international community as a whole.

Annex 27**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations, Khaled Mohammed H. Almanzlawiy**

[Original: Arabic]

First and foremost, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on the assumption by France of the presidency of the Security Council for June. I support your intensive work in managing the proceedings of the Security Council and wish you continued success.

In two days' time, the world will mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations. On that occasion, States undertook to maintain international peace and security across the world, uphold justice, stand up to oppression and confront aggressors.

At a time when Member States are preparing to mark the signing of the Charter of the United Nations, the Israeli occupation authorities are persisting with their provocative settlement policy in the occupied Palestinian territory. In so doing, they are showing total disdain for all international covenants, the four Geneva Conventions and the authoritative international resolutions, which outlaw settlement-building and prohibit the prejudice caused to civil and public rights and property when settlements are expanded or when those already in place are legalized. The attempts by Israel to annex more occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank and the Jordan Valley constitute a grave violation of international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Such steps could eliminate any prospect of a lasting and comprehensive peace.

Saudi Arabia categorically rejects all the futile and illegal policies, practices and plans enacted by Israel, such as the Israeli authorities' recent attempts to annex land in the West Bank, particularly in the Jordan Valley, and hence to create a new reality on the occupied land. Those actions will lead to a significant conflagration that will be difficult to contain. Saudi Arabia also rejects the attempts by Israel to institutionalize racial discrimination against the Palestinian people, obliterate its national identity, displace an entire people, revoke its right to its own land and holy places, and deprive it of the fundamental rights that it needs in order to live. Owing to those measures, Israel is the foremost violator of human rights in the world.

Saudi Arabia will continue to defend the cause of Palestine and its people in its quest to exercise its legitimate and inalienable rights, which are guaranteed under international law. For my country, the main points of the Palestinian question remain the same: ending the occupation, establishing an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital, and guaranteeing the right of return of Palestine refugees. We emphasize the importance of a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on a strategic choice to end one of the longest and most intractable historic conflicts in modern times; the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, which provides for the establishment of a Palestinian State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital; the return of the refugees; and an end to the occupation of all Arab lands, including the Syrian Arab Golan and Lebanese territory.

The time has come for the international community and the Security Council to assume their responsibilities, come to the aid of the Palestinian people and champion its cause by seeing that justice is done and fulfilling its aspiration — indeed, its right under international resolutions — to build an independent State. It is time to confront decisively Israel's ongoing practices and violations of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions, which show disdain for the will of the international community, undermine any prospect of peace, and extinguish any

glimmer of hope for a lasting and comprehensive peace in a region that has long been plagued by instability.

My country welcomes the removal of the coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen from the list, which is annexed to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict for 2020 (S/2020/525), of parties that have not put in place measures aimed at improving the protection of children. That step shows that the coalition has been able to formulate and follow a protocol for the protection children in armed conflict. It is also a testament to the coalition's commitment to protecting children, and to the value of the significant and ongoing measures taken by the coalition, in accordance with the international terms of reference, to protect children in the current conflict in Yemen.

The coalition recognizes the importance of finding peaceful solutions to conflicts and supports every effort to do so. Accordingly, it has accepted the Secretary-General's recent call for a ceasefire in Yemen. My country has also backed the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire in the light of the coronavirus pandemic, not to mention the efforts of his Special Envoy for Yemen to press for a ceasefire. In view of the role of Saudi Arabia and the coalition States in resolving the Yemeni conflict, and your own considerable efforts to implement the Riyadh agreement, Sir, we commend the Yemeni Government and the Southern Transitional Council for responding to the coalition's appeal for a comprehensive ceasefire, de-escalation and the convening of a meeting in Saudi Arabia to move forward with implementation of the Riyadh agreement and restore normality. Such action would bring the Yemeni people together, heal its rifts and support its endeavour to recover its control of the State and restore security, stability, and territorial unity and integrity.

My country has worked intensively to ensure that control of the Yemeni State returns to the Yemeni people. It has supported the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen to move the peace process towards a solution consistent with the three terms of reference, namely, the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the outcomes of the all-inclusive National Dialogue Conference and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, particularly resolution 2216 (2015). However, the Iran-backed terrorist Houthi militias have thus far merely given further confirmation of their amoral stance. They have continuously carried out bare-faced terrorist attacks on civilians and civilian sites in Saudi Arabia. Most recently, they launched eight pilotless explosive aircraft and three ballistic missiles at civilians and civilian sites in Saudi Arabia, in a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and customary norms. They have rejected all of the coalition's ceasefire and de-escalation initiatives.

