



Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

Provisional

6590th meeting

Tuesday, 26 July 2011, 10 a.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Hoyer	(Germany)
<i>Members:</i>	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	Colombia	Mr. Alzate
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Messone
	India	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Nigeria	Mr. Amieyeofori
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Bangladesh, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Iceland, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Morocco, Nicaragua, Pakistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, Uganda and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to participate in this meeting.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 21 July 2011 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2011/444 and which reads as follows:

"I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council that will be held on Tuesday, 26 July 2011, regarding the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question."

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Robert Serry, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, Acting Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diallo, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of

the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to participate in this meeting.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Serry.

Mr. Serry: Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor. Let me acknowledge the presence of both Ambassador Mansour at this table — I think we met a few weeks ago in Jerusalem — and of the new Israeli Ambassador, Mr. Prozor. I had the privilege of meeting him yesterday.

The political process to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in profound and persistent deadlock. Efforts to find the necessary common ground for resumed negotiations have proven extremely difficult, given the differences and lack of trust between the parties. Political leaders on both sides are frustrated, as are their publics. This is particularly acute on the Palestinian side in the absence of a credible political horizon for ending the occupation that began in 1967. Israel remains concerned about achieving lasting security and an end to the conflict.

The Quartet has engaged throughout this year to promote meaningful negotiations. Most recently, the Secretary-General joined Quartet partners in Washington, D.C., on 11 July. The Quartet sought to translate the important speech of President Obama on 19 May, in which he laid out parameters on borders and security as what he termed a "foundation for negotiations", into an internationally agreed framework for the parties to resume talks. The Secretary-General appreciated the substantive discussion in Washington, D.C. The Quartet did not issue a statement to help chart the way forward, but its efforts continue.

Both President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu continue to reiterate their desire to negotiate. However, in the absence of a framework for meaningful talks, and with Israeli settlement activity continuing, the Palestinians are actively exploring approaching the United Nations. President Abbas states that he remains committed to negotiations and that efforts in the United Nations would help to preserve the two-State solution. Israel opposes this course of action, stating that it will make negotiations for a two-State solution more difficult to achieve. The Palestinians are consulting closely with the Arab

League on this issue, and both parties are intensively engaging members of the international community.

We hope that the international community can be united in forums of collective decision-making — now, in September, and after September too — and shape a legitimate and balanced way forward that will help the parties to overcome their differences and ultimately return to negotiations. We will continue to work with Quartet partners to seek urgent action in this regard. We also note the prerogatives and responsibilities of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

We must not lose sight of what is at stake. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and my own Office, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories (UNSCO), have all acknowledged the unprecedented achievements of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. The Palestinian Authority has, in key areas, reached a level of institutional performance sufficient for a functioning State. The Palestinian Authority is ready to assume the responsibilities of statehood at any point in the near future.

Real security and economic gains have been made, benefiting both peoples. Better governance, increased investment, improvements in movement and access, and donor engagement have strengthened the West Bank economy in a difficult global environment over the past two years. The training and deployment of thousands of Palestinian security officers and intensified security coordination have seen terrorist cells dismantled and extremist incitement combated. Palestinians have seen law and order return to the main cities, and Israelis have faced comparatively few acts of violence from the West Bank.

However, as we have often warned, this agenda will soon reach the limits of achievement without more political and physical space. This requires Israeli steps to roll back measures of occupation and continuous donor support. For example, we have repeatedly called on Israel to allow the expansion of Palestinian urban centres to accommodate population growth and industrial activity, which would necessitate including some parts of Area C. While steps of enablement were made in the past, bold measures have been lacking in recent times, and the implementation of those measures that have been announced, including the February 2011 package agreed with Quartet Representative Blair, has been slow. Indeed, we have seen many negative actions

in Area C. The demolition of Palestinian structures has surged. This year, 700 people have been displaced as approximately 370 structures have been demolished — the highest number since 2006. Water and sanitation systems have been targeted in particular.

Settlement activities continue in many of the most sensitive areas of East Jerusalem and Area C. In the past month, 40 units were approved in Karnei Shomron in the northern West Bank. I am particularly concerned that on 26 June 2011, for the first time in several years, Israel confiscated 19 hectares of private Palestinian land in the village of Karyut, also in the northern West Bank. An outpost, illegal even under Israeli law, has been placed on that land. This departs from Israeli public undertakings not to build new settlements or set aside land for new settlements, and sets a worrying precedent for the future legalization of outposts, which, under the Road Map, should be removed. Settlements are illegal under international law and prejudice final status discussions, and settlement activity must cease.

Issues on which we report regularly to the Council, including settler violence, incursions citing security concerns, movement and access limitations, and the route of the barrier, continue to be sources of friction between the parties. I note that on 23 June the Israeli authorities, as ordered by the Israeli Supreme Court, began re-routing a section of the barrier near Bil'in, a village where there are weekly protests, thus giving residents access to an additional 1,020 dunums of agricultural land, although they are still deprived of another 1,280 dunums.

There are now growing calls from civil society groups and political figures for intensified peaceful protests against the status quo and calls for action to realize the Palestinian right of self-determination. Meanwhile, precisely at the time when the State-building plan was meant to reach fruition, the Palestinian Authority has faced setbacks owing to its fiscal position and shortages in donor funding, forcing it to cut back on security expenditures and only pay half-salaries in June.

I urge donors, including members of the Arab League, who are meeting on this issue today in Cairo, to ensure that the Palestinian Authority can pay salaries and meet its other financial obligations. I urge Israel to do more to empower its moderate, committed and peaceful Palestinian partner.

Security Council resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009) and the framework of international law continue to guide United Nations policy on Gaza. We are concerned that the calm between Israel and Gaza, which was restored in early April, has been challenged by the firing of some 18 rockets into Israel since 23 June. During the same period, Israel conducted three incursions and 16 air strikes, killing two and injuring eight Palestinian militants, but also killing one Palestinian civilian and injuring 14 others. One Israeli soldier was injured during an incursion, and an Israeli civilian contractor was lightly injured by gunfire from Gaza. Militants' firing of indiscriminate rockets towards civilian areas is unacceptable and must cease. Israel must also show restraint. Tensions have subsided in recent days. My office remains active in promoting a full restoration of calm, which remains a cornerstone for any broader achievements in Gaza.

A nascent recovery is under way in Gaza, with real GDP growth of 15.1 per cent in 2010 and 17.9 per cent in the first quarter of 2011. However, this rebound starts from a very low base and is driven in part by public expenditures, donor aid, tunnel traffic, increased imports from Israel and limited exports. Imports are only about a third of the volume before the closure. Unemployment in Gaza is very high, at 31 per cent; 54 per cent of households remain food insecure; and 38 per cent live in poverty.

Israel's June 2010 policy change from a list of permitted items to a list of prohibited ones has contributed to an increase in consumer good imports. A limited range and volume of agricultural products has also been exported since Israel's December 2010 decision to allow them.

The level of United Nations projects approved for Gaza to date, pursuant to Israel's policy, totals \$265 million — a significant start towards addressing Gaza's vast basic needs including in education, housing and sanitation.

The Rafah crossing for people now operates six days a week between Gaza and Egypt.

Together with our Quartet partners, we urge Israel to allow aggregate, iron bar and cement for use by Gaza's private sector. The ongoing illicit tunnel trade in these essential building materials empowers those who control smuggling at the expense of the legitimate commercial sector. Exports to foreign countries and the West Bank should also be further enabled. The much

freer movement of people to and from the Strip is vital if Gazans are to enjoy basic rights, normal interaction with the outside world, and human dignity. We continue to seek the full reopening of all legitimate crossings. We urge continued vigilance to combat smuggling of weapons into the Strip.

Most of the vessels involved in a recent flotilla did not receive authorizations from maritime authorities from countries in the region to sail towards Gaza. On 19 July, Israeli naval forces intercepted a small boat carrying approximately 10 activists who intended to sail to Gaza, and directed it to the Israeli port of Ashdod. Unnecessary confrontations at sea were avoided, as urged by the Quartet.

In Gaza, the Hamas interior ministry closed the local Sharek Youth Forum on unspecified accusations of immoral behaviour. The authorities are also seeking to audit international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with on-site inspections. We urge full respect for the free and independent exercise of the functions of those organizations. We also urge full respect for the work of United Nations agencies, some of whose activities in support of Palestinian beneficiaries have been misrepresented recently.

We are also very concerned that a bomb was detonated near the UNSCO compound in Gaza on 25 June causing material damage to the perimeter wall, which underlines the continued challenging security environment facing the United Nations in the Strip.

I also draw your attention to the fact that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) faces an unprecedented funding shortfall of \$61.4 million for its core programmes and operations, as well as for its emergency food and employment operations. I urge donors to provide decisive and speedy support to UNRWA, without which support to Gazans could be significantly curtailed come October.

The Secretary-General joined the Director-General of the International Red Cross in expressing his grave concern at the continuing captivity of Israeli Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit on the fifth anniversary of his detention, and called on Hamas to protect his life, treat him humanely and present a proof of life. We also continue to call for his release and for the conclusion of prisoner exchange negotiations, which would also enable the release of a significant number of Palestinian prisoners. We note with concern reports of

steps taken to harden the conditions of detention of some of these prisoners during the reporting period.

Implementation of the May reconciliation accord is stalled amid disputes over the composition and programme of a new Government. The longer reconciliation is delayed, the more that developments on the ground will push the West Bank and Gaza further apart, with grave consequences for prospects for a viable Palestinian State. The United Nations continues to promote reconciliation within the framework of the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the positions of the Quartet and the Arab Peace Initiative.

There has been no movement on the regional tracks of the peace process. Popular protests and political change have become part of the regional dynamic and affect the way the parties perceive their security and political strength. Uncertainty in the region should be cause for the parties to redouble efforts to address stability. Progress towards peace is more urgent than ever.

I will not brief on Lebanon given that the Special Coordinator for Lebanon briefed you last week.

In conclusion, after nearly 20 years of inconclusive peace negotiations since the Madrid Conference, yet again we are reaching a point where the parties fail to meet an agreed timeline for a permanent status agreement. I can only describe the current situation, whereby the process of Palestinian State-building in the West Bank has matured but the political track has failed to converge, as dramatic.

We continue to urge the parties to find a way forward at this sensitive and important time. We hope that the international community can help by shaping a legitimate and balanced framework. Without a credible political path forward, accompanied by more far-reaching steps on the ground, the viability of the Palestinian Authority and its State-building agenda — and, I fear, of the two-State solution itself — cannot be taken for granted.

This agenda should be advanced within the framework of Security Council resolutions and international law, the agreements and obligations of the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The President: I thank Mr. Serry for his briefing, and I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): At the outset, I wish to convey Palestine's congratulations to Germany on its presidency and skilled stewardship of the Security Council this month. I am personally delighted to see you, Mr. Minister of State, presiding over the Security Council as an indication of the importance that Germany places on this debate.

We laud your efforts in leading the Council, particularly in the proceedings on the application for full United Nations membership by our brotherly country of South Sudan. Palestine reiterates its warmest congratulations and full solidarity and support to South Sudan in this new chapter of independence for the people of South Sudan, wishing them all success and prosperity.

We express appreciation as well to the Gabonese Republic for its wise guidance of the Council in June. I also express appreciation to the Special Coordinator, Mr. Robert Serry, for his briefing today and for all of his serious efforts on the ground on behalf of the Secretary-General. I must add that I was extremely delighted to meet with him a few weeks ago in his office in Jerusalem, an office that is so beautiful and evokes many optimistic hopes for us, the Palestinians, that we might have it as the office of our presidents when we have our own independent State.

The Security Council convenes this open debate at a moment requiring serious reflection and candid deliberation about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the international efforts to resolve it and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole.

We are all aware that the answers to the problem lie in the legal principles and just positions at the core of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. The missing factor is the political will to uphold international law and implement those resolutions. While numerous good-faith regional and international efforts have been exerted, they continue to fail owing to Israel's relentless violations of the law and the general failure to hold Israel accountable for its illegal actions. Israel needs to change course in a way that would make the realization of the two-State solution possible. This is a fact, and it is the major reason why the Israeli military occupation continues and why the Palestinian people continue to be denied justice and their right to self-determination and freedom.

In our letters sent in the recent period, we have fully informed the Council of the deplorable situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as a result of the Israelis' illegal policies, which are destroying the contiguity of the territory and inflicting more suffering on our people. Such illegal practices have not ceased for a single moment, and they include the following.

The illegal settlement campaign continues, especially in and around occupied East Jerusalem, in breach of Israel's obligations under international law, United Nations resolutions and the Quartet Road Map's demand for a freeze of all settlement activities. Construction of settlements and the wall and the demolition of homes continue unabated, as do attempts to seize and de facto annex land.

Terror attacks continue against Palestinian civilians by Israeli settlers, clearly emboldened by the extremist tendencies of the Government, which continues to protect them and promote their agenda, with more than 139 attacks documented in the past month.

Collective punishment of the population in the Gaza Strip through the illegal blockade and obstruction of international reconstruction efforts and any semblance of normal life continue.

