



# Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

**8489**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Tuesday, 26 March 2019, 9.30 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Delattre . . . . . (France)

*Members:*

Belgium . . . . .	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China . . . . .	Mr. Wu Haitao
Côte d'Ivoire . . . . .	Mr. Ipo
Dominican Republic . . . . .	Mr. Trullols Yabra
Equatorial Guinea . . . . .	Mrs. Mele Colifa
Germany . . . . .	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia . . . . .	Mr. Fachir
Kuwait . . . . .	Mr. Alotaibi
Peru . . . . .	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
Poland . . . . .	Ms. Wronecka
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Safronkov
South Africa . . . . .	Ms. Goolab
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Ms. Pierce
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Cohen

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) (S/2019/251)

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*The meeting was called to order at 9.45 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) (S/2019/251)**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Israel to participate in this meeting.

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

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

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2019/251, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016).

I give the floor to Mr. Mladenov.

**Mr. Mladenov:** On behalf of the Secretary-General, I will devote my regular briefing on the situation in the Middle East today to presenting the ninth report (S/2019/251) on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), which covers the period between 15 December 2018 and 15 March 2019. Before I provide an update on the developments related to the provisions of the resolution that have taken place following the submission of the written report of the Secretary-General to the Council, I would like to address the situation on the ground in the past 48 hours.

On 25 March, a rocket was launched from the Gaza Strip, directly hitting a house in central Israel. Seven

family members were injured, including three children. Over the following 24 hours, at least 103 rockets and mortars were fired from Gaza towards Israel, some of which were intercepted by the Iron Dome system, while others caused material damage to a house in Sderot or hit uninhabited areas. The Israeli Air Force conducted 42 strikes on various locations in Gaza, while some 16 shells were fired by the Israel Defense Forces and the Israeli navy towards the Gaza Strip. According to local sources, seven Palestinians were injured as a result of the strikes. Several buildings were destroyed, including Hamas offices and security buildings. At 6 a.m. this morning, local time, a fragile calm seems to have taken hold.

In the past 10 days there have been two rockets attacks from Gaza targeting the Tel Aviv area, which represents a very serious escalation. Since the early hours of yesterday, my team and I have been working intensely with Egypt and all concerned parties to ensure that the situation does not spiral out of control. As I have said many times in the Security Council, but I will repeat it again here today, nobody has an interest in a full military confrontation in Gaza.

A new conflict will be devastating for the Palestinian people, it will have consequences for Israelis who live in the vicinity of the Gaza perimeter, and it is likely to have regional repercussions. This is why I ask all participants today to join the United Nations in condemning the continued indiscriminate firing of rockets towards Israel. Such acts of provocation only dramatically increase the risk of escalation and ultimately damage our collective efforts to support the people of Gaza and intra-Palestinian reconciliation. We must also call on all sides to exercise maximum restraint as the situation remains extremely tense.

Returning to the report under resolution 2334 (2016), I have to begin by saying that once again no steps have been taken by Israel to "immediately and completely cease all settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem", as called for in paragraph 2 of the resolution. Since the end of the reporting period, the Government announced the construction of 840 new units in Ariel. This decision was presented as a response to an attack on 17 March.

Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures also continued across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Since 15 March, an additional seven Palestinian-owned structures have

been demolished or seized by the Israeli authorities. This has resulted in the displacement of nine people. A water cistern in Susiya, three structures belonging to communities in southern Hebron and an elementary school building under construction in the Shuafat refugee camp in East Jerusalem are among the buildings demolished.

Resolution 2334 (2016) also calls, in paragraph 6, “for immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians”. However, even the brief period since the submission of the written report, as witnessed by recent events, has been characterized by escalating violence. Beginning on 14 and 15 March, thousands of Palestinians in Gaza demonstrated under the slogan “we want to live”. They protested the dire socioeconomic circumstances in Gaza and “the injustice due to the Palestinian division and the Hamas takeover of Gaza by force and violence”. Although the protests were generally non-violent, Hamas security personnel violently dispersed participants and many, including women, children, journalists and human rights activists, were beaten and hospitalized. Tens of homes were raided in search of demonstrators. Local human rights monitors reported that over 1,000 people, including children, were arrested and many reportedly beaten. The crackdown was condemned by all Palestinian factions.

Meanwhile, protests at the Gaza fence, which had subsided for a couple of days, also resumed. At least 11 incendiary devices were launched from Gaza towards Israel just since 15 March. In response, the IDF shelled or conducted air strikes against targets in Gaza on four occasions, causing no injuries. That, of course, does not include the rockets fired in the escalation of the past 48 hours.

Tensions in the occupied West Bank also continued. Four Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces in various security operations and other incidents, while two Israelis, including one soldier and one civilian, were killed by Palestinians. On 17 March, a Palestinian stabbed an Israeli soldier near the Ariel settlement, took his rifle and shot him and an Israeli civilian, killing both and severely injuring another soldier. In the subsequent search operations, 15 homes were raided, a temporary security cordon was imposed on several villages and three of the suspect’s family members were arrested. Two days later, the suspect was killed by the Israeli security forces in the village of Abwein.

Another incident took place on 19 March, when Jewish worshippers, accompanied by Israeli security forces, entered Nablus on their way to visit Joseph’s Tomb — a monthly practice that is consistent with previous agreements between the parties. While the details of the ensuing clashes remain disputed, two Palestinians were killed by the Israeli security forces and at least 27 others were injured.