We call on the Security Council to assume its responsibility and take a decisive stand to put a stop to the Iran-backed terrorist Houthi militias' attacks on civilians and civilian sites in Saudi Arabia, and to compel them to engage genuinely with de-escalation efforts and refrain from hampering United Nations endeavours to reach a political solution to the conflict in Yemen, in accordance with the three terms of reference, and spare the Yemeni people any further suffering.

Annex 28**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations, Bashar Ja'afari**

[Original: English and Arabic]

The continued Israeli occupation of the occupied Arab territories is a clear indication of the politicization, manipulation and blatant double standards that face the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Palestinian question has accompanied the United Nations since the early days of its establishment, and the Security Council and other United Nations bodies have adopted hundreds of resolutions that affirm the need to end the Israeli occupation of Arab lands, including the occupied Syrian Golan. The Security Council has also held hundreds of meetings on this issue since the adoption of the item "The situation in the Middle East", on a monthly basis, several decades ago. However, those efforts went unheeded owing to Israel's disdain for the United Nations and the resolutions of the Council, foremost among which are resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981). Israel refuses to commit to those resolutions because of the support it receives from some Member States, especially the United States, which contributes to prolonging the occupation, increasing the number of grave violations of international law, augmenting acts of aggression and threatening regional and international peace and security.

The inability of the United Nations to implement its resolutions has encouraged some to shirk their legal commitments and the agreed terms of reference, seek to twist the facts and entrench the occupation. That has been seen over the past few months through the unilateral, unlawful and provocative actions taken, including the United States Administration considering occupied Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, its declaration of what it referred to as recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan and the occupation authorities' attempt to annex territories of the West Bank.

The Syrian Arab Republic, along with the overwhelming majority of Member States, affirms its strong condemnation of those decisions and considers them as a merely unilateral act issued by a party that does not possess either the status or 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.

Israel, the occupying Power, continues, through its systematic and dangerous practices, to try to consolidate its control and impose its will on the occupied Syrian Golan, including, but not limited to: seeking to organize illegal local elections in the occupied Syrian Golan, concluding contracts and granting licenses to usurp its natural resources, looting the property of Syrian citizens and displacing them in order to set up a project to generate power by wind turbines and forcing our people in the Golan to register the lands that they inherited from their ancestors with the Israel Land Authority under penalty of confiscating the lands of protesters.

Furthermore, Israel continues settlement activities and has announced the establishment of a new settlement called Trump Heights. This new settlement was a present from the Prime Minister of the Israeli occupation to American President Trump for his flagrant violation of United Nations resolutions and international law in unilaterally recognizing what he termed Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan. All these practices are flagrant violations of international law and

international humanitarian law, with which some deal with double standards and unlimited hypocrisy.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms that the policy of arbitrary detention and mock trials pursued by the Israeli occupation forces are part of a series of crimes and human rights violations committed by Israel against Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan over the more than five decades of its occupation of the Syrian Golan. In that context, Syria rejects the arbitrary and unjust ruling issued by the Israeli occupation forces on 10 June of three years' imprisonment for the patriotic activist Nihal Suleiman Al-Muqt, sister of the released prisoner Sidqi Al-Muqt, who is from the town of Majdal Shams, in the occupied Syrian Golan. That ruling is unlawful and invalid because it was issued by an illegal occupation force, and it complements the oppressive and arbitrary practices against the people of the occupied Golan and punishes them for their national positions, adherence to their homeland and Syrian identity.

Finally, my Government affirms that the occupied Syrian Golan is an integral part of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic and that its restoration to the line of 4 June 1967 by all means guaranteed by international law will remain a priority for Syrian policy and the compass from which it will not deviate..

Syria reiterates its support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State over all of its national territory and its capital, Jerusalem, while ensuring the right of refugees to return to their homes in accordance with resolution 194 (III), of 1948. It renews its call to grant the State of Palestine full membership in the United Nations.

Annex 29**Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Mevlüt Cavuşoğlu**

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive periodic report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) (S/2020/555). The report once again clearly registers the fact that illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories constitute a flagrant violation under international law and one of the biggest obstacles to the achievement of the two-State solution as well as of a just and comprehensive peace.

We appreciate in particular the report's emphasis on the continued use of unlawful force by the Israeli security forces against Palestinians as well as demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures and on the increasingly frequent incidents of settler violence against Palestinian civilians. Its findings and recommendations deserve thorough consideration by Member States.

The use of excessive and disproportionate force against civilians, arbitrary arrests, attempts to erode the status of Jerusalem, the inhumane blockade in Gaza and the illegal settlements have all been parts of a recurring pattern that severely curtails the fundamental rights and freedoms of Palestinians.

During the past few years, Israel has intensified its expansion of illegal settlements throughout the occupied Palestinian territories. The settlements undermine the perspective of a two-State solution and lay the foundation for the annexation of those areas. Therefore, it is imperative for the international community to exert the utmost efforts to stop Israel from further expanding those illegal settlements.