Military air strikes continue against neighbourhoods in Gaza, as do attacks on Palestinian fishing boats, causing injury to dozens of civilians and destruction to property.

Military raids and arrests of Palestinian civilians, including children, and the deterioration of already harsh conditions imposed on Palestinian prisoners, particularly following the Israeli Prime Minister's declaration to "toughen conditions" on them, continue. The plight of all prisoners, including those suffering from acute health conditions and those on hunger strike in protest of Israel's cruel treatment, remains of utmost concern.

The use of excessive force against Palestinians and others, including Israelis, peacefully demonstrating against the Wall and the settlements continues.

(spoke in Arabic)

I would like, in this forum, to salute the people of Bil'in and their friends for their peaceful struggle. They have succeeded in defeating Israel one kilometre from

the Green Line. I had the honour to visit Bil'in last week, and I visited the old track and the new construction of the wall. In this forum, I would like to salute Bil'in for this great achievement.

(spoke in English)

In addition, hostile acts and threats continue against peace activists, especially those protesting the blockade, human rights organizations and civil society activists. Israeli aggression against non-violent protest has also taken a new form in the punitive, undemocratic boycott law that was recently adopted.

All of these illegal actions and provocations are indicative of the Israeli Government's extremely right-wing and anti-peace agenda. Israel, the occupying Power, is obstructing peace in both word and deed, sabotaging the small opportunity remaining to achieve the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders for the realization of peace and coexistence between our peoples.

These facts must be faced head on, and all empty excuses and illogical pretexts for such illegal actions must be rejected. The fragility of the situation and rapid rise in tensions require immediate redress by this Council, in line with its Charter obligations. Continued appeasement of Israel's expansionist agenda runs the risk of and bears the responsibility for further harming the prospects for peace and security, with serious short and long-term consequences.

In this regard, we are heartened by the fact that neither the Palestinian people nor their Arab brethren, nor even the international community, have given up on the pursuit of a just peace. All remain resilient in their calls for an end to the Israeli occupation, the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, and a just solution for the Palestine refugees based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948. Current opportunities to advance these noble objectives must be seized, specifically in light of the critical situation on the ground and in the context of the ongoing and very relevant Arab spring.

To continue to deny the appeals of the Palestinian people for independence in their State of Palestine in exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination is unjustifiable. The Palestinian people must live as an independent, free and dignified people in peace and

security, and Palestine must be allowed to prosper and contribute as a full member of the community of nations. This is the goal to which the Palestinian leadership is fully committed and which we seek to achieve with the invaluable support of all concerned States and peoples from around the globe.

We are determined to overcome the obstacles in the way of peace. However, that will require both an honest assessment of the situation and the determination of an appropriate course of collective action to deal with those obstacles and to truly advance just and lasting peace, security and coexistence.

In that regard, the failure of the Quartet to adopt clear and fair parameters for the solution to allow for the resumption of credible negotiations between the two sides was a serious missed opportunity. It was a setback for the Quartet's efforts to shepherd the peace process towards its objective of ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and the conclusion of a peace treaty that would end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in all its aspects, including the just resolution of all final status issues: Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, settlements, borders, security and water.

That failure of the Quartet was caused by Israel, which refused to accept the legitimate and internationally supported basis for negotiations, including the elements contained in the bold speech made by United States President Barack Obama on 19 May and the positions taken by the European Union and the Quartet as a whole. Held hostage to such intransigence, the Quartet was regrettably unable to endorse the parameters and to call upon the parties to return to the negotiating table on that basis.

Here, it must be clarified that the Palestinian side abides by its commitments and is ready to resume serious negotiations, within a limited time frame, based on clear parameters, including the understanding that the pre-June 1967 borders must be the foundation on which any negotiations proceed. President Abbas has been clear in that regard. Israel, however, continues to arrogantly and dangerously reject that basis, making the revival of peace negotiations impossible at the present time.

The aim is not to place blame, but it is necessary to confront the truth in order to act collectively to overcome the impediments to achieving a peaceful solution. If the international community continues to absolve Israel of its unilateral and illegal behaviour,

there will be no incentive to change that behaviour. Permitting the occupying Power to continue to breach the law without consequence will completely destroy the two-State solution as a viable option, ushering in yet another period of turmoil, insecurity and suffering, and a search for alternative solutions. If we are serious about opening the doors to the two-State solution, Israel must be held fully responsible for its actions.

The decisions that must be made at this moment are critical to reviving the failing peace process and to changing the destructive course on which the occupying Power has put us all. However, the decisions to be made are not difficult, for they are logical, justified and rooted in international law, United Nations resolutions and the international consensus solution to the conflict, namely, the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, which is a historic compromise agreed to long ago by the Palestinian leadership.

The Palestinian leadership remains committed to the terms of reference of the peace process: the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map. We are determined to remain proactive and to make a positive contribution towards ending the conflict and achieving the national aspirations and rights of our people. Any steps taken by the Palestinian leadership will be fully transparent and consistent with the goal of the peace process. Through legitimate political, diplomatic and legal means, and with the support of the international community, we believe that it will be possible to achieve peace.

The coming months will be critical. September 2011, the date set by the Quartet and endorsed by the international community for concluding a peace agreement, remains a target date for effecting a change that can create the positive dynamics and momentum necessary to achieving a breakthrough.

Next month, the Palestinian National Authority will complete its implementation of the two-year plan, launched by Prime Minister Fayyad, to build the institutions of the Palestinian State, end the occupation and achieve independence. With international political and financial support, that plan — a complementary track to the peaceful platform on which President Abbas was elected — has reached its objectives, as acknowledged by the international community. We have fulfilled our responsibilities and are ready to

govern ourselves. The only remaining obstacle is Israel's 44-year military occupation.

Our people have legitimate rights, needs and demands, and it is our duty to listen and to act responsibly to advance their just cause. We cannot keep waiting for Israel to negotiate in good faith — an almost impossible matter as long as the occupier continues to be absolved of its obligations under international law and might is permitted to trump right. A new process — awakened by the failings of a 20-year process since Madrid and an 18-year process since the signing of the Oslo Accords due to Israel's refusal to end its occupation, its illegal settlement activities and its human rights violations and to commit to peace — has been set in motion. The time for change is now. There is no justification for the denial of the rights and the freedom of the Palestinian people.

We thus continue to appeal for the recognition of the State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders. We are convinced that the more than 120 bilateral recognitions of Palestine to date are each a reaffirmation of our inalienable right to self-determination and our natural and legal right to statehood and to be a part of the international community. We recognize the important respective roles played by Governments, parliaments, civil society and all the world's citizens in that regard. We renew our gratitude for their vital support and solidarity.

Further, we believe that actions undertaken at the United Nations — the centre of multilateral activity — whether in the Security Council or the General Assembly, can contribute towards achieving the peace that we all seek, and that they will not obstruct the realization of that objective. That is not a unilateral action. On the contrary, it is multilateral. The consecration of the two-State solution in bold resolutions, including recognition of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, and its admission as a full Member of the Organization, will help to make the two-State solution more inevitable.

That decisive measure could finally convince Israel, the occupying Power, that its occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people are completely rejected by the world and that it must abandon its destructive course, including its greatest unilateral illegal action — the settlement campaign, which has

been rejected by the entire international community, including all members of the Council. We believe that that is what will ultimately lead to a change in the status quo and to peace.

We are thus hopeful that the international community, including the Council, will uphold the legal, political and moral responsibilities towards the question of Palestine that have remained unfulfilled since the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 181 (II), which partitioned Mandate Palestine, and for which there is now an historic opportunity to finally fulfil towards ensuring justice and freedom for the Palestinian people.

Why should the Palestinian people be forced to languish yet another year — or even one more day — under foreign occupation? They should not and they must not. This is the time to end the Israeli occupation. This is the time for Palestine's independence. This is the time for Palestine and Israel to live side by side in peace and security, and this is the time for a new Middle East. We believe that the international community is ready for that, and we trust that the appropriate actions will be undertaken soon to make this a reality.

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

Mr. Prozor (Israel): Let me thank you, Sir, for your able stewardship of the Security Council this month. It is an honour and a privilege to have you presiding over this important debate of the Security Council.

I would like to begin by offering my Government's condolences to the people and Government of Norway following last week's appalling attacks in Oslo and Utøya. The victims of this tragedy remain in our thoughts and prayers.

I speak before the Council today as a proud representative of the Jewish State and the Jewish people — a people whose bond to the land of Israel and our eternal capital, Jerusalem, extends back more than 3,000 years. It is where we began and where we have been reborn, realizing the dreams of our forefathers to be a free people in our own land. Our nation seeks a lasting peace in which the Palestinians will have their own State alongside — but not instead of — the Jewish State of Israel. This morning, I would like to share several observations about the Middle

East peace process, which stands yet again at a critical juncture.

First, let me state clearly that unilateral actions will not bring peace to our region. Like a false idol, the Palestinian initiatives at the United Nations may be superficially attractive to some, yet they distract from the true path to peace. Winston Churchill said that all the secrets of statecraft lie in history. On this question, history's lessons are unmistakable. Peace can be achieved only through bilateral negotiations that address the concerns of both sides. This was the way of President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin; the way of Prime Minister Rabin and King Hussein. It has been the framework for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians for the past two decades.

Only this month, we were again reminded that negotiations are the route to statehood when South Sudan proclaimed its independence and was accepted as the 193rd State Member of the United Nations. It marked a new chapter in a long and difficult journey. Both South Sudan and the Sudan harboured serious frustrations. Major problems arose. Yet, the parties did not seek quick fixes or instant solutions. Although it was hard, they sat together and negotiated, reaching a mutual agreement. This is why South Sudan was accepted by such a broad consensus of the international community.

It is no coincidence that we do not hear the same resounding enthusiasm for the Palestinian's march towards unilateralism at the United Nations. On the contrary, many in the international community are looking for ways to avoid this action. Many have recognized that Palestinian attempts to create a State by bypassing negotiations are akin to picking out a chimney-pot for one's house before laying its foundation. They see the potential consequences of mistrust and unmet expectations that could lead to violence.

It is evident that some Palestinian leaders understand this as well. Prime Minister Fayyad has spoken out against such a declaration. Just last week, Nabil Amr, a member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization Central Council and a former minister of the Palestinian Authority (PA), called on the PA to delay its statehood bid. Palestinians like Mr. Fayyad and Mr. Amr see the practical reality before us. Like many others, they recognize that after September will come October, and November, and December. They

know that this declaration will be in violation of the bilateral agreements that are the basis for Israeli-Palestinian cooperation, and will create expectations that cannot be met.

Now is the time for the international community to tell the Palestinian leadership what it refuses to tell its own people. There are no shortcuts to statehood. They cannot bypass the only path to peace. The Palestinians will have to make compromises and make hard choices. They will have to get off the bandwagon of unilateralism and back to the hard work of direct peacemaking.

There have been attempts to find a framework for relaunching the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. These efforts must be consistent, taking into consideration the vital interests of both sides. Some of those who speak most loudly and clearly about the interests of Palestinians suddenly seem to lose their voice, hesitate and sometimes even mumble when it comes to discussing Israel's vital interests: its recognition as a Jewish state and its right to live within safe and secure borders. Both of these issues — security and recognition of Israel as a Jewish State — are absolutely essential to ensuring the future of the State of Israel.

With regards to our security challenges, let me remind the Council that Hamas and Hizbullah have fired 12,000 rockets into Israel since we withdrew from Gaza and southern Lebanon. You do not have to be a rocket scientist to realize that if rockets fall on your cities, schools and citizens, your Government has a right to defend itself. Our civilians face this reality every single day. No target is free from attack. Just this year, rockets have been launched at homes, synagogues, kindergartens and even a bright yellow school bus, killing a 16-year old boy.

Without clear security arrangements, there is no guarantee that terrorists, arms and munitions will not flow into the West Bank in a future Palestinian State, just as they are being smuggled into Gaza today as we speak. One does not have to look too far to recognize Israel's existential security challenges. Let me point out that Israel's only international airport — named after David Ben-Gurion, one of our founding fathers — lies within a few miles of the West Bank. That is shorter than the distance from where we are sitting right now to JFK or Newark Airports. It could be a target of constant rocket fire. One can only imagine the

reaction if other airports were under a similar threat. Lasting peace must be based on a demilitarized Palestinian State and an emphasis on education that promotes peace instead of hatred, tolerance instead of violence, and mutual understanding instead of martyrdom.

On the issue of the Jewish State, we must have clarity as well. If lasting peace is to take hold, Israel's recognition of a future Palestinian State must be met with an equal acknowledgement that Israel is the Jewish State. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has stated openly and repeatedly that we will accept a Palestinian State alongside a Jewish State. Yet the Palestinian leadership has not done the same. It will not tell its own people that it accepts a Jewish State. Without such an acknowledgement, it will remain unclear whether the Palestinians' quest for statehood is part of an effort to end the conflict with Israel or a pretext to continue it.