In Bethlehem, on 20 March, a 26-year-old Palestinian was shot and killed by the Israeli security forces and another was injured while driving near a partial military checkpoint under disputed circumstances. In Beit Sira village, near Ramallah, a Palestinian man was similarly shot and injured near a checkpoint. Israeli authorities have launched investigations into both incidents.

On 24 March, two Israeli prison guards were stabbed by Hamas inmates in Ktziot Prison, in southern Israel. Following that, 12 prisoners were reportedly injured in ensuing clashes between guards and inmates.

Resolution 2334 (2016), in paragraph 7, calls upon the parties “to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric”. Unfortunately, such actions and rhetoric have continued. On 17 March, both Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad praised the attack near the settlement of Ariel and called it a “heroic operation”, while Fatah social media sites praised the perpetrator as a “heroic martyr”. Israeli political leaders have also continued to call for targeted assassinations of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad officials and for the annexation of the West Bank.

Resolution 2334 (2016), in paragraph 4, reiterates the calls of the Middle East Quartet for

“affirmative steps to be taken immediately to reverse negative trends on the ground that are imperilling the two-State solution”.

No such steps were taken during the reporting period.

Meanwhile, the situation at Jerusalem’s holy sites continues to be tense. On 17 March, the Jerusalem Magistrate Court reinstated for 60 days an order to close the building located in Bab Al-Rahmah — also known as Mercy Gate — in the Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount compound, which has been closed by the Israeli authorities since 2003 on security grounds. The Islamic Endowment — the Waqf — echoed by the Palestinian and Jordanian Ministries of Foreign Affairs, maintains that Israeli courts lack jurisdiction over the holy site, which lies in the territory occupied in 1967, and warned

against any changes to the historical and legal status quo. Israel, however, considers the establishment of a mosque in the Mercy Gate area to be a violation of the status quo. As of 20 March, the Jerusalem Magistrate Court order had not been executed. Daily prayers continue in the Mercy Gate area, while discussions between Israel and Jordan are ongoing.

The past few days have not seen a resolution of the funding crisis created by Israel's decision to withhold 6 per cent of the revenues it collects on behalf the Palestinian Authority, and the Palestinian leadership's refusal to accept any clearance transfers unless the full amount is reinstated. The Palestinian Government has begun implementing severe austerity measures. The measures include a 50 per cent salary cut for over 50 per cent of Palestinian Government employees, overall ceiling on salary payments, the cessation of promotions, appointments and bonuses and of the purchase of property and cars, and a 20 per cent reduction in operational expenses across the board, including reduced expenses on travel, hospitality and fuel. In addition, the Palestinian Authority plans to borrow from domestic banks between now and July. This will all have a substantial impact on the Palestinian economy, resulting in reduced purchasing power and further reduction in gross domestic product growth rate both in West Bank and Gaza.

In closing, I would like to reiterate some observations concerning the implementation of the provisions of resolution 2334 (2006).

The expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is continuing unabated. The advancement, approval or tender of more than 3,000 units in the occupied West Bank, as indicated in the written report before the Council (S/2019/251), is the largest batch since May 2018. This includes the latest announcement of over 800 units in the settlement of Ariel. I reiterate that the establishment of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, has no legal effect and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law, as stated in resolution 2334 (2016), and must cease immediately and completely.

The demolition and seizure of Palestinian structures also continues. The demolition of structures linked to vital water connections in Area C communities in the West Bank, which were already suffering water shortages, is particularly troubling. I am concerned by

the continued pressure being placed on Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Such policies must be reversed and Israel should abide by its obligations under international law.

I am saddened by the persistent violence that continues to result in the tragic loss of Palestinian and Israeli lives. Recent incidents in the West Bank and Gaza highlight the mounting tensions across the occupied Palestinian territory and the risk of a broader escalation of the conflict. I call on the parties to reject violence and to work to reduce tensions. There is no justification for terror, and I call on all to join the United Nations in condemning it unequivocally.

I am concerned that we may once again be facing another very dangerous escalation of violence in Gaza, with potentially catastrophic consequences. The past two days have shown us how precariously close we came once again to the brink of war. The indiscriminate launching of rockets and mortars against Israeli towns and villages violates international law and places civilian lives at great risk. The launching of incendiary and explosive devices towards Israel must also stop.

I also remain gravely concerned by the number of deaths and injuries of Palestinians along the Gaza perimeter fence. Israeli security forces have the responsibility to exercise restraint, and lethal force must be used only when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life.

I strongly condemn the campaign of arrests and violence inside Gaza against protesters, including women and children. The brutal beating of journalists and human rights workers and the raiding of homes is particularly alarming. The long-suffering people of Gaza have a right to protest without fear of reprisal, and I call on all Member States to join the United Nations in condemning such actions.

As I have repeatedly emphasized, the situation in Gaza is untenable and the latest protests further highlight the need for the return of a unified Palestinian Government to Gaza. I call on all Palestinian factions to engage in earnest with Egypt in order to implement the 2017 Cairo agreement and end the intra-Palestinian divisions. While the United Nations is continuing its efforts to de-escalate the situation, progress on the reconciliation track and the lifting of closures on Gaza remain essential. I encourage Member States to support those vital efforts.

The lack of resolution of the Palestinian Authority's funding crisis threatens to further destabilize an already volatile situation. Both parties should continue to implement their bilateral agreements and avoid taking unilateral actions that undermine the two-State solution.