We also agree with the Secretary-General's pertinent observation that the Palestinians now also face serious socioeconomic impacts as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). We believe that the international community should increase its assistance to the State of Palestine. With that understanding, Turkey has provided 15 tons of medical supplies to the State of Palestine and plans an additional \$5 million of direct budget assistance.

The situation in Gaza remains particularly fragile. As an emergency measure, the Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Hospital in Gaza has been transferred to the Islamic University of Gaza to be used as a quarantine centre. However, the population of Gaza is still subject to an inhumane blockade by Israel. The humanitarian conditions in the region are unsustainable, unacceptable and not in the interest of any of those concerned. The need to address the reconstruction and rehabilitation requirements of the Gaza Strip is ever-growing. This cannot be effectively done while the current blockade remains in force. This policy of collective punishment needs to end.

Peace and prosperity in the Middle East can be achieved only through the two-State solution, which will pave the way for a just, comprehensive and lasting resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In this regard, the most immediate and pressing challenge is the Israeli Government's illegal plans for the annexation of the West Bank. The annexation would be a grave violation of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. It would mean the end of the two-State solution once and for all. It would increase grievances and the suffering of Palestinians at the hands of the occupying Power. Palestinian land and the people of Palestine do not deserve to be sacrificed for the sake of Israel's brazen policies of violence and occupation.

In fact, an overwhelming majority of the international community objected to Israel's plans. Most recently, the meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Executive Committee held on 10 June delivered a strong message against Israel's initiatives for annexation and provided its full support to the Palestinian people in their quest for justice. This message should be supported by all the members of the international community to prevent Israel from taking this dangerous step.

We take this opportunity to once again urge the Israeli Government to immediately cease its illegal settlement activities and not to proceed with its illegal annexation plans.

The international community has to maintain its support for the two-State solution, leading to the establishment of an independent, sovereign and contiguous State of Palestine on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Turkey is ready to contribute to all international efforts towards that end.

It is high time that the international community uphold the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, ensuring that they live in a free Palestine in peace and dignity. As ever, Turkey is firmly committed to standing with the Palestinian people with all its might.

Annex 30**Statement by the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations**

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.

At the outset, I thank France for its successful presidency of the Security Council this month and for providing the opportunity for the OIC group to participate in this important meeting. The question of Palestine is of primary concern to Muslims around the world, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation reiterates its unwavering support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people.

OIC member States have repeatedly stated their concerns over the grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly in regard to Israel's wall construction, continuing settlement construction and expansion, land confiscation and annexation, and demolition of homes and properties, as well as the forced displacement of Palestinian citizens. The current plan under consideration by the Israeli Government to unilaterally annex vast swathes of the occupied Palestinian territory as early as one week from now requires our particular and urgent attention today. In response to that plan, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of OIC member States adopted on 10 June a resolution rejecting Israel's threat to annex parts of the Palestinian land occupied in 1967 and urging the Security Council to take the measures necessary to prevent annexation plan including by compelling Israel, the occupying Power, to stop all its illegal actions.

The OIC group reiterates that the annexation of Palestinian land would violate international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolutions 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016). The OIC group warns that the implementation of this illegal, unilateral plan would undermine the realization by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination and the decades-long efforts made by the international community to achieve a two-State solution based on the 4 June 1967 borders and the prospects for realizing a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. Additionally, we underscore that any annexation would have grave consequences for the stability and security of the region and beyond.

The OIC group therefore stresses the urgent need for the international community to engage in serious efforts to halt Israel's illegal annexation plan in order to salvage the prospects for peace. Furthermore, States should neither recognize the illegal situation resulting from Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, nor render any aid or assistance to illegal settlement activities. With reference to resolution 2334 (2016), the OIC group reiterates its calls on States to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

The OIC group calls on the Security Council to honour its obligations under the United Nations Charter and to address Israel's annexation plan, which undermines efforts to reach a lasting political solution in accordance with the relevant provisions of international law and United Nations resolutions.

The OIC reiterates its demand that Israel, as the occupying Power, fully respect all of its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, international human rights law and the United Nations Charter, and to comply with all relevant United Nations resolutions.

We urge the international community, while addressing this threat of annexation, to also consider that the health-related, economic and social challenges in

the occupied Palestinian territory have been exacerbated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In particular, we encourage support for the United Nations COVID-19 response plan in the occupied Palestinian territory, the programme budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the COVID-19 flash appeal for Palestine refugees.

In conclusion, the OIC group affirms the urgency of bringing to an end the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and of achieving the fulfilment of the right of the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate rights, including their right to self-determination and to sovereignty over the territory of the State of Palestine, based on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.