Palestinian leaders claim that they will be prepared for statehood by September, parading this as a magic date before the international community. We recognize the progress that the Palestinian Authority has made over the past two years with the assistance and cooperation of Israel and the international community. The West Bank economy is a bright spot in the midst of a global recession, growing by 10 per cent in 2010.

Yet, it is clear that much still needs to be done to create a functioning State that lives in peace with its neighbours. Even the most basic condition for statehood does not exist. The Palestinian Authority does not maintain effective control over all of its territory nor does it hold a monopoly on the use of force. The Hamas terrorist organization still maintains de facto control in Gaza.

Let me turn at this point to my Palestinian colleague, Permanent Observer Mansour, and ask a simple question. On behalf of whom will he present a resolution in September — Mr. Abbas or Hamas? Will it be on behalf of both the Palestinian Authority and the Hamas terrorist organization, which promotes a charter calling for the destruction of Israel and the murder of Jews? Will it be on behalf of Akram Haniyeh, the Palestinian Authority's chief spokesman? — Or Ismail Haniyeh, the Hamas Prime Minister in Gaza, who in a speech there last December said:

“When I say ‘the land of Palestine’, I am not referring [only] to the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem. ... I refer to Palestine from the [Mediterranean] Sea to the [Jordan] River, and from Rosh Hanikra to Rafah.”

On these issues Israel and the international community must have clarity. Whether the Palestinians bring forward a draft resolution in the General Assembly or invoke the “Uniting for Peace” resolution (General Assembly resolution 377 (V)), it is clear that the Palestinians are not united, and are far from united for peace.

There is much uncertainty about the future Palestinian Government: its acceptance of the Quartet conditions, the peace process, the control of its security forces and many other questions that each and every representative here knows very well. It will take at least until after the Palestinian elections next year before it is clear what Palestinian unity really means. For Israel, this so-called unity has only brought continued impunity for the terrorists who fire rockets into our cities.

Today's debate is titled “The situation in the Middle East”. The turmoil that is sweeping our region — from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea — has shown that there are many challenges facing the Middle East — most of which do not revolve only around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In particular, the international community cannot allow the issue of Iran to fall under the radar. Iran remains the centre of terrorism in our region, transferring arms to Hamas, Hizbollah and other terrorist groups, in serial violation of numerous Security Council resolutions.

Iran continues to advance instability in the Middle East — from Syria to Bahrain to Morocco. Last month's report by the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1929 (2010) made clear that Iran continues to pursue nuclear weapons capabilities, in complete disregard of the will of the international community. New information shows Iran's intention to install uranium centrifuges at its facility in Qom — a facility that was concealed for many years from the International Atomic Energy Agency. Such behaviour does not just endanger the Middle East only, or a specific group of countries. It endangers us all. We cannot underestimate the danger of long-range missiles and short-range minds. The international community cannot stand by as the Ayatollah regime seeks to

assemble a dangerous mix of extremist ideology, missile technology and nuclear radiology.

Let me remind the Council that Gilad Shalit, Israel's kidnapped soldier, has been held in captivity for more than five years, with not a single visit from the Red Cross. We expect the international community to do all in its power — and more than it has done so far — to bring about his immediate release, which we await, and every family in Israel awaits.

Israel is happy to have many friends around the world. As we are often reminded, true friends never shy away from letting you know what they think. Today I issue a call to the true friends of the Palestinians — to those who want to see them fulfil their national aspirations. As they march down the path of unilateralism, the Palestinian's true friends should tell them the simple truths. Direct negotiations cannot be bypassed. Peace cannot be imposed from the outside.

To the Palestinians I also issue a call. Take Israel's outstretched hand. Seize the opportunities before us to advance down the real road towards peace — a road of solutions not resolutions, dialogue not monologue and direct negotiations not unilateral declarations.

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

I now give the floor to members of the Security Council.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): It is an honour to have you, Minister Hoyer, preside over the Council, and I thank Special Coordinator Serry for his briefing here today.

The United States is committed to a just and fair resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Last May, President Obama outlined a comprehensive vision for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. He noted that, at a time when the people of the Middle East and North Africa are casting off the burdens of the past, the drive for a lasting peace that ends the conflict and resolves all claims is more urgent than ever. The President's remarks laid out a firm foundation for future

negotiations, and those remarks have been strongly supported by the international community. My Government has been clear all along. The only place where permanent status issues can be resolved, including borders and territory, is in negotiations between the parties — not in international forums such as the United Nations.

We must all ensure that our actions help move peace efforts forward. Our focus has been on encouraging direct engagement by the parties on the basis of President Obama's remarks. We are also continuing our support for the Palestinian Authority's important efforts to strengthen the Palestinian economy, enhance the capability and professionalism of its security forces and build up the necessary institutions of statehood. However, as President Obama has made clear, Palestinian leaders will not achieve peace or prosperity for their people if Hamas insists on a path of terror and rejection. Palestinian leaders must also take further steps to combat incitement to violence, and Hamas must immediately and unconditionally release Gilad Shalit, who has now suffered in captivity for more than five years.

Today is our last open debate on the Middle East before the opening of the next General Assembly. Let there be no doubt: Symbolic actions to isolate Israel at the United Nations in September will not create an independent Palestinian State. The United States will not support unilateral campaigns at the United Nations in September or at any other time. A viable and sustainable peace agreement can only be achieved by mutual agreement of the parties themselves. Only through serious and responsible negotiations can the parties achieve the shared goal of two States for two peoples, with a secure Jewish State of Israel living side by side in peace and security with an independent, contiguous and viable State of Palestine.

This is the goal; this is the vision. But there are no shortcuts. We call again on all Member States to encourage the parties to take constructive actions to promote peace and to avoid actions that could undermine trust, prejudice negotiations or place the temptations of symbolism over the hard work of reaching agreement.

Let me also reiterate that, like every United States administration for decades, we do not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlement activity. The fate of existing settlements must be dealt with by the

parties along with other permanent status issues, and Israel should continue its efforts to deter and prosecute anti-Palestinian violence perpetrated by extremists.

Let me turn briefly to the situation in Gaza. The recent seizures of advanced weaponry bound for Gaza as well as the recent and alarming rocket and mortar attacks on Israel from Gaza should remind us all that Israel continues to have clear and legitimate security interests regarding cargo bound for Gaza.

While Israel has eased restrictions on the movement of goods and people in and out of Gaza, more needs to be done. Ordinary Gazans still have very real humanitarian needs. So we are working closely with Israel, the international donor community and the Palestinian Authority to deliver critical assistance to the people of Gaza. We continue to urge those who wish to deliver assistance to use established channels to ensure that Israel's legitimate security needs are addressed, while the Palestinians' humanitarian needs are met.

Let me say a few words about the ongoing crisis in Syria. The world has been inspired by the courage of the peaceful protesters who have taken to the streets across the country to demand their universal rights. The regime has responded with violence, brutality and mass arrests. But Syria is currently headed towards a new political order, shaped by the Syrian people, in which the Government will derive its legitimacy from the consent of the governed. A transition to democracy is already under way. President Al-Assad may try to delay that transition, but he cannot stop it, and Syria can never return to the way it was before.

The United States fully supports the Syrian people's demands for a unified Syria, with a democratic, representative and inclusive Government that respects basic liberties and provides equal protection under the law for all citizens, regardless of sect, ethnicity or gender. We call on the Syrian Government to stop the violence and arrests immediately, and to allow peaceful protests and freedom of speech. Human rights abuses must end now, and human rights monitors must immediately be granted access to all of Syria. We again call on the Syrian Government to permit access for the fact-finding mission called for by the Human Rights Council in April. The Security Council has a responsibility to address the situation in Syria and the Government's ongoing repression, which could further

destabilize the country and undermine peace and security in the region.

Finally, let me say a word about Lebanon. We hope that Lebanon's new Government will live up to all of its international obligations, including the full implementation of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006), and uphold the country's commitment to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. In particular, we call on the Government of Lebanon to continue to meet its obligations under international law to support the Tribunal. Lebanon's independent judicial proceedings offer the nation a chance to move beyond its long history of political violence and achieve the peace and stability that the Lebanese people deserve. Those who oppose the Special Tribunal seek to create a false choice between justice and stability. Lebanon, like every other country, deserves both.

Mr. Amieyefori (Nigeria): On behalf of the Nigerian delegation, I warmly welcome you to the Security Council, Mr. President. Let me also thank the Special Coordinator, Mr. Serry, for his comprehensive briefing.

The Middle East peace process remains deadlocked, in spite of concerted efforts on the part of the international community to return the parties to direct negotiations. Mistrust and a lack of confidence-building measures have combined to complicate the outlook. Amid the deadlock, both sides seem to be contemplating a series of mutually harmful unilateral actions. While one side is now threatening to annex settlement blocs and even cancel the Oslo Agreements, the other is seeking to achieve membership in a broad range of international organizations. Deeply frustrating as the continuing deadlock is, the parties must recognize that the parameters of the two-State solution and an end to the conflict must be negotiated.

With the Middle East Quartet unable to present a common platform for the renewal of negotiations at its last meeting, the only way to avoid the impending political confrontation is for the parties to immediately re-enter into direct negotiations on all permanent status issues, including borders, Jerusalem, refugees and security. Bringing both sides to constructive dialogue will be easier to achieve if there is a common platform or agenda around which all interlocutors, including the Quartet, can converge. Israel's implementation of its Road Map obligation to freeze all settlement activities, and Palestine's commitment to the security of the State

of Israel will undoubtedly facilitate the process. The international community, particularly the Security Council, must be fully involved in charting the way forward.

Inter-Palestinian reconciliation is indispensable to achieving the peace required to drive the process of establishing an independent State and peace in the Middle East as a whole. It is important that the April reconciliation agreement be sustained and fully implemented. The formation of a consensus Government will go a long way towards helping to forge lasting peace and stability, as well as to supporting accelerated economic development.

We welcome the improved and steady movement of goods and services through the crossings into Gaza. The delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza through the channels established by the Greek authorities, in consultation with the United Nations, is highly commendable. We urge all flotilla initiatives to take similar steps to avoid the escalation of tensions in the region. The approval by Israel authorities of United Nations road and school projects is encouraging, and we hope it will help to improve the welfare of the Palestinian people. We continue to commend the role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in providing much-needed relief and assistance to Gazans, and we urge greater international financial and logistical support for UNRWA.

On Lebanon, we reaffirm our commitment to that country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We congratulate Prime Minister Mikati on the formation of a new Government, which should stay committed to the country's international obligations, including resolution 1701 (2006), and to supporting and preserving the work of the Special Tribunal. We urge Israel to implement its proposal to formally withdraw its forces from the northern part of Al-Ghajar.

The security and humanitarian situation in Syria remains a source of concern, with refugee movements creating serious consequences for neighbouring countries. We urge the parties in Syria to exercise maximum restraint and engage in meaningful dialogue towards a peaceful settlement of the crisis. The Government's endorsement yesterday of a law that would allow the formation of political parties alongside the ruling party is a welcome development. It is incumbent on the Government to continue to

implement the promised reforms and to grant access to aid agencies and the United Nations in order to provide much-needed assistance to those who require it.

Nigeria remains hopeful that, in spite of the current stalemate in the peace process, a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Middle East question is possible. The parties must continue on the path of dialogue; they must also make the painful compromises necessary for achieving enduring peace in the region.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon): Pending the long-awaited Quartet parameters for peace negotiations in the Middle East, Arab leaders, including the Palestinians, have welcomed as constructive elements the lines drawn by President Obama last May. While they continue to support holding an international conference on the Middle East in Moscow, they also welcome the recent French initiative to host another international conference in Paris. But this Arab attitude has once more met with Mr. Netanyahu's reiteration of his resounding four "no's": no freeze on settlements; no return to the 1967 borders; no negotiations over the future status of Jerusalem; and no right of return for Palestinian refugees.

The Palestinians have been accused of seeking recognition of statehood and membership of the United Nations as an alternative to negotiations. But the reality is that those negotiations have been non-existent since September 2010, when the Israeli Government failed to renew the settlement freeze, partial though it was.

Moreover, in view of Mr. Netanyahu's four "no's" obstinately undermining any possible significant outcome, at best such negotiations could lead only to yet another round of frustrating negotiations.

However, hoping against hope, President Mahmoud Abbas is indeed worthy of praise for having steadfastly reiterated, just three days ago, that the Palestinians would continue to opt for negotiations over any other path, including at the United Nations. President Abbas is right, as there can be no comprehensive solution without genuine negotiations on final status issues, including border-related issues, security arrangements, the future of settlements, the status of Jerusalem, the return of refugees and water-sharing. However, it should be noted that statehood was never among those issues, and the reason for that is very simple. Statehood is but an expression of the

right of self-determination, and self-determination is part of the inalienable rights of people. An inalienable right is by definition a right that can be neither surrendered nor negotiated. In the United Nations system, the Palestinians' inalienable right to self-determination was first recognized by the General Assembly in its resolution 3236 (XXIX), of 1974, and, since then, has been reaffirmed every year by an overwhelming majority of the members of the Assembly.