The situation in the Old City of Jerusalem also remains a serious concern. I urge all parties to work towards de-escalating of tensions. I encourage Israel and Jordan to work together to uphold the status quo at the Holy Sites, noting the special and historic role of the Hashemite Kingdom as custodian of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

Lastly, I remain deeply concerned by the lack of progress towards the realization of a two-State solution, in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, long-standing international parameters and prior agreements. There is no viable alternative to the two-State solution. Given the interconnected nature of conflicts throughout the region and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict's potential to fuel extremist narratives, creating the conditions for the parties to return to meaningful negotiations remains critical.

What is needed first and foremost, however, is the necessary leadership and political will to take concrete steps in support of ending the occupation and realizing a lasting peace. Until that can be found, another generation of Israelis and Palestinians is destined to spend their lives searching in vain for an elusive peace.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing.

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

**Mr. Fachir** (Indonesia): I wish to thank Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov for the comprehensive briefing. Let me also thank the Secretariat for the second written report (S/2019/251) on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). The report demonstrates yet another sad reality — not a single element of the resolution has been implemented by the occupying Power, nor is there any sign of future implementation. On the contrary, the occupying Power has blatantly dismissed the Council's resolution.

Another bleak condition has been reported by the independent international commission of inquiry on the brutality of the occupying Power, including the use of live ammunition at close range against civilians, even

against children, medical personnel and persons with disabilities. That is a blatant violation of human decency, international humanitarian law and human rights.

Both reports present three main concerns to which we must be alert.

First, there is a clear and worrying tendency towards the effective annexation of Palestine by the occupying Power. We have a long list of violations that have been consistently and blatantly committed by the occupying Power. They include the continued construction of illegal settlements, the closure of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron, the non-payment of Palestinian revenues, incidents at Al-Haram Al-Sharif, as well as violence committed by the authorities, the security forces and settlers, to name just a few. That goes against everything the United Nations has been striving for since 1947. Let me reiterate in the strongest terms Indonesia's rejection and condemnation of any such attempts.

Secondly, we must all step up our efforts to improve the humanitarian and economic conditions of the Palestinian people. That is even more pressing in view of the diminishing commitments of some others with regard to multilateralism and humanitarian assistance. We are deeply concerned about the non-payment of \$139 million in Palestinian tax revenues by the occupying Power. This constitutes the illegitimate confiscation of other's property and violates the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations — a treaty that Israel signed with the Palestinian Authority. It is unjust, unfair, grossly unacceptable and definitely illegal.

We applaud the Palestinian people for their resilience and determination to withstand such pressure in spite of their dire economic, political and humanitarian crises. We also fully respect the Palestinian Authority's policy of full transfer or nothing at all.

On the positive side, we applaud the effort of the United Nations country team and other donors, through its various initiatives and projects, among others the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism. Just last month, Indonesia also committed to increasing its financial support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and building a desalination project in Gaza.

My third point is that any future peace plan must respect the agreed parameters based on relevant United Nations resolutions. The two-State solution

is the only realistic way to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace between the parties.

Indonesia also continues to encourage Palestine in attaining national unity. We commend the efforts of Egypt and Russia in support of national reconciliation initiatives.

Upholding the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem is important. The sealing by the occupying Power this month of all gates to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as the Old City of Jerusalem, is a dangerous measure that has further inflamed the tensions and was probably designed with that aim. Those measures are capable of further destabilizing the already complex and fragile situation and triggering violence.

Instability in Palestine, particularly in Jerusalem, will have a significant ripple effect in the region and beyond. We therefore call upon the Security Council to monitor those developments very closely so as to avoid a potential escalation of conflict that could be too costly if handled too late.

Allow me to clearly state Indonesia's position on the recent situation in the Golan Heights. Indonesia strongly rejects the United States illegal move in recognizing Israel's sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, as it is an escalatory and grave violation of international law, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 497 (1981). This action will provoke and disrupt ongoing efforts to create peace and stability in the region. It is therefore entirely unacceptable by any standard. As stated in resolution 497 (1981), Israel's decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights is null and void and without international legal effect. I consequently would like to reaffirm Indonesia's principled position in recognizing the Golan Heights as an integral part of the Syrian Arab Republic that was occupied by Israel in 1967.

In conclusion, Indonesia would like to reiterate that peace in the Middle East can be achieved only if the international community, especially the Security Council, is united along all fronts. We must never forget that our mandate is to save human lives and humankind.

**Mr. Alotaibi** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing in this periodic monthly meeting

regarding the ninth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) (S/2019/251). The State of Kuwait fully supports his efforts to diffuse the situation and prevent further escalation. We thank the Secretary-General for presenting his second written report, in line with that resolution, note S/2017/507 and according to the practice concerning similar issues on the Council's agenda. We also look forward to receiving at least two written annual reports.

We were not surprised that today Mr. Mladenov repeated the same phrase for the ninth time in the 27 months since the adoption of resolution 2334 (2016), namely, that Israel took no steps during the reporting period to cease its settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories. In fact, the opposite is happening. Israel, the occupying Power, continues to expand its policies of annexing Palestinian territories at a rapid pace and to undermine the two-State solution.

The latest reports of the United Nations highlight the fact that the Israeli occupying Power is implementing plans to build, expand, finance and authorize settlement activities, including to build more than 6,000 residential units in Area C and East Jerusalem. The international community must therefore compel Israel to implement resolution 2334 (2016), which states that Israeli settlement activity is a flagrant violation of international law and an obstacle to peace, and calls on Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. It also stresses the need to implement all other relevant international resolutions, including resolutions 465 (1980) and 497 (1981), that consider Israeli settlement activities to be illegal and illegitimate.

Over nearly a month, we have called for numerous meetings to discuss the illegal unilateral decisions taken by the Israeli Government, first when Israel refused to renew the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron, and then when we requested, in cooperation with Indonesia, the convening of a meeting on 8 March in order to discuss the economic repercussions of Israel's unilateral decision to retain part of Palestinian tax revenue. As recalled by Mr. Mladenov today, we may see another crisis across the region in the coming weeks as a result of this decision, which is contrary to the bilateral agreements, including the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations, and violates international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. In that regard, we stress the absolute right

of the Palestinian Authority to use its funds as it wishes, including those related to social assistance for the most vulnerable people and the martyrs' families, as well as the families of thousands of political prisoners held in the occupation prisons.

With regard to Israeli hate speech, Israeli political and military leaders continue their provocative statements, in clear violation of resolution 2334 (2016), which calls for an end to all provocations, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, which lead to an increase in settler crimes against Palestinian civilians and their property, including their holy sites, which are under the protection of the Israeli security forces, and demonstrate no respect for the sanctity of those sites. A case in point was the recent closure of the Bab Al-Rahmah gate at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the subsequent closure of the entire Mosque, preventing worshippers from reaching the Mosque squares. In addition, Israeli forces detained a number of senior employees of the Islamic Waqf in Jerusalem, preventing the head of the Council, who is 80 years old, from entering the Mosque for a week. We condemn once again all those violations by Israel, the occupying Power, of the Islamic and Christian holy sites, in particular its attempts to change the historic and legal status of the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque, and to divide it in time and place.

We will soon mark the first anniversary of the Great March of Return in the Gaza Strip, which will coincide with the issuance of the report by the independent international commission of inquiry on the violations concerning the Palestinian occupied territories. The report concludes that Israeli soldiers have committed violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law during the protests. The report also stresses that the protests were civilian in nature and with clear political objectives, and that some of the violations committed amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Beginning with the first March of Return, we have warned at each meeting since 30 March 2018 against what I have just said, and against the inability of the Security Council to end those crimes and the persistence of Israel, the occupying Power, in implementing its policies and illegal practices. We have stressed the need to enforce General Assembly resolution ES-10/20, on the protection of Palestinian civilians, as long as the illegal occupation and siege persist. That could be done through the options of protecting Palestinian civilians that are detailed in the most recent report

of the Secretary-General, as well as by urging the international community to participate in protecting those civilians and creating a practical and effective mechanism to implement the General Assembly resolution and the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report.

Turning now to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), it is difficult for the international community to continue to call for stability in the entire Middle East region, and in the occupied Palestinian territories in particular, without recognizing the vital role that UNRWA plays in providing basic services to almost 5 million Palestinian refugees. In that regard, we commend the adoption by the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation at its forty-sixth session of a decision to create a fund to ensure sustainable funding for UNRWA, in order to support Palestinian refugees as part of the Islamic Bank for Development. The fund will mobilize resources from different countries and institutions in order to support UNRWA's humanitarian relief, health and education services for Palestinian refugees.

With respect to the decision of the United States to recognize Israel's annexation of the Syrian Golan and keep it under its sovereignty, we have followed international reactions condemning any annexation of territory by force, and rejecting any illegal measure to further tensions in the region. We regret the decision taken by the United States to recognize Israel's annexation and sovereignty of the Golan. We stress Syria's right to recover the entire Syrian Arab Golan, in line with legitimate international resolutions. We reject any decision that would perpetuate Israel's occupation of the Syrian Arab Golan or any other Arab occupied territory.

Over the past five decades, Israel, the occupying Power, has taken decisions to change the legal, natural and demographic situation in the Golan. Those attempts are illegal, null and void. They are a violation of international conventions, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1975) and 497 (1981), whereby the Security Council rejects any annexation of territory by force. Israel has described the United States decision as historic, while it is the only State to ignore and violate international legitimate resolutions.

In closing, we call on the international community once again to fulfil its commitments and take the measures necessary to revive the peace process in order to reach a two-State solution and put an end to the Israeli occupation since 1967, with a view to achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace, based on relevant United Nations resolutions, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map.

**Mr. Trullols Yabra** (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his comprehensive briefing on the situation on the ground, in the light of the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/251).

We heard with deep concern the details concerning the dramatic deterioration of the situation, alerting us to the dangerous direction in which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is headed, while systematically eroding the prospect of sustainable peace at a critical juncture. As we have been well warned, the taking of unilateral measures in flagrant violation of international law, continuous violence, incitement, provocation, financial pressures and the lack of internal reconciliation in the midst of a major humanitarian crisis are elements undermining the conditions necessary to achieving peace. Given the interrelated nature of conflicts in the Middle East, with the Israeli-Palestinian as perhaps the most emblematic and persistent of all time, the consequences of inaction entail the risk of fuelling violence and extremism in the region, while destabilizing it further and increasing the suffering and despair of millions of people.

As we recently discussed, we must revitalize our collective efforts and strengthen international consensus, as we are aware that we share common threats and challenges with regard to humanitarian issues and to regional and international security, while relying on international law, multilateralism and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and recognizing the important mediation role played by the United Nations. In that regard, over the past quarter we have noted with dismay the continued expansion of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, with the advancement, approval or tender of more than 3,000 units and measures geared towards the potential legalization of several outposts and homes, including through steps to legalize them retroactively.

We also strongly condemn the violence of the past several days directed against protestors in Gaza,

including women and children, just as we condemn the violence throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including the continued use of lethal force and the firing of rockets, mortars and incendiary devices from Gaza into Israel, including the events of yesterday in which two children were injured and force was used against medical personnel carrying out their tasks.