The question has sometimes been asked as to whether Palestine fulfils the requirements of statehood. Under international law, the test of whether an entity claiming to be a State is, in fact, a State remains whether such an entity meets the requirements of statehood as defined in the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States.

The first criterion is that of a permanent population. It is our guess that no one here still questions the existence of a Palestinian people. Both its existence and its inalienable rights as a people have long been recognized by our Organization.

The second criterion is that of a defined territory. For the Palestinian leadership, the territory of the State of Palestine comprises the well-known Gaza Strip and West Bank, which was occupied by Israel in 1967, and whose final borders could be subject to mutually agreed-upon adjustments by both the Palestinians and the Israelis. The fact that the territory's final borders are not confirmed is no impediment to statehood, as many States' borders have undergone changes or have been challenged without their statehood being affected, as noted by the International Court of Justice in other cases.

The third criterion is that of government. The position of the international community is that the condition of proper institutions for self-governance has now been fulfilled. On this condition of statehood, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Serry, who is here with us today, concluded in his report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians meeting in Brussels on 13 April that Palestinian "governmental functions are now sufficient for a functioning government of a State"; we heard him repeat this earlier today in this Chamber. That conclusion was underscored by

concurring World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports.

The fourth and final criterion is the capacity to enter into relations with other States. Such a capacity is, obviously, evidenced by the fact that Palestinian embassies and missions operate in more than 100 countries.

Palestine therefore meets all four criteria of statehood. However, it is an occupied State, and it is our duty to help it put an end to occupation and achieve independence.

It has also been asked whether the Palestinian quest for recognition of statehood and United Nations membership violates previous Palestinian-Israeli agreements. First, the basis of Palestinian statehood precedes any Palestinian-Israeli agreement and cannot therefore be logically or practically in violation of them. As a matter of fact, Palestinian statehood is rooted in General Assembly resolution 181 (II), of 1947, which divided Palestine into two States and has often been labelled "the birth certificate of Israel". Based on that resolution, the Palestinian leadership proclaimed, during an extraordinary meeting of the Palestinian National Council held in Algiers, the birth of the State of Palestine in 1988, that is, five years prior to the Oslo accords, the first Palestinian-Israeli agreement.

Secondly, rather than considering the fulfilment of Palestinian statehood as contradictory to or incompatible with the peace process that started with the Oslo accords, the international community endorsed the two-State solution in the road map and in Security Council resolution 1850 (2008) and continued to encourage the Palestinians to consolidate and strengthen their Government and national institutions.

Seeking recognition of statehood has sometimes been referred to as a unilateral move. Could seeking such recognition and applying for membership in the United Nations, as announced by the Palestinian leadership and supported by the Group of Arab States, qualify as a unilateral move?

Obviously, giving full legal effect in the United Nations system to the recognition by the majority of its Members of the State of Palestine can by no means qualify as a unilateral act. That would simply reflect the expression of the collective will of the vast majority of the Members of the United Nations, which,

in turn, is the most multilateral of forums in the international system.

Unilateral actions continue, however, to be taken on the ground and to jeopardize not only the resumption of the much-hoped-for negotiations but also the viability of the two-State solution. The continuous building of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, the demolition of Palestinian houses, the eviction of Palestinians from their ancestral homes and the confiscation of their lands, as well as the building of the infamous Wall by the Israeli occupying forces are not, to the best of our knowledge, carried out with the consent of their victims, but are, par excellence, unilateral acts. These are the unilateral and illegitimate acts that must be stopped.

Seeking recognition for the State of Palestine and granting it full membership in the United Nations is not about delegitimizing Israel. It is about upholding a legitimate right of the Palestinians and, yes, delegitimizing Israel's decades-long occupation.

To those who are still reluctant to join us in such an endeavour, allow me to say: do not blame the victims, but support their quest for dignity. To reap peace, invest in justice. Recognize the State of Palestine. Help it achieve independence.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome Mr. Hoyer, Minister of State of Germany, who is presiding over today's meeting, and I thank Mr. Serry for his briefing. I also listened carefully to the statements made by the representatives of Palestine and of Israel.

The protracted and unresolved Middle East issue is the main obstacle blocking progress on peace and development in the Middle East, which thus affects global peace and stability. The Israeli-Palestinian peace talks have again reached a stalemate with a lack of substantial progress over the past few months. The Middle East is now at a crucial crossroads. China is deeply concerned by the current status of peace talks between Israel and Palestine.

China supports a solution to the Israel-Palestine dispute through political and diplomatic channels based on relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map for peace in the Middle East, with the aim of establishing a fully independent, sovereign

State of Palestine with the two countries, Palestine and Israel, living peacefully side by side.

Israeli settlement activities have directly caused the stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and also constitute the major obstacle to the resumption of those talks. China is against Israel's construction of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory and appeals to Israel to immediately cease its settlement activities and to promote conditions conducive to mutual trust between the two parties in order to break the stalemate in the peace talks.

China welcomes the internal reconciliation agreement among the Palestinian parties and hopes that they will use it to strengthen internal unity and cooperation and play an active role in moving the Middle East peace process forward.

The solution to the Middle East issue is inseparable from vigorous support and assistance on the part of the international community. China attaches great importance to the important role of the Quartet and hopes that it will soon propose specific programmes conducive to the resumption of peace talks between the two parties. China hopes that the international community will display the necessary political wisdom and courage and strengthen its efforts to promote peace negotiations and that it will continue its tireless efforts to facilitate the resumption of the peace talks. China has noted the recent proposals and initiatives put forward by the relevant parties and is open to any diplomatic efforts and initiatives conducive to breaking the current stalemate.

The Middle East question has long been on the Council's agenda. China favours the Council's more active and practical involvement in this issue, as well as a greater role for the Council in revitalizing the Middle East peace process.

In order to achieve a comprehensive, lasting and just peace in the Middle East, the peace talks between Lebanon and Israel and between Syria and Israel, as part of the Middle East process, should be conducted in parallel. All relevant parties should create conditions conducive to dialogue and negotiation in order to put an end to the prolonged confrontation and resulting tensions in the Middle East.

China has resolutely supported the just cause of the Palestinian people to restore their legitimate sovereign rights and supports the establishment of a

fully sovereign and independent State of Palestine. China congratulates Palestine for subscribing to the choice of peace, and China will continue to support the just cause of the Palestinian people. We sincerely hope that the goal of establishing an independent state of Palestine will be achieved at an early date.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa): We welcome you, Mr. President, to the Council and it is a pleasure to see you presiding over this important meeting. My delegation expresses its appreciation to Special Coordinator Mr. Robert Serry for his briefing to the Council. South Africa associates itself with the statement to be delivered later on by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. We also thank the Ambassadors of Palestine and Israel for their statements.

Following President Obama's statement during the general debate this past year, we had hoped that the Palestinians' final status would be resolved by this September and that during this year we would welcome yet another new Member State to the United Nations, in addition to South Sudan. President Obama's statement created a strong expectation within the international community that an enabling environment would be cultivated, within which final status negotiations between Palestine and Israel would take place, culminating in the resolution of that decades-long conflict. Sadly, however, owing to intransigence and lack of political will, peace and a sustainable resolution to the conflict seems more elusive than ever.

It was disappointing that the recent meeting of the Quartet in Washington, D.C., failed to provide a clear road map showing the way forward. It is imperative for the Quartet to work urgently with the parties within parameters that essentially include a decision on the borders of the two States based on the 4 June 1967 lines, with mutually agreed swaps; security arrangements; a just, fair and agreed solution to the refugee question; and fulfilment of the aspirations of both parties with regard to Jerusalem. South Africa stands ready to work with its partners to support the Quartet in this process.

Furthermore, if the parties wish to reach an amicable and mutually beneficial agreement on the final status issues, there is certainly no gain in suspending negotiations. A return to negotiations by both parties, without preconditions and without altering final status issues is therefore more than ever critical.

This will require the parties to indicate, through both words and actions, that they are committed to a negotiated process and to reaching a mutually acceptable outcome. Israel's continued disregard for international law and the decisions of this Council, the General Assembly and the International Court of Justice, by continuing to build illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, remains a serious obstacle to peace. These actions are aimed at changing the facts on the ground and will make agreement on the final status issues much more difficult to achieve, mainly because they make the realization of a contiguous Palestinian State nearly impossible.

Violence by any side, including rocket attacks against Israel and its disproportionate response, is no way to advance the aspirations of either side.

Over 60 years have passed since the 1947 adoption of resolution 181 (II) in the General Assembly on the United Nations partition plan for Palestine, and over 40 years have passed since the adoption of Security Council resolution 242 (1967). As we are all aware, resolution 181 (II) recommended the partition of Palestine into two independent States, and resolution 242 (1967) laid the basis for the border between the two States — yet we continue debating matters already decided and agreed upon by those bodies.

It is South Africa's view that we need to focus on the implementation of those decisions. The State of Israel has recently celebrated its sixty-third anniversary, yet the State of Palestine, recognized by many of us, remains outside the membership of this Organization. We welcome the Palestinian efforts to seek United Nations recognition for their State. We can fully appreciate the frustration expressed by the Palestinian people in their quest for statehood.

South Africa fully supports the recent decision of the African Union taken in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, which called upon its:

“... Members States, especially those Members of the United Nations Security Council, to support the Palestinian efforts during the next session of the United Nations General Assembly to obtain full membership to the United Nations for the State of Palestine based on the 1967 lines with East Jerusalem as its capital, and URGES all Member States which have not yet done so to

recognize the State of Palestine to do so as soon as possible”.

It is our view that instead of using our efforts to deter Palestinians from exercising their Charter-given right to self-determination, we should exert efforts towards finding a resolution on final status matters, so that the two independent States, Israel and Palestine can exist side by side in peace.

We support Palestine’s continued efforts at State-building, and in this regard we welcome the signing of the reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas. We urge Israel and the international community to respect this internal sovereign decision of the Palestinians and focus on the peace process. We encourage the Palestinian parties to work together on implementing the reconciliation agreement. We further call on the international community to extend unbiased support to the Palestinian Authority in its effort to build institutions in an unfettered manner.

South Africa remains deeply concerned about Israel’s continued blockade of the Gaza Strip, and joins the international community’s demand that Israel end the illegal blockade that continues to exacerbate the suffering of ordinary civilians. The blockade and imposed restrictions violate international humanitarian law, including article 23 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and contradict the will of the international community, as expressed in various Security Council resolutions.

In conclusion, we reiterate that, in our search for a solution to the Palestinian question, it is now, more than ever, clear that we must not lose sight of the broader regional questions to which Palestine is inextricably linked. We therefore call on the international community to accelerate efforts towards the holistic resolution of the Middle East crisis, including the Lebanese and Syrian tracks.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): Let me thank Mr. Serry for his briefing and the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer for Palestine for their statements.

France associates itself with the statement to be delivered by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union.

Since the beginning of this year the Arab world has found itself at the heart of historic turmoil from which the region will emerge transformed. These

developments are the sign of the Arab societies’ aspirations to freedom. France has commended the movement and reaffirms again its support for all efforts for democratic transition that are peaceful and negotiated.

We believe this regional momentum provides a unique opportunity to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To do that, the position of France is based on certain straightforward convictions.

First, the status quo is untenable. Secondly, only dialogue will make it possible to achieve the sole legitimate solution, which is two States for two peoples. Further, the resumption of the peace process must be based on balanced parameters agreed between the two sides. We stated those parameters here on 18 February (6484th meeting). Let me recall them.

There must be an agreement on the borders of the two States, based the lines of 4 June 1967, with equivalent exchanges of territory on which the sides will have agreed. Security arrangements are needed that for the Palestinians respect the sovereignty of the State of Palestine and show that the occupation is over, and for the Israelis protect their security, prevent the resurgence terrorist acts and take into account new and emerging threats. Thirdly, there must be a just, equitable, realistic and agreed solution to the issue of refugees. Lastly, the aspirations of both sides with respect to Jerusalem must be fulfilled. A way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two States.

It is in that spirit that France has proposed an initiative aimed at resuming negotiations on the basis of these clear, balanced parameters, which reflect a broad international consensus and are in keeping with the primary expectations of both sides. We regret that the Middle East Quartet, at its meeting of 11 July, did not endorse these parameters and did not issue an appeal for a resumption of the peace process. Despite that setback, we call on the parties to refrain from any action that could prejudice the resumption of bilateral talks and to not resign themselves to the dangerous stalemate in which we currently find ourselves.

We commend the progress achieved by the Palestinian Authority in building institutions for the future Palestinian State. We call on all donors to continue their efforts in terms of budgetary assistance.

The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip continues to be of concern. We call again on the Israeli authorities to change their policies with regard to Gaza, without compromising their legitimate security concerns.

Our position on settlements continues unchanged. They are illegal from the standpoint of international law and are an obstacle to peace. They are based on despoiling the Palestinian people, and they undermine the confidence between the sides. They pose a threat to the possibility of achieving the two-State solution. We condemn ongoing settlement activities on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem and call on Israel to abandon its building projects.