At our most recent meeting on this item (see S/PV.8466), we expressed concern about the gap left by the absence of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH), given the key role it played in conflict prevention and the protection of Palestinians in that sensitive area. Reports of an increase of violence and harassment by settlers in the H2 area of Hebron following the withdrawal of TIPH on 1 February justify our collective concern.

We remain concerned about the fragile humanitarian and economic situation that persists in Gaza, including the acute energy crisis, and acknowledge and commend the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in its efforts to alleviate the suffering of the population. The recent freezing of fiscal revenue collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority is an additional destabilizing factor that could further exacerbate the situation. We appeal to the leadership and political will of the parties to urgently direct their renewed efforts towards achieving a peaceful resolution to this perennial conflict through fair negotiations, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and previous agreements and initiatives, based on the two-State solution and the best interests of their people — Israelis and Palestinians, who for too many years have endured the suffering caused by the conflict.

**Mr. Cohen** (United States of America): I thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his sobering briefing.

The United States strongly condemns the rocket attack on Israel from Gaza yesterday that injured seven innocent civilians, and we reaffirm Israel's right to defend itself. I think that we can all agree on the need for Israelis and Palestinians to work together, with the support of the international community, to improve conditions in Gaza and the West Bank, but this malicious and insidious violence is a clear signal from Hamas and others in Gaza who see such cooperation and progress as counter to their aims.

Every one of us around this table has a responsibility to condemn the rocket attacks, but we must also

recognize that, in addition to terrorizing Israeli civilians, Hamas has failed to provide for Palestinians in Gaza and, most recently, has cracked down violently on Palestinian protesters. Over the past few weeks, thousands of Palestinians in Gaza have come out to protest against Hamas and the dire economic and humanitarian situation in Gaza. Hamas security forces responded with sweeping arrests of and violence against protesters, including women and children. Journalists were brutally beaten, and 15 local journalists were jailed. According to Amnesty International, “[t]he crackdown on freedom of expression and the use of torture in Gaza have reached alarming new levels”.

We agree that many factors have contributed to the situation in Gaza, but the international community needs to shine a light on Hamas’s injustices, such as rocket attacks into Israel and encouraging and praising violence against innocent Israelis, and also how it treats its fellow Palestinian brothers and sisters.

As Council members are aware, yesterday President Trump signed a proclamation recognizing the Golan Heights as Israeli territory — a decision of critical strategic and security importance to the State of Israel. To allow the Golan Heights to be controlled by the likes of the Syrian and Iranian regimes would be to turn a blind eye to the atrocities of the Al-Assad regime and the malign and destabilizing presence of Iran in the region. The United States Administration has made clear that there can be no peace agreement that does not satisfactorily address Israel’s security needs in the Golan Heights.

**Mr. Ipo** (Côte d’Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the holding of this briefing dedicated to discussing the latest developments in the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question and the obstacles to achieving lasting peace in that region. My delegation commends Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, for his excellent briefing, which prompts several observations on the peace process and the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

With regard to the peace process, in the light of the latest developments Côte d’Ivoire notes with regret that the hope of achieving lasting peace between the Israeli and Palestinian sides is diminishing as the crisis unfolds. The firing of rockets from Gaza into Tel Aviv and the subsequent Israeli response raise fears of

an escalation of violence that could further erode the prospects of a definitive solution to the conflict. Given that alarming situation, Côte d’Ivoire reiterates its call on all stakeholders to exercise restraint and to comply strictly with the relevant United Nations resolutions and their obligations under international law.

My country adheres to the international consensus on the need for a resumption of the peace process, which is an appropriate framework for finding mutually acceptable solutions to key issues, such as the status of Jerusalem, the lifting of the blockade on Gaza and the security of the Palestinian population in Hebron. Côte d’Ivoire therefore calls on all parties involved to engage with resolve in a constructive dialogue, while calling on them to refrain from any unilateral action that could undermine the international community’s efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis.

In that regard, Côte d’Ivoire supports all measures and initiatives that could contribute to inter-Palestinian reconciliation, in particular between Fatah and Hamas, so as to enable the Palestinian Authority to exercise its sovereign functions in both Gaza and the West Bank. Lastly, Côte d’Ivoire reiterates its commitment both to the security of the State of Israel and to the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and reaffirms its strong support for the two-State solution, with each State coexisting peacefully within the pre-1967 borders.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, Côte d’Ivoire remains concerned about the unprecedented crisis in Gaza, characterized by increasingly difficult access to health care, continuing water shortages, a very limited electricity supply and the irregular payment of civil servants’ salaries, in addition to an unfavourable socioeconomic situation marked by an unemployment rate of more than 50 per cent of the working population.

In that light of that grim scenario, my country calls once again on the Security Council to work in cooperation with the relevant specialized United Nations agencies and all partners to find the necessary means to meet the basic needs of more than 5 million people in distress. Here my delegation calls on international partners to further mobilize in order to provide the necessary financial support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The goal is to help the Agency, which plays a key role in the international humanitarian assistance

mechanism, obtain the resources necessary to close its budget deficit, estimated at more than \$200 million.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the financing obtained by the United Nations, which should help, on the one hand, to provide more of the fuel needed to provide electricity to Gaza and, on the other, to support programmes allowing for the creation of approximately 15,000 new temporary jobs in Gaza. We thank the generous donors, which are thus contributing to combating poverty and food insecurity in Gaza and the other Palestinian territories. Here I would commend the establishment of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, whose activities are carried out jointly by the Israeli Government, the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations, which gives grounds for hope for frank cooperation between the key actors in the peace process and the socioeconomic development process.