Lastly, we cannot ignore the regional context of the peace process. In Lebanon there are developments along the border that have sparked concern in the international community. We condemn the attack on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon on 27 May and, just a few hours ago, once again, against the French contingent. In that context, France calls on all parties to meet their obligations set out in Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).

The formation of the Lebanese Government by the Prime Minister of Lebanon, Mr. Mikati, is an important step for Lebanon and the Lebanese. The Government must continue to implement Lebanon's obligations and international undertakings, particularly with respect to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and its funding, in accordance with resolution 1757 (2007) and the commitments undertaken by the Lebanese Prime Minister.

We are further concerned by the deadly events that took place on 15 May and 5 June on the Golan Heights, along the Syrian-Lebanese border. France again underscores the absolute need for the Syrian authorities to ensure compliance with the separation zone between Israel and Syria, in accordance with Security Council resolution 350 (1974).

For more than four months now, the Syrian regime has been involved in systematically repressing peaceful demonstrations, ignoring the appeals of the international community. The Syrian organizations for the defence of human rights are today listing nearly 1,500 killed and 12,000 political arrests. Each week we see civilian victims. The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect

said on 21 July that crimes against humanity may have been committed and continue to be committed in Syria.

On 11 July the embassies of France, the United States and Qatar in Damascus were attacked without Syrian security forces attempting to defend them. France condemns such schemes, which run counter to Syria's obligations under international law. Such illegal initiatives, such crude manoeuvres will not enable the authorities in Damascus to divert attention from the substance of the problem: ending the repression of the Syrian population and implementing a democratic transition. We hope the Security Council will finally be able to take up its responsibilities to condemn the violent repressions to which the Syrian people are subjected.

The events today in the Arab world, including the Palestinian territory, demonstrate to us the urgency and the strength of the aspirations of Arab societies for liberty and democracy. In a few weeks we will see the deadline set in the Fayyad plan. The expectations of the Palestinian civil society have never been so high. We should not ignore that signal and risk falling back into an impasse with the always-present threat of further escalation of violence. We need to find an opportunity to resume dialogue under the auspices of the international community. It is from the standpoint of the proposals of the parties, from the standpoint of their initiatives to resume the peace process that France will shoulder its responsibilities in steadfastly working to advance peace.

Mr. Messone (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): We welcome you in the chair, Mr. President, for this important debate on the situation in the Middle East. We in our turn would like to thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Robert Serry, for his briefing. He brought us up to date on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and on other situations in the Middle East.

Gabon would like to recall its support for the legal framework founded on the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and of the General Assembly. We also recall our position here in favour of a two-State solution: a Palestinian State and an Israeli State living side by side in peace.

The present context in the Middle East calls for new efforts to resume negotiations and to arrive at a dynamic compromise, one that must be based on parameters that are broadly accepted by the

international community, which were recalled in President Obama's statement.

My delegation remains concerned at the long-standing stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, despite the commendable efforts of the international community to restart direct negotiations between the two parties, in particular the Quartet meeting held on 11 July at the initiative of the United States Government. It is regrettable that this meeting, while it inspired some hope, did not lead to the resumption of negotiations. The stalemate is unacceptable and, if it continues, risks creating a rift in the international community on the prospects of the peace process.

It is well known that a great number of countries support the decision of Palestine to declare its independence. If this situation is not met with a resumption of negotiations, it could create an even more difficult situation in the Middle East. The current situation in the region thus calls for renewed efforts. We remain concerned by the cycle of attacks and reprisals that is hampering the consolidation of the progress made on the ground by the Palestinian Authority, whose efforts we call on the international community to continue to support.

With regard to the impasse and obstacles, it is ever more urgent to restart the peace process on the basis of principles that are clear and accepted by all parties, which must include, of course, the establishment of a climate of trust between the parties, a commitment to pursuing peace negotiations in good faith, the security of Israel, and the creation of a Palestinian State. The stability of the entire region also depends on this commitment.

Turning to Lebanon, my delegation welcomes the formation of the new Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Najib Mikati. We hope that this Government will work to resolve security concerns, particularly those raised by non-State armed groups, and to return to dialogue and national reconciliation.

With regard to the situation in Syria, while it remains concerned, my delegation notes the recent adoption by the Parliament of a draft law authorizing political pluralism. We urge the Government to continue on this track in order to win back the trust of the population and the international community.

We condemn the continued colonization of Palestinian land. We also condemn the indiscriminate attacks against Israel. We wish to see the two parties return to the negotiating table in order to break the current deadlock.

Mr. Moraes Cabral (Portugal): At the outset, allow me to recognize your presence here today with us, State Minister Hoyer. I thank Special Coordinator Robert Serry for his very useful briefing, and the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their contributions to today's debate.

Portugal's position and concerns are well known. We have been repeating them here month after month as the overall situation has unfortunately not changed, as Mr. Serry underlined. I can therefore be brief. We remain gravely concerned at the prolonged, frustrating and dangerous stalemate in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process and the lack of any credible negotiating process. As a member of the European Union, we naturally share the views that will be expressed by the Acting Head of its delegation later in today's debate.

We regret that a way has not yet been found to bring the parties back to direct talks, which have been on hold since September 2010. We are still convinced that negotiations remain the only way to achieve a final settlement based on the two-State solution, with the emergence of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State, living peacefully with Israel and its other neighbours.

To succeed, negotiations must be based on clear parameters that reflect widely held principles. They must also address all final status issues and ensure tangible achievements within a set time frame. They will demand the clear political will of both sides and have to be conducted in good faith.

As developments in the occupied Palestinian territories and the wider region continue to underscore, time is of the essence. The developments on the ground that Mr. Serry has outlined continue to be extremely worrying. They constitute serious obstacles to peace and undermine trust and the feasibility of a two-State solution. This is particularly the case of the accelerated settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; renewed land confiscation in the occupied territories; and the unabated demolition of Palestinian homes and the eviction of their inhabitants.

Once again, we strongly deplore that Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit remains in captivity and continues to be denied any humanitarian access. This is totally unacceptable, and we urge his immediate release. Portugal is equally troubled by the marked increase in security-related incidents in and around Gaza after a period of calm. We vehemently condemn the launching of rockets from Gaza into Israel and call on all sides to refrain from provocative actions and to exert maximum restraint. On the other hand, Portugal urges the Government of Israel to end the closure of Gaza and fully comply with resolution 1860 (2009). We reiterate that all assistance and legitimate goods destined for Gaza should be delivered, channelled through official crossings and established mechanisms.

Palestinians have worked diligently in preparing for their statehood and, as Mr. Serry reiterated, are ready for it. Let me recall President Obama's words of 19 May:

“The Palestinian people must have the right to govern themselves and reach their full potential in a sovereign and contiguous State.”

We therefore commend and strongly encourage the ongoing efforts of the Quartet in pursuit of an urgent resumption of meaningful direct negotiations that will result in the establishment of a Palestinian State on the basis of the 4 June 1967 lines, with equivalent land swaps as may be agreed by the parties. As I said, time is of the essence. The status quo is not only unsustainable but also very dangerous.

We had very useful consultations on Lebanon last week, during which I stated our position fully. Here, I wish to reiterate our condemnation of the terrorist attack against a United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) convoy on 27 May. We also regret the loss of life on 15 May during the Nakba demonstrations in the south of Lebanon, and commend the efforts of UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces to prevent the recurrence of a similar tragic outcome on 5 June.

Portugal welcomes the formation of the new Lebanese Government. Lebanon now has the opportunity to address many challenges and fulfil its international obligations, including those pertaining to resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1559 (2004) and the Special Tribunal. We also urge Israel to honour its own commitments under resolution 1701 (2006) and to swiftly complete its withdrawal from the northern part

of Al-Ghajar and to fully respect both the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Lebanon by air, land and sea.

The situation in Syria remains of the utmost concern. We are deeply troubled by the ongoing repression of peaceful protestors across the country and the dramatic death toll it has entailed. We regret that the Syrian authorities have not yet responded to the calls to immediately stop the violence. It is also regrettable that Damascus has not yet allowed the undertaking of a fact-finding mission, which is expected to report back to the Human Rights Council. We commend the neighbouring countries that are providing assistance to fleeing populations.

The solution to the crisis lies in an immediate end to the violence, a credible, genuine and inclusive national dialogue, and meaningful political reforms without delay. The only way to provide stability for Syria in the long term is through a peaceful transition to democracy based on national unity, territorial integrity and respect for the rights of all its citizens. We call, then, on the Syrian authorities once again to cease the violence it has imposed on its citizens, and we urge it to exert the utmost restraint and to allow for humanitarian access.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): It is a pleasure to welcome you, Mr. President, and to see you presiding over today's meeting. I thank Special Coordinator Robert Serry for his briefing, and the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their statements.

We meet again to discuss the situation in the Middle East in the midst of unprecedented transformations in the region. Unfortunately, those transformations have so far failed to bring change to the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

The Palestinian aspiration to statehood is not an abstraction. It is the cornerstone of democracy, dignity, freedom and human rights for the Palestinian people. We regret that, apart from the disagreements between the two sides, the main partners in the peace process remain unable to help the parties overcome the current impasse.

In this context, it is not surprising that the Palestinian leadership has announced its intention to request the United Nations to recognize the Palestinian State, based on the pre-June 1967 lines and with East

Jerusalem as its capital, and to apply for full membership of the Organization. The absence of a peace process adds to the legitimacy of the Palestinian request.

Resorting to the United Nations cannot be seen as a unilateral move. It is the exact opposite. The very concept of a two-State solution arises ultimately from the multilateral system, as the Permanent Representative of Lebanon has just reminded us. General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947 endorsed the plan of partition. The recognition of a Palestinian State is the completion of this 64-year-old promise.

Having had an important role in the General Assembly session that legitimized the State of Israel, Brazil feels it is time for the United Nations to grant the same vote of confidence to the Palestinian people's capacity to build a peaceful, democratic and prosperous State of its own. The Palestinian State, although under foreign occupation, is already a reality on the ground, as we have heard from the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

Palestinian institutions are now sufficient for a functioning State. International recognition can help reduce the asymmetry that characterizes relations between the parties. It can help realign the debate on the application of international law in the occupied Palestinian territories. It can also help to advance negotiations on core issues in a more fair and just manner. In the letter in which Brazil recognized the State of Palestine, we reiterated our understanding that only dialogue and peaceful coexistence with its neighbours can truly advance the Palestinian cause.

Resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009) encourage intra-Palestinian reconciliation and the formation of a Palestinian Government committed to the Quartet principles and the Arab Peace Initiative, and that respects the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The Palestinian reconciliation agreement signed in Cairo in May is a first step towards this important goal, which will provide the Palestinian people with a united and coherent representation.

We urge the Palestinian leaders to fully embrace non-violence, human rights and democracy as core principles of their struggle to end occupation. We expect them to fully commit to the security of the State of Israel and to the right of Israel to exist in peace and harmony with its neighbours.

A new Middle East is in the making before our eyes. The legitimacy of the movements that seek transformation lies in the democratic character of their demands and in the peaceful nature of their actions. In each national context, these forces will find their particular political expression in the face of different strategic, security, social, ethnic and economic conditions. Challenges will be manifold. Genuine change, in line with the aspirations of the people, can only come from within.

We condemn once more, in the strongest possible terms, the use of lethal force against unarmed demonstrators. Repression is likely only to strengthen the will of those struggling to exercise basic, universal rights. As we stand in solidarity with those peacefully demonstrating for democracy and social justice, we must pursue avenues to peaceful political solutions leading to meaningful reforms. Sustained international engagement will be needed, in order to ensure that those transformations are followed by a more equitable development and a better life for all citizens in the region.

Mr. Barbačić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): Allow me to thank Mr. Robert Serry, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing today. We also thank the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their presence and contributions to our debate.

Bosnia and Herzegovina remains deeply concerned about the absence of any progress in the Middle East peace process. The current impasse is not in the interests of either the Israeli or the Palestinian people. The scheduled time frame for the conclusion of peace negotiations is approaching rapidly. Hence, we cannot afford further delays before the beginning of serious and responsible negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians. At this critical moment, it is also of vital importance that the Security Council, the Quartet, the Arab League and other international and regional actors continue their efforts aimed at bringing the parties to direct substantive talks.

In that light, we understand President Obama's statement of 19 May and his appeal for decisive action that should lead to a lasting peace that includes two States for two peoples. For our part, we reaffirm our commitment to the two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and

viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

The current upheavals in the wider region clearly reflect the democratic aspirations of the peoples in the Middle East. This new environment creates an opportunity to speed up the negotiation process. We hope that the interested parties will recognize this newfound momentum and, by taking up the chance for substantial negotiations, will join the stream of positive changes in the Middle East.

Continued settlement activities on occupied land are illegal under international law and contrary to Israel's obligations under the Road Map. These activities represent an obstacle on the road to comprehensive peace. We therefore call upon Israel to respond positively to appeals by the international community by ending all settlement activities in occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is firm in its position that civilian populations must be protected. It is for this reason that we urge the parties to observe restraint and make every effort to avoid violence and further loss of innocent lives.

The continuation of the unsustainable and unproductive situation in Gaza is also of concern. In this regard, we welcome the Israeli Government's recent approvals of materials for new homes and schools to be constructed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. However, we strongly believe that this is not enough and that more needs to be done. Only the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) can meet the basic needs of the 1.5 million Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip. Hence, we reiterate our call for a full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) and for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza, including goods from the West Bank. Israel's security concerns, including a complete stop to violence and arms smuggling into Gaza, must also be addressed.

In conclusion, Bosnia and Herzegovina believes that lasting peace and stability in the region of the Middle East are possible through diplomatic efforts and full commitment to the peace process. To that aim, we expect the parties to take difficult decisions and return to direct talks without delay.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are pleased to welcome you, Mr. Minister, as Chair of the Security Council meeting. We thank Mr. Robert Serry, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his substantive briefing on developments in the regional situation. We regret to note the intransigence in the Middle East settlement process. There remain considerable differences in the approaches of the parties. An atmosphere of mutual mistrust prevails.

As a result, there is an impasse. For almost a year, the negotiation process has been stalled. That is a very bad and dangerous trend, given the extensive transformations and changes in the Middle East and North Africa. That should not distract us from our common task, which is to promote a Middle East settlement. In order to restore trust, above all the parties need to avoid steps that prejudice the outcome of a final settlement. They need to refrain from any manifestations of violence, in particular against civilians, and to demonstrate in practice their willingness to compromise. In that regard, it is crucial that settlement activities, above all in East Jerusalem, be ended.

We believe it important to underscore that negotiations should be resumed on the well-known international legal basis, including Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Road Map. Any attempts to undermine that basis will not bring the sides closer to starting constructive dialogue.

Apart from that, we would like to underscore the Arab Peace Initiative. Given the role played by the League of Arab States and its Committee in the Middle East peace process to promote that Initiative, we support close coordination between the Quartet and that regional organization. In fact, that is how we view a common and targeted international approach to resolving the key issue of the Middle East. We see the ultimate aim of the negotiating process as achieving the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to build their own viable and independent State, with its territorial integrity and East Jerusalem as its capital, living in peace and security with Israel, within internationally recognized borders based on the 1967 lines and potential agreed land swaps.

The implementation of any future Palestinian-Israeli arrangements will be called into question unless there is a single partner on the Palestinian side. For that

very reason, Russia supports Palestinian steps to achieve national reconciliation. We are ready to contribute to the successful implementation of the plans for intra-Palestinian unification and to provide comprehensive assistance to a future Palestinian Government.

We are seriously alarmed by the ongoing tension in the Gaza Strip and the continued plight of the peaceful Palestinian people. We strongly advocate the complete lifting of the Israeli blockade of the Strip.

A complete, comprehensive and just settlement in the Middle East is possible only by covering all tracks, including the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. We advocate unconditional and strict compliance with the relevant Security Council decisions to restore peace and security in the region and to normalize Israel's relations with its neighbours.

In such conditions, we believe that the ongoing mediation role of the Middle East Quartet is needed more than ever in the interests of finding an acceptable formula for the resumption of the negotiation process and the definition of parameters for a settlement, which must be achieved through dialogue among the interested parties.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Robert Serry for his briefing this morning and the Permanent Representatives of Palestine and Israel for their important contributions.

As we speak, momentous events continue to unfold across the Middle East. The determined struggle of people in the region to secure their universal rights against, in some cases, brutal Government repression offers hope for the future. The only credible answer to legitimate popular demands is sustainable reform. Nowhere is the fight for basic rights and the brutality of an autocratic regime unwilling to give its people what they want and what they are entitled to more apparent than in Syria.

We condemn the continuing heavy violence in Syria, the murder of peaceful protesters and the attacks on the United States and French embassies in Damascus. The Syrian regime has killed more than 1,500 civilians, and the death toll is rising on a daily basis. President Al-Assad claims that he is holding Syria's different factions together, but his regime's brutality risks inflaming sectarian tension. President Al-Assad must swiftly and meaningfully implement

reforms that he himself has promised, ensuring that they mark the start of a sustainable transition to a new political system that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people.

In our view, Security Council action demanding an end to the violence and calling for a peaceful Syrian-led political process is long overdue. We will continue to push for action, challenging those on the Council who stand in the way to meet their responsibilities.

Events in the wider Middle East are inextricably linked to efforts to find a long-term solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. At a time when populations in the region are striving for and realizing their rights, the Palestinians, too, must realize their goal of an independent and viable State of Palestine.

As we have said before, it would be a great shame and a source of continued insecurity if the hopes of the Palestinian people were left unfulfilled, while the region is transformed around them. Therefore, it is critical that progress in the peace process be made. September — the time frame set out by President Obama and the Quartet to welcome Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations and the month that will mark the completion of the Palestinian Authority's State-building programme — is fast approaching.

There is a danger that, in September, all stakeholders in the peace process give up hope and look simply to manage the situation, but, in our view, that would be premature. The parties should redouble their efforts to break the impasse and should resume direct negotiations on the basis of clearly articulated parameters — two States based on the 1967 borders, with mutually agreed land swaps; security arrangements that protect Palestinian sovereignty, while also providing sufficient reassurance to Israel; Jerusalem as the capital of both States; and a just solution for refugees. We encourage the Quartet to set out those simple parameters and to urge the parties back into talks.

Neither Israel nor the Palestinians can afford to let the current stalemate become the long-term status quo. They must act now to keep alive the prospect and hope for a sustainable peace. I would highlight three areas where they must work harder to avoid further deterioration of trust.

First, settlement activity must stop. Continued settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is not only illegal, but is increasingly destroying the viability of a contiguous Palestinian State, sharing Jerusalem as its capital with Israel. As well as construction, associated actions, such as the destruction of freshwater infrastructure by the Israeli authorities, undermine the very survival of entire Palestinian communities in the West Bank. Halting settlement activity and associated activities is not elective surgery. It is a life-saving operation.

Secondly, Israel has legitimate security concerns that must continue to be safeguarded. Maintaining security cooperation and ensuring that there is a complete and sustained cessation of rocket attacks from Gaza are key to reassuring the Israeli Government and public that there exists a genuine partner for peace.

Thirdly, more must be done to improve access to Gaza. Restrictions that stifle Gaza's economy breed hatred, radicalism and violence. An improved Gazan economy and the resurgence of Gaza's pragmatic business fraternity are not only essential to the people of Gaza, but also firmly in Israel's own security interests.

There is no time to waste in making progress towards peace. We know from history that standing still is never an option in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is either progress towards a negotiated agreement or backsliding into violence. It is up to the leaders on both sides to take the bold steps necessary to ensure the former and to avoid the latter.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): At the outset, I would like to welcome you, Mr. President, to New York and thank you for chairing this open debate. I would also like to thank Special Coordinator Robert Serry for his comprehensive briefing and the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their statements, which we have carefully noted.

Since our last open debate on this item in this Council (see S/PV.6520), the Palestinian factions have signed an agreement. The main elements of the agreement include reform of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the holding of elections by May 2012, and the establishment of unified agencies, national reconciliation and a joint committee to implement the agreement. The unity between the Palestinian parties should not only end the division between the West

Bank and Gaza, but also create State institutions in Gaza. To this end, we hope that the Palestinian parties will succeed in the speedy implementation of the reconciliation agreement. We also hope that Hamas will not only accept the State of Israel as a reality, but also cooperate with the Palestinian Authority to deal with Israel's security concerns.

Stalemate in the peace talks, however, appears to be giving rise to a sense of desperation in the Palestinian territories. For more than four months now, the monthly debates on the Palestinian issue in this Council have hinged on the hope that the Quartet would put forward a set of practical steps that could enable Palestinians and Israelis to resume talks. This hope was yet again belied when the Quartet meeting Washington, D.C., on 11 July ended without any statement.

Over the past few years, the Palestinian authority has made significant progress in building State institutions, improving the economy of the West Bank and rapprochement with various factions, including Hamas. This progress has invited commendation from the international community at large. The State-building efforts of the Palestinian Authority have, however, reached their geographical and institutional limits. Any further progress would require the resumption of talks on final status issues.

The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, meanwhile, remains a cause for serious concern. The blockade of Gaza is not only adversely affecting the population, but also driving militant elements to vent their frustration through violence, thereby further complicating the situation on the ground and increasing Israel's vulnerability and security concerns.

The stalemate in peace talks and the grim humanitarian situation can further complicate an already fragile situation. We share the sense of the international community that the freezing of settlement activity in the Palestinian territories could enable the peace talks to resume. We therefore call upon Israel to implement Prime Minister Netanyahu's address to the Knesset in May this year, wherein he said that Israel could consider territorial compromise in return for security and recognition. Putting a stop to settlement activities should be the first step in this process. Unless this essential step is taken and peace talks resume, the growing desperation may lead the parties to actions that could spiral out of control. As the month of

September approaches, it is important to realize that there is limited time for Palestinians and Israeli to seize the opportunity.

Other issues relating to Arab lands that remain under Israeli occupation are equally important. Progress on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks constitutes the essential core to achieving a comprehensive and durable peace in the region. In a region witnessing protests movements all around, the continuing impasse in peace talks could have destabilizing effect on a much larger area. In this context, the events of 15 May and 5 June show how fragile the situation is and how easily violence can be incited on a larger scale, destabilizing the whole region. We are therefore afraid that if the peace talks do not recommence quickly, unilateral steps by the parties will ensue, which would increase the distance between them and make it more difficult to find a comprehensive settlement. We therefore call on the members of the Quartet to intensify their collective and individual efforts to break the stalemate.

India has a long-standing tradition of solidarity with the Palestinian people. India has supported the Palestinian people's struggle for a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital and living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Arab Peace initiative, the Quartet Road Map and relevant Security Council resolutions.

India has been assisting in the capacity- and institution-building of the Palestinian people with material and technical assistance programmes. Through the India, Brazil and South Africa forum, India has extended assistance. India is also contributing \$1 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, continuing our solidarity with the Palestinian people in their pursuit of legitimate goals and quest for development based on dignity and self-reliance. In addition, we have provided untied budgetary support of \$10 million to the Palestinian Authority for each of the past two years.

In conclusion, let me reiterate our expectation that the parties will restart talks without further delay. These talks should lead to a final and comprehensive resolution of the Middle East conflict. We owe it to ourselves and to future generations of Israelis and

Palestinians to ensure that they do not remain mired in conflict, but live in peace and security.

Mr. Alzate (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish at the outset to warmly welcome you, Sir, and to take this opportunity to express the support of my delegation in your work as President of the Security Council at this debate. I wish to thank Mr. Robert H. Serry, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his detailed briefing on recent developments in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

Recent developments in the Middle East and North Africa have generated the ongoing interest of the international community. Colombia has not been aloof from this situation; it has repeatedly expressed its strong support for the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of the region, respect for their human rights and individual freedoms, and their right to a better and dignified life.

We understand the situation in the Middle East as an integral issue. That is why we advocate a lasting and structured solution to the unstable situation in the region. We call for an end to the use of force or threat, and an end to terrorism. Our country is committed to addressing the issue with democratic principles and the ultimate goals of peace and security. We understand the aspiration of the Palestinian people to receive prompt recognition of the Palestinian State. We therefore continue to support the objective of creating a viable Palestinian State, living in peace alongside Israel and within defined, secure and internationally recognized borders based on the 1967 lines and changes mutually agreed by the parties.

We express our concern over the suspension of peace talks and ask the parties to resume negotiations as soon as possible. We believe that negotiation is the way to achieve a lasting solution. We are convinced that without an agreement accepted by the parties, we would be repeating the mistake of 1947.

We support the work of the Quartet and the implementation of the Road Map. Therefore, we share the views expressed by Quartet representatives on 11 July regarding the urgent need to call on parties to overcome current obstacles and find the way to resume direct negotiations, without delay or preconditions, starting a preparatory phase of negotiations to maximize the chances of success. We also support all efforts we are making through the United Nations.

We believe that settlements are an obstacle to the search for a lasting peace in the Middle East. They are not only illegal under international law but constitute a breach of the agreements established in the Road Map. We firmly believe in the need for both parties to act under international law in compliance with their commitments and obligations.

In addition, the international community must continue to support the institutional strengthening of the Palestinian Authority in order to build a viable State. We share the consensus of the Quartet that Hamas must renounce to violence, recognize Israel and specifically reject the use of terrorism as a political tool.

Israelis and Palestinians cannot continue to be immersed in confrontation and mistrust. We make an ardent call to restart talks between the parties on the basis of mutual respect and recognition of the identity and rights of each people. The Palestinians are entitled to their own State living in peace with Israel and moving toward common prosperity. Future generations of Palestinians must be able to grow up in hope, not despair. Similarly, current and future generations of Israelis must be able to live free from fear of attack and to enjoy peaceful relations with the neighbouring Arab countries.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as Minister of State.