To conclude, Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its support for Mr. Nickolay Mladenov and wishes him every success in carrying out his mission. We are convinced that there can be no military solution to the various crises in the Middle East, in particular in Palestine. My country is of the view that only inclusive dialogue will be able to bring about lasting peace and stability in a region whose peoples have a legitimate aspiration to prosperity and happiness.

**Ms. Goolab** (South Africa): I would like to join others in thanking the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Mladenov, for his briefing on the developments in the Middle East.

South Africa condemns the rocket attack from Gaza aimed at Israel. These kinds of rocket attacks not only place the lives of innocent civilians in danger but also undermine the legitimate cause of the Palestinian people. While recognizing Israel's legitimate right to security, we condemn Israel's disproportionate use of force.

These recent incidents have not occurred in a vacuum. The people of Gaza have endured serious hardship during the Israeli blockade on Gaza, and the escalation of violence will only worsen their already dire situation. The Security Council needs to also act decisively and urgently on the lifting of the illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip.

My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the Secretary-General's written report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016)

(S/2019/251) and to express our hope that this practice will continue with future reports. Just as we receive reports on other matters on the Council's agenda, written reports on this issue are essential if the Security Council is to effectively exercise its mandate in terms of maintaining international peace and security in the Middle East.

As reported by the Secretary-General, Israel has continued unabated and with impunity to expand settlements and to demolish and seize property in the occupied territories. It is important to reiterate that the establishment of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, is a flagrant violation of international law.

The continued expansion of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory undermines the prospects for long-term peace; alters the conditions on the ground, putting the two-State solution in jeopardy by eroding the possibility of a contiguous and viable Palestinian State; and contravenes a decision of the Council. Such overt violations of a resolution adopted by the Security Council would usually lead to severe measures against the party responsible; however, on this issue the Council remains silent. If the Council does not uphold its own decisions, it loses its effectiveness and undermines its core mandate of maintaining international peace and security. In that regard, we once again call on all States Members of the United Nations to fully implement the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016).

My delegation wishes to express our grave concern about the continued disregard for the prevailing and long-standing Middle East peace process and attempts to prejudge final-status issues, particularly with regard to the borders and the status of Jerusalem, through unilateral actions.

I wish to reiterate South Africa's position in support of a two-State solution. We would also like to emphasize that the primary responsibility for peace rests with the Palestinians and Israelis themselves. The guidelines for negotiations should be based on the already established international framework, which include General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, to name but a few.

We remain concerned that more than 40 years after the adoption of resolution 242 (1967), which called for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the territories that it occupied after the 1967 war, including the Syrian

Golan Heights, Israel continues to illegally occupy the Golan Heights and thereby violate Council resolutions. International law should be upheld in this regard, and we therefore call on Israel to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic.

As noted by the Secretary-General, the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the occupied Palestinian territory found reasonable grounds to believe that in almost all of the cases it had investigated, the use of live ammunition by the Israeli security forces against protesters was unlawful. During the period under investigation, 183 protesters, including 35 children, were killed and more than 6,100 injured through the use of live ammunition. South Africa strongly condemns this excessive and disproportionate use of force by the Israeli security forces and calls on Israel to refrain from the unwarranted use of live ammunition in response to protests.

In conclusion, the ongoing protests in Gaza are evidence of the dire and untenable situation of the Palestinian people. The upcoming one-year anniversary of the start of the Great March of Return is expected to see tens of thousands of Palestinians protesting Israel's continued illegal occupation of Palestine. In this regard, we call for all parties to ensure that the protests remain peaceful and non-violent.

**Ms. Wroniecka** (Poland): At the outset, let me thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his comprehensive and insightful briefing.

Poland strongly condemns yesterday's rocket attack from the Gaza Strip, which struck a residential building in the Sharon region, injuring at least seven people, including two infants. While recognizing Israel's right to defend itself, we call on all sides to exercise maximum restraint in order to avert any escalation, which could potentially lead to a full-scale war in the Strip. In this context, yesterday's events on the ground are extremely worrying.

In 2016 the Security Council adopted resolution 2334 (2016) reaffirming its previous resolutions regarding applicable international law and the parameters of a peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Unfortunately, since then the conflict has not seen significant positive advances towards achieving peace. On the contrary, trends on the ground have been negative: the closure of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron, new tensions around the Temple Mount and the Israeli decision on tax

revenues, not to mention the issue of settlements, have had negative consequences and only add to the already extremely volatile security situation in Gaza as well as in the West Bank.

Those developments on the ground clearly point to a continuing need to continue the de-escalation process, as the risk of miscalculation increases daily, especially as we approach the first anniversary of the Great March of Return, at the end of March.

Our priority is the resumption of meaningful peace talks. We believe that a negotiated two-State solution and the resolution of all final-status issues, including that of Jerusalem, remain a realistic way of fulfilling the legitimate aspirations of both parties and achieving long-term peace. Unfortunately, as the situation on the ground worsens, the two-State solution is being questioned. The recent increase in violence, in particular in the West Bank, proves that perpetual occupation and conflict are paving the way for growing frustration among the citizens and providing a fertile breeding ground for extremism.

The humanitarian situation on the ground, in particular in the Gaza Strip, has continued to deteriorate. Basic needs continue to be unmet and many people lack access to basic services, including health care. The prevailing lack of decisive steps towards a return of the legitimate Palestinian Government to Gaza, despite Egypt's best efforts to revive the process, is detrimental to Palestinian aspirations to statehood, contributes to the worsening of the humanitarian crisis and risks escalation. Progress in the Palestinian reconciliation process would undoubtedly contribute to improving the situation on the ground.