I would like to thank Special Coordinator Robert Serry for his excellent briefing.

Germany aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the European Union.

We are at a crucial moment in the Middle East process. People across the region are rising up for freedom, democracy and a better life. At the same time, we face a continuing stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Within the volatile regional context, it is more urgent than ever to reach lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. For the people in the region, progress in the peace process would send a strong signal of stability and would be testimony to the merits of politics and diplomacy.

We all share the same vision. We want to see the State of Israel and a sovereign, independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security. It is time to make decisive progress. Prime Minister Netanyahu and

President Abbas must assume their responsibility and take bold steps towards the resumption of direct and substantive talks.

We remain convinced that clear parameters are a prerequisite for successful negotiations. President Obama set out a balanced approach in his speech on 19 May. The European Union, for its part, has articulated what it considers to be the key parameters. Germany, France and the United Kingdom stated their view on this matter in a joint explanation of vote in this Council (see S/PV.6484). We continue to believe that an international endorsement of parameters is needed in order to create a basis for genuine negotiations.

The Quartet continues to play a central role in this process and has been in permanent contact with the parties. Germany strongly supports the efforts by the European Union High Representative, Baroness Ashton, in the Quartet for a credible and balanced perspective to relaunch and facilitate the peace process. We call on the Quartet to continue and intensify its efforts to set out a fair and balanced framework for negotiations in order to trigger progress prior to the September deadline that it has itself endorsed.

Palestinian leaders have announced that they may turn to the United Nations in their quest for statehood. At the same time, Palestinians have made it very clear that a resumption of negotiations is their preferred option. Palestinians expect from their leaders headway in establishing a Palestinian State. Germany acknowledges the remarkable progress by the Palestinian Authority in building the institutions of the future State of Palestine. In their reports, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations have clearly stated that the Palestinian Authority has crossed the threshold towards a functioning State in key sectors. Now, the political process needs to catch up urgently with the substantial progress made on the ground. At the same time, we must do everything to preserve the achievements on the way to Palestinian statehood.

Let me be very clear on this: Germany supports the establishment of a Palestinian State. As a matter of course, such a State will become a Member of the United Nations. Progress in this direction is a matter of urgency. Palestinians and Israelis have been waiting for too long to see the conflict end. But there is no viable or acceptable alternative to negotiations. Only negotiations will end the occupation, and only

negotiations can provide a possible solution to the core issues. Any action that is not conducive to a comprehensive solution and that could undermine trust between the parties should therefore be avoided.

We are deeply concerned that failure to provide a credible political horizon for real progress towards a two-State solution could lead to serious consequences. Germany remains deeply concerned about continued settlement construction in the Palestinian territories and in East Jerusalem and about new construction plans and recent land confiscation in the West Bank, the first since 2008.

In this Council, Germany, together with Britain and France, has made its position on settlements very clear: they are illegal under international law and are an obstacle to peace, and they constitute a threat to a two-State solution. All settlement activity, including in East Jerusalem, should therefore cease immediately. All members of the Council are in agreement that continued settlement activity constitutes a major obstacle to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. It is most unfortunate that settlement construction has continued despite so many appeals.

Gaza remains a serious concern. We strongly condemn the recent resumption of rocket and mortar attacks on Israeli territory after the ceasefire following the Cairo Agreement. That type of action is utterly unacceptable. Germany recognizes Israel's right to protect its citizens against attacks. At the same time, we look to Israel to exercise this right judiciously, in order to forestall further escalation. We continue to call for the immediate and unconditional release of Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit, who has been held hostage for more than five years now.

Let me turn to one of the challenges that lie ahead. There is a need to sustain the positive developments initiated by the Palestinian Authority. The current financial situation is critical. It is not clear if salaries can be paid any longer. We call on all donors to honour their existing commitments. It may also become necessary to mobilize an additional international donor effort, and we would welcome any such initiative.

We need to help create and maintain the conditions for self-sustained economic growth, including in Gaza. The appropriate way ahead is the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009), calling

for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for goods and people to and from Gaza, and for the prevention of the illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition. At the same time, we expect any Palestinian Government to commit itself unequivocally to the principle of non-violence, to a two-State solution and to a negotiated peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, accepting the previous agreements and obligations, including Israel's legitimate right to exist. By the same token, we expect those bearing Government responsibility in Israel to unequivocally accept the two-State solution and to do their utmost to set the course for it.

People in the Middle East have suffered too long from conflict and confrontation. Our shared goal is a just and lasting peace that ends the conflict and resolves all claims. In our time, many attempts to reach this goal have been frustrated. We understand the growing impatience, but we should be clear about what will bring us closer to peace, and what may result in further frustrations.

I should just like to say a word on Syria. We are deeply shocked by the current events in that country. Despite promises of reforms and dialogue with the opposition, military actions, killings, arrests and repression continue. We are concerned about acts of violence between followers of different creeds. We urge the Syrian Government to stop playing the sectarian card. The Syrian regime must put a halt immediately to all violence against and repression of the Syrian people. Only if the violence stops is there a chance for initiating a sustainable political process. The transition towards a new Syria must be based on the full political participation of all its citizens and on commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights.

It is not for outsiders to decide the future of Syria. This is an issue of the sovereignty of the people. The people of Syria are speaking loudly and clearly, just as the peoples of Egypt and Tunisia expressed their views. The legitimate demands of the Syrian people must be addressed. The Security Council cannot stand aside. It is our firm belief that a strong signal from the Council condemning the ongoing violence and repression of the Syrian people is of the utmost importance. The Security Council must assume its responsibility.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): I have the honour to address the Security Council today on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and to begin by welcoming you, Mr. President, as you preside over the Council today, and by expressing the Movement's appreciation for today's briefing by Mr. Robert Serry, United Nations Special Coordinator and Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

The Non-Aligned Movement believes that, at this critical juncture, the international community must renew its resolve to uphold its long-standing commitment to the realization of the two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on the basis of international law and the well-known terms of reference of the 20-year peace process. There is an international understanding that we must reach the end of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and Arab lands occupied since 1967; the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the borders of 4 June 1967; a just solution to the plight of the Palestine refugees, and thus the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

It is therefore regrettable that all serious efforts made to date by the concerned international and regional parties, including by the Quartet in its last meeting on 11 July in Washington, D.C., have not yet led to the resumption and advancement of direct negotiations on the Palestinian-Israeli track. It is equally alarming to the Movement that the mere issuance of a Quartet statement has become an issue in itself, highlighting the serious need to improve the efficacy of that mechanism and to resolve the conflict, which remains a threat to international peace and security.

It is also greatly to be regretted and condemned that Israel, the occupying Power, continues to pursue its illegal settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, along with many other unlawful policies and practices that continue to exacerbate the situation on the ground and to raise tensions. Such illegal practices also constitute the main obstacle to efforts to resume credible peace negotiations and are making it nearly impossible to realize the two-State solution on the basis of the

borders of 4 June 1967. In that regard, NAM strongly condemns the boycott law enacted by the Israeli Knesset earlier this month, which penalizes people or organizations who call for a boycott of the illegal Israeli settlements. It is a law that many in Israel itself find unconstitutional and anti-democratic.

Recent declarations regarding the establishment of thousands more illegal settlement units, as well as the continuing and unprecedented pace of Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes and properties, especially in neighbourhoods of occupied East Jerusalem, in order to build new settlements in the heart of the City, all affirm Israel's hostile intentions and belie its Government's alleged commitment to the peace process and a two-State solution. All current indications, from provocative declarations to accelerated construction on the ground and continued revocation of Palestinian residency rights, are that Israel is clearly choosing settlements over peace. Indeed, to date, Israel has persisted in its unlawful attempts to alter the geographic and demographic composition of the Palestinian territory, particularly East Jerusalem, the annexation of which remains and will remain rejected and unrecognized by the international community.

The sponsorship by the vast majority of the Non-Aligned Movement member States of the draft resolution (S/2011/24) presented earlier this year to the Council, calling for the immediate cessation of all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, reflects the international position on this important issue. NAM regrets that the draft resolution was not adopted by the Council, as we had hoped for and expected in accordance with the Council's duty under the Charter to address Israel's deliberate destruction of the attainment of peace and security in the Middle East. The Non-Aligned Movement emphasizes its position, clearly stated at the NAM Ministerial Conference held in May in Bali, Indonesia, and reiterates its call for the Council to be resolute in demanding that Israel, the occupying Power, abide by its legal obligations.

Moreover, we believe that calls for compliance must be backed by credible action. Israel must be called on to abide forthwith by all its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Road Map, without exception, and must be held accountable for their violation. That includes the obligation to immediately

and completely cease all settlement activities and to respect the international consensus on that issue, including the calls from the United Nations, NAM, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the European Union, the Quartet and all other concerned international and regional bodies and actors.

NAM also emphasizes the need to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to fully lift its illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip, in line with its obligations under international law, resolution 1860 (2009) and all other relevant United Nations resolutions. This inhumane blockade continues to provoke the deep concern of people all over the region and the world, reflected, inter alia, in acts of solidarity such as the freedom flotilla. In this context, the Movement expresses its concern about and condemnation of the Israeli military's boarding and seizure on 19 July of the French civilian boat *Dignité-Al Karama*, which was sailing to Gaza to lend much-needed support to the people of Gaza, and calls for the blockade of Gaza to be lifted immediately.

In this connection, the Movement re-emphasizes the need for the reconstruction of Gaza, and calls on Israel to open all its crossing points into Gaza and to allow for the sustained and regular movement of persons and goods, including essential construction materials and those necessary for reconstructing United Nations facilities and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools. Normal commercial flows must also be permitted, since they are imperative to the rehabilitation of livelihoods and economic recovery. NAM also reiterates the need to empower UNRWA with all the financial and human support necessary for it to carry out its mission effectively.

NAM also expresses its deep concern about Israel's continuing arrest and imprisonment of Palestinian civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, in the recent period. NAM strongly condemns the continued detention and imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians in Israeli jails, where ill treatment and torture are common. The Movement welcomes all international efforts aimed at raising awareness of the plight of Palestinian political prisoners, including through the meetings held in Algeria in December 2010 and in Morocco in January 2011, as well as the convening of the United Nations international meeting on Palestinian political prisoners in Austria in March. NAM particularly stresses the

importance of the declaration on Palestinian political prisoners adopted in May at the NAM Ministerial Conference in Bali, Indonesia. It is the conviction of the Movement that those prisoners, who include children and women, should be immediately released, and that proper international inspection of their condition should be a priority for the international community, particularly the Security Council and the Human Rights Council.

NAM stresses that serious, genuine and meaningful negotiations can be conducted only within well-defined parameters and a specified time frame. NAM highly appreciates the initiatives launched in the past few months to restart the negotiations on this basis. These include President Obama's speech on 19 May; the Russian initiative to dispatch a mission by the Security Council to the region and to convene an international conference to resume the negotiations; the parameters presented by the United Kingdom, France and Germany to be taken as a basis for the resumption of negotiations by the Quartet; and the French initiative to start negotiations for one year, ending with the convening of an international conference; as well as many other initiatives and efforts by the Non-Aligned Movement, including the NAM caucus in the Security Council. In the meantime, the NAM regrets the fact that consensus was not possible among the members of the Security Council on any of these initiatives. This casts a negative shadow on the ability of the Security Council to deal effectively with such a situation, which continues to endanger international peace and security.

The Movement calls upon the Security Council and the Quartet to exert maximum efforts to set clear parameters and a time frame for the negotiations. At the same time, should those efforts fail to produce the required results, the international community, including the members of the Quartet, must do their utmost to facilitate and support constructive efforts to overcome the stagnation of the situation and contribute to peace. This should include actively working towards universal recognition of the State of Palestine on the basis of the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and receiving the State of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations, particularly since we heard today from Mr. Serry that Palestine was ready for statehood.

Indeed, there is a unanimous conviction that respect by Israel of its obligations is imperative so as to enable the resumption of direct negotiations aimed at achieving a two-State solution on the basis of

Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008), the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map. At this critical juncture, it is therefore incumbent upon the international community to act collectively to compel Israel to abide by its obligations forthwith and to resume final status negotiations on the basis of the internationally agreed terms of reference that form the foundation of the two-State solution on the basis of the 4 June 1967 borders, so that we can realize this year the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and thus begin a new era in the Middle East.

Turning now to Lebanon, the NAM condemns Israel's ongoing violations of Lebanese sovereignty and the recurring serious breaches of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). The Movement calls on all concerned parties to implement fully Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) in order to put an end to the current fragility and avoid the recurrence of hostilities.

Concerning the occupied Syrian Golan, the Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms that all measures and actions taken, or to be taken, by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical or demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as any Israeli measures to impose jurisdiction and administration there, are null, void and have no legal effect. The Non-Aligned Movement demands that Israel abide by Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967, in implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Furthermore, the NAM condemns in the strongest terms the excessive use of force and the killing of unarmed civilian protesters by the Israeli forces on 15 May and 5 June 2011 and calls for those responsible for those brutal acts to be brought to justice.