Let me underline that the critical financial shortfalls of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are also cause for alarm, particularly since 80 per cent of the population of Gaza is dependent on the Agency's humanitarian services. In that regard, I commend the mobilization of donors in 2018, which helped to secure additional funding for the Agency's budget, as well as the imposition of austerity measures by the Agency under the leadership of Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl.

However, it is vital to continue such efforts this year, as UNRWA remains a key factor for stability and security in the region. We strongly believe that stopping UNRWA's important activities could well

cause instability and create a vacuum that would only serve the extremists.

Unfortunately, provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric continue on both sides. In our opinion, such acts constitute a significant obstacle to the reactivation of the peace process. Let me be clear. Violence by all sides should be prevented and condemned, as we expect the genuine commitment of both sides towards a peaceful and negotiated two-State solution.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that Poland fully supports the long-standing European position that all settlement activity is illegal under international law. Such settlements continue to undermine the practical prospects and hope for peace.

**Mr. Peesteen de Buytsverve** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov for his briefing and for the work that he and his team are doing. We welcome the distribution of a written report (S/2019/251) in accordance with the Council's usual practice on the basis of note 507 (S/2017/507), and we hope that that practice continues.

The continuing settlement policy in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is of the greatest concern to us. Settlement activity, accompanied by forced displacement, eviction and demolition, also targets particularly symbolic places, such as the ancient cities of Hebron or Jerusalem, and areas of strategic importance for the prospect of a viable and contiguous Palestinian State. In that regard, we remain very attentive to the developments in Khan Al-Ahmar.

We strongly oppose the settlement policy and its related measures. Settlement activity is illegal under international law. It undermines the trust necessary for the resumption of dialogue and jeopardizes any chance of achieving a just and lasting peace based on the coexistence of two States. The settlement policy also leads to increased tensions and violence between Israeli settlers and Palestinians. We condemn all recourse to violence and call for the de-escalation of tensions and for combating impunity for the perpetrators of such acts of violence.

The date 30 March marks the first anniversary of the Great March of Return. While recognizing Israel's right to ensure its security, we recall that Israel must respect the fundamental right to peaceful demonstration

and the principle of proportionality in the use of force. Lethal force must be used only as a last resort. However, it is not acceptable for demonstrations in Gaza to be diverted by extremist elements. They must remain strictly non-violent. We condemn in the strongest terms the firing of rockets into Israeli territory. We once again call for avoiding an escalation, as Mr. Mladenov did so eloquently.

We also condemn the violence used by the Hamas security forces against demonstrators in Gaza, in particular journalists, staff of the Independent Commission for Human Rights and human rights defenders. The repression of demonstrations is unacceptable and must stop. Hamas is required to respect freedom of expression and the fundamental right to peaceful demonstration.

We call on all parties to respect international human rights law and international humanitarian law and to ensure free access for humanitarian actors and unconditional access to medical care, including care that can be provided only outside the Gaza Strip. It is essential that the international community support the efforts of those humanitarian actors. In that regard, we would like to acknowledge the indispensable role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, whose mandate and work on the ground Belgium will continue to support.

Recent months have been marked by a series of unilateral decisions that call into question the Oslo Accords. Israel's decision not to renew the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron has led to an increase in violence in Hebron. Israel's decision to partially suspend the transfer of tax revenues owed to the Palestinian Authority, followed by the Palestinian Authority's decision to no longer accept any tax revenues, is likely to have a negative economic and security impact.

Now more than ever, all parties concerned must refrain from unilateral acts that are contrary to the agreements concluded and to international law. In accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 497 (1981), Belgium recalls that the annexation of territories occupied by force is illegal and that it does not recognize Israel's sovereignty over the territories occupied by that country since June 1967, particularly the Golan Heights.

I would like to conclude my statement by emphasizing once again that there is no alternative to the two-State solution, with borders based on the lines of 4 June 1967 and the city of Jerusalem as the future capital of the two States, in accordance with the internationally agreed parameters. The vision must be an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable Palestinian State, living in peace alongside Israel.

International law and the relevant Council resolutions must be the basis for any credible diplomatic initiative to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. The Security Council plays a key role as guarantor of any comprehensive, just and lasting solution, in line with its previous resolutions and in full respect for international law.

Belgium will continue to work in that direction in the Security Council and jointly with our Palestinian and Israeli friends.

**Mr. Meza-Cuadra** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Mladenov for his detailed briefing this morning. We would like to welcome the presentation in written format of the quarterly report (S/2019/251) on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which was requested of the Secretary-General by a considerable number of members of the Security Council and contributes to greater transparency in dealing with this delicate topic.

We would like to touch on three specific aspects. First, we note with concern the escalation of violence in the past few days and weeks in a highly volatile atmosphere that results in unpredictable consequences. Peru emphatically condemns Hamas's firing of rockets and incendiary devices, which put the lives of the Israeli population in jeopardy, cause material damage and undermine the prospects for a political solution. We also stress that, in accordance with international humanitarian law, the legitimacy of Israel's defence depends on its compliance with the principles of proportionality and caution. In that regard, in the context of the first anniversary of the March of Return, we call on all stakeholders to adopt the necessary measures to prevent acts of violence and the loss of life.

We regret that the report once again shows increased settlement activity, demolitions and expulsions in occupied Palestinian territory, which are contrary to international law, seriously undermine the territorial integrity of the Palestinian State and diminish the prospects of reaching a two-State solution. The Israeli

authorities should order an immediate cessation of those activities, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2334 (2016).