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

Mr. Benítez Versón (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba associates itself fully with the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The situation in the Middle East, particularly in the occupied Palestinian territory, remains alarming.

The tremendous physical, economic and social devastation caused by the illegal and destructive colonization practices carried out in the occupied Palestinian territories represents the main obstacle to the achievement of a peace agreement.

The settlement policy is preventing the creation of a Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders and, consequently, the possibility of a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Cuba is deeply concerned about the serious situation in the Gaza Strip. The Government of Israel must lift, immediately, unconditionally and completely, the cruel and illegal blockade on Gaza and allow for the free circulation of supplies from and to the Gaza Strip, as well as permanent humanitarian access.

The creation of two States living peacefully side by side, with recognized borders, is not merely wishful thinking. Palestinians have long been owed a solution enabling the creation of their State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Similarly, the question of its refugees must be resolved in accordance with General Assembly resolution 181 (II).

However, the Government of Israel continues to hinder the resolution of the conflict, while the country that is supposed to guarantee the peace process has not showed the required political will to give that process the necessary impetus.

Cuba supports all legitimate efforts aimed at reaching a just solution to this conflict and at the creation and recognition of a Palestinian State.

The Security Council cannot remain passive on the question of Palestine. There is no other conflict more threatening to international peace and security. Yet the Council continues to fail to take action. The United States veto of every draft resolution introduced on this issue has made the Security Council into a hostage of the domestic policy of one of its members. The threat of veto remains a sword of Damocles over the most powerful, and yet the most antidemocratic, international body of the multilateral system. This situation is unacceptable and must change, failing which the impunity with which the Government of Israel acts in the occupied Palestinian territory will increase.

Cuba believes that it is possible to find a short-term peaceful solution. The Palestinian Authority has been working hard in the past few months, and many

States have responded positively to the call to recognize the Palestinian State. Cuba urges those States that have not yet done so to recognize, as soon as possible, the Palestinian State on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Cuba reaffirms that all of the measures and actions taken, or to be taken, by Israel aimed at altering the legal, physical or demographic condition and the institutional structure of the occupied Syrian Golan are null, void and without legal effect. We reiterate that all of these unilateral measures and actions, including the illegal construction and expansion of Israeli settlements in the Syrian Golan since 1967, constitute violations of international law, international agreements, the relevant resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations, and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Cuba calls on Israel to fully withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967.

In conclusion, Cuba is confident that the growing recognition by many countries of the Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders will generate a fresh impetus and pave the way for a lasting solution to the conflict.

Cuba reiterates its position in favour of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace for all the peoples of the Middle East region that would put an end to the occupation of all Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and guarantee the exercise of self-determination by the Palestinian people through the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

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

Mr. Kleib (Indonesia): Let me begin by expressing our gratitude to Mr. Robert Serry, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for the briefing he provided at the start of the debate.

Indonesia associates itself with the statement of the Non-Aligned Movement just delivered by the Representative of Egypt and with that of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, to be delivered later by the Representative of Kazakhstan.

The resilience of the Palestinian people is worthy of recognition. They have endured repression and endless mayhem for decades, yet they have kept on

moving forward towards achieving their dreams: the dream of statehood, namely, the dream of our Palestinian friends, brothers and sisters, to have a place that they can call their own.

The August 2009 comprehensive plan for Palestine formulated by the Government of Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, entitled "Palestine: Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State", is a component in the establishment of Palestinian statehood and thus part of the significant journey to achieve that long-term dream. We must support that dream, and we must continue to support the rehabilitation and development of Palestinian national institutions.

The Non-Aligned Movement ministerial meeting in Bali in May made a commitment to support the independence of the State of Palestine. In the same vein, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation echoed the same position.

We welcome the important step forward taken in recent times by several States to extend recognition to the State of Palestine on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We urge members of the international community that have yet to do so, to confirm their recognition of the State of Palestine without delay, as justice delayed is justice denied.

Indonesia wishes that in September, less than two months from now, in the Hall of the General Assembly, we, the community of nations, shall witness and welcome the birth of a new nation, the State of Palestine, in fulfilment of a long dream.

However, the dream of our Palestinian people and their journey to an independent State has unfortunately continued to be beset by hurdles and setbacks. Israel continues with its infamous ingenuity to combine persistent hostility towards the Palestinians with determined efforts to frustrate the peace process. Summary evictions of Palestinians, demolition of their property, and the expansion of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, comprise a grand design to construct a new reality. Such efforts mimic the strategies and tactics of a colonial Power.

Israel must recognize that we are living in an era when human rights are to be respected and protected and that the will of the oppressed will prevail. No country can live with a clear conscience if it resorts to brutal repression. No country can wear the mantle of

dignity while ignoring universal democratic values. Israel must change its controversial policies and cease its inhumane actions.

Israel has many choices. But the most honourable and most reasonable choice is to conduct direct negotiations with Palestine. That choice will garner the sympathy and support of the international community. Such direct negotiations must lead to realizing the dream of statehood — nothing more and nothing less.

Let me conclude by underlining that the path towards statehood is filled with roadblocks. We can attest to this. But my delegation firmly believes that we, the international community, must and can remove all hurdles to the peaceful and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We must embrace the significant moment when the international community, in particular the Security Council, fulfils its obligation to the Palestinian people — a moment of remarkable progress and transformation in the history of the Middle East.

For its part, Indonesia's commitment and support for the Palestinian cause is total and unwavering. Our commitment to an independent, viable and democratic Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with its neighbours, is absolute.

The President: Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diallo, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to participate in this meeting.

Mr. Diallo (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I should like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your presidency of the Council for the month of July, which marks the start of the summer holidays and serves to remind us of where we stand with regard to work that we must complete at the forthcoming session, including on the question of Palestine.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Ambassador Nelson Messone, Permanent Representative of Gabon, for his exemplary leadership of the Council during the past month. I would also like to thank Mr. Robert Serry for his comprehensive briefing.

Two and a half years after the end of Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip, we are, once

again, witnessing a surge in violence in and around Gaza. The worrisome situation requires the Council to take urgent and appropriate action, in accordance with its resolution 1860 (2009), in order to protect the civilians in that overpopulated Palestinian territory. As well, the illegal economic blockade of Gaza must be lifted and a durable ceasefire ensured. Efforts aimed at achieving Palestinian reconciliation carried out around the leadership of President Abbas, as called for in resolution 1860 (2009), should also be supported. Undoubtedly these basic measures are vital to stabilizing the situation and establishing peace.

The stalemate in the peace process is unacceptable at a time when so many have pinned their hopes on September and the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. Now, more than ever, the Council must act resolutely to bring about a peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine. In that regard, it should be recalled that the Quartet Road Map, which the Council endorsed in its resolution 1515 (2003), has already set out the necessary requirements, including refraining from any action that might undermine confidence between the parties.

The Council will thus agree with me that a call for the resumption of negotiations must necessarily be accompanied by measures to compel Israel to abide strictly by its obligations under international law. Indeed, inaction on the part of the Council further invites Israel to intensify its illegal policies, as evidenced by the explosive growth of Israeli settlements.

The Council is aware, however, that that the ultimate objective of the settlement project is to consolidate Israeli control over the occupied Palestinian territory and make it impossible to achieve a two-State solution based on the June 1967 borders, as called for by President Obama in his speech of 19 May.

Furthermore it is deplorable and even frustrating that the Quartet's much-anticipated meeting did not lead to a decision on clear parameters, similar to those endorsed by the European Union, to guide Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

Since the last open debate of the Council on the Palestinian question (S/PV.6520), our Committee has made every effort to promote a solution that would rest on the existence of two States and establish peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. In that connection, the Committee held the United Nations

Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People in Helsinki, in April, to mobilize international support for the Palestinian State-building programme. In that connection, it is widely agreed that the Palestinian Authority has succeeded in establishing sound public institutions.

Similarly, in Brussels in June, the Committee convened the United Nations International Meeting in Support of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process, to take stock of European and other international and multilateral initiatives aimed at achieving a two-State solution. Our Committee is also heartened by the growing number of States recognizing Palestine.

We are also mindful that the Road Map includes other multilateral options, including, in the context of the United Nations, promoting the achievement of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Today, perhaps more than ever, the Security Council has a particular role to play in achieving this shared but often delayed goal.

In this manner, and by acting with strong political will and courage, we can achieve justice for both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. This has been the stated aim of the United Nations since 1975, which our Committee strives to achieve.

The President (*spoke in French*) I now give the floor to the representative of the European Union, Mr. Pedro Serrano

Mr. Serrano (European Union): Many thanks, Mr. President, for giving the floor to the European Union (EU). Many thanks, too, to Special Coordinator Robert Serry for his briefing and to the representatives of Palestine and Israel for their statements.

The candidate countries Croatia and Montenegro; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia; and Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

While dramatic events are unfolding in the Middle East region, the Arab-Israeli conflict continues to be caught in a worrisome stalemate. It is a matter of the highest priority for us to continue to make every effort to contribute to the ending of this conflict. The legitimate aspirations of the peoples in the region, including those of Palestinians for statehood and of Israelis for security, are at stake.

The meeting of the Middle East Quartet on 11 July confirmed the need to set out a reference framework to help the parties to resume negotiations. Efforts are continuing to find the formula that can best achieve this goal. EU member States have repeatedly expressed their full support for High Representative Ashton in her continued efforts for the Quartet to create a credible perspective for the relaunching of the peace process, most recently in the Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions adopted on 18 July 2011.

The EU stresses the central role of the Quartet. Indeed, the complexity of the transformational moment witnessed across the Arab world calls for multilateral efforts aimed at supporting a negotiated solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The European Union continues to believe that this is the best way forward. The European Union also encourages an active Arab contribution to this process and reiterates its view of the value of the Arab Peace Initiative.

The European Union's goal remains the just and lasting resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine living side by side, in peace and security and mutual recognition.

Recalling the Berlin Declaration, the EU reiterates its readiness to recognize a Palestinian State when appropriate.

The European Union believes that negotiations should include all final status issues, including borders, Jerusalem, refugees, security and water, respecting previous agreements and understandings. Clear parameters defining the basis for negotiations — as contained in Council Conclusions of December 2009, December 2010, May 2011 and presented to this Council on 21 April 2011 (6520th meeting) — are key elements for a successful outcome.

This is an opportunity for the EU to recall its positions in this regard. We believe that the following parameters could serve as a basis for a resumption of negotiations between the parties.

First is an agreement on the borders of the two States based on the lines of 4 June 1967, with equivalent land swaps as may be agreed between the parties. Secondly, security arrangements must for Palestinians respect their sovereignty and show that the occupation is over, and for Israelis protect their

security, prevent the resurgence of terrorism and deal effectively with new and emerging threats. Thirdly, there must be a just, fair and agreed solution to the refugee question. Fourthly, the aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem should be fulfilled. A way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of both States.

The European Union calls on all parties to abstain from actions that are not conducive to a comprehensive solution of the conflict. Furthermore, it expects the parties to avoid practices that undermine trust and to refrain from any provocative action which may threaten the ongoing efforts to resume direct talks.

The European Union reiterates that settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-State solution impossible. All settlement activity, including in East Jerusalem, should stop immediately.

The European Union remains one of the major supporters of and contributors to the Palestinian State-building efforts led by President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad. The European Union reiterates its strong support for the institution-building process and welcomes the outcome of reports which state that the Palestinian Authority is above the threshold for a functioning State in the key sectors studied.

In this regard, the EU expresses its full appreciation of the current Government's success in implementing the State-building plan. The European Union expects a future Palestinian Government to continue the Palestinian Authority's institution-building efforts and to uphold current standards in terms of transparent and efficient public finance management, as consistently commended by the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The European Union considers intra-Palestinian reconciliation behind President Mahmoud Abbas to be an important element for the unity of a future Palestinian State and for reaching a two-State solution.

In this context, the EU commends the Egyptian role in brokering the Cairo agreement on 3 May. The EU looks forward to continuing its support, including through direct financial support, for a new Palestinian Government, composed of independent figures, that commits to the principles set out in President Abbas' speech on 4 May, upholding the principle of non-violence, remaining committed to achieving a two-State solution and to a negotiated peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, accepting previous agreements and obligations, including Israel's legitimate right to exist.

The EU calls for the unconditional release of the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit without delay.

Despite some progress following the decisions of the Israeli Government to ease the Gaza closure, the EU reiterates its call, in line with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), for an immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns.

With regard to the situation in Syria, the EU deplores the fact that the Syrian leadership has chosen to ignore repeated calls by the international community and continues its policy of deliberate, violent repression of peaceful protestors. The EU reiterates its condemnation of this policy in the strongest terms. The violence must be stopped immediately in order to prevent further bloodshed. In this context, the European Union calls for a political process leading to rapid and concrete implementation of substantial reforms, addressing the legitimate demands of the Syrian people on their way to a peaceful, genuine and irreversible transition to democracy.

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

The meeting was suspended at 1.20 p.m.