We also deplore the fact that the peace process has stalled, due in part to the aggressive and confrontational tone of various public declarations by senior Palestinian and Israeli leaders and to actions such as the withholding of legitimate Palestinian Authority funds. Given the current precarious situation, we believe that the Council must be clear in urging the parties to exercise restraint, avoid further escalation and promote the resumption of formal dialogue with a view to reaching the only viable solution, that of two States coexisting within secure and mutually recognized borders.

Finally, with regard to the situation in the Golan Heights, Peru reaffirms its historical position, which is that acquiring territory by force is inadmissible, as outlined in the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

**Mrs. Mele Colifa** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to express our gratitude to Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov and his team for their comprehensive report (S/2019/251) and their ongoing efforts to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East, particularly with regard to the Palestinian question.

Equatorial Guinea would like to begin today by expressing its concern about the growing disengagement between Israelis and Palestinians, fuelled by actions and policies that have fomented hatred between the parties this year. Since the conflict began, more than half a century ago, the Security Council, the United Nations and the international community have spared no effort to find a viable solution to the issue. It is regrettable that all the efforts of recent years have failed to encourage the parties to resume the stalled negotiations. Instead, we have received only reports of deaths, injuries and material and infrastructure damage. It is therefore appropriate that as we seek to improve the situation in Gaza, we should be vigilant with a view to ensuring that the West Bank and East Jerusalem do not also end up in the same unfortunate situation of frequent attacks and outbreaks of violence that we have been seeing since the final months of 2018.

Israeli and Palestinian leaders must realize that the international world is watching them. We see their actions and policies. Equatorial Guinea has never wanted the security of the State of Israel to be compromised

for any reason. We continue to hope that the parties can exercise the utmost restraint and avoid any further loss of human life. In that regard, we urge the parties to refrain from taking unilateral decisions that are likely to promote extremism and inflame this already strained situation. We also want to point out that more than any other conflict, the history of this issue has shown us that violence is not the ideal way to find a solution that suits the parties and the international community.

With regard to the situation in the Gaza Strip, we deplore the fact that despite all the efforts devoted to resolving the crisis that the area is mired in, the lack of drinking water and the repeated blackouts continue to infuriate the population, greatly affecting the region's economy and its citizens' living conditions. In addition, Palestinians' lack of regular access to fertile land and fishing in the area also has adverse effects on their development. However, where the security and integrated organization of this Palestinian enclave are concerned, we call on Fatah and Hamas to work on a definitive agreement so that the Palestinian Authority can function normally in Gaza, as it is doing in the West Bank. In that connection, we thank Egypt, which has the support of the United Nations and has been working with the parties to that end.

Before concluding, I would like to underline the importance of the taxes collected by Israel on behalf of the Palestinian National Authority, which we believe cover a significant part of the Palestinian budget. If those funds cannot be used, some public services may be affected, and we therefore urge the parties to resolve the issue.

Lastly, Equatorial Guinea believes that a two-State solution that ensures the establishment of an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace and security with Israel, is the only way to put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and achieve a broad regional peace. In that regard, the Security Council, the United Nations and the international community should intensify their efforts to put the necessary pressure on the parties to overcome the obstacles preventing the resumption of direct negotiations.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his briefing. We also welcome the Secretary-General's recent written report

(S/2019/251) on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016).

At the moment the international consensus on taking forward the Middle East peace process is facing challenges, and the efforts to facilitate the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks have shown no signs of progress. China is deeply worried. In the meantime, the conflict and confrontation in the Gaza Strip are escalating and the construction of settlements in the West Bank has continued. The incendiary rhetoric and violent acts from the parties concerned are more frequent, and the way the situation is evolving is extremely worrying.

We call on the Israelis and Palestinians to keep in mind the big picture of the need to ensure the safety and security of the population in the region and regional peace and stability, maintain calm and exercise restraint, move in the same direction, halt military actions and work to help ease tensions effectively. The Security Council and other stakeholders with influence in the Middle East must remain united and work hard to create the conditions needed for the stabilization of the Palestinian-Israeli situation and a resumption of dialogue. China appreciates the efforts that countries such as Egypt and Russia are making to facilitate internal Palestinian reconciliation.

The question of Palestine is at the core of the Middle East issue and bears on the region's long-term stability and development. China wants to stress once again that a two-State solution is the fundamental way to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The international community must build on the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative, and must scale up its efforts to facilitate a resumption of talks so as to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question. Any new initiative should contribute to the realization of a two-State solution. Resolution 2334 (2016) should be implemented effectively. All settlement activities in the occupied territories should cease immediately, as should the demolition of Palestinian homes and the destruction of Palestinian property, and measures should be taken to prevent violence against civilians.

The final status of Jerusalem is a complex and sensitive issue that underpins the settlement of the Palestinian question and has an underlying impact on regional peace and tranquillity. The recent conflict at the Al-Aqsa Mosque is worrying. All parties should act with caution and support the principle of respecting

the city's diverse history, upholding fairness and justice, implementing the international consensus and achieving peaceful coexistence. They should work in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and international consensus to reach a balanced solution through negotiations, taking the interests of all sides into account.

The Golan Heights is internationally recognized as an occupied territory. The Security Council has adopted several resolutions calling for Israel's withdrawal from the area. China opposes any unilateral action to alter those facts and does not wish to see any further escalation of regional tensions.

**Mr. Safronkov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Mladenov for his informative briefing on the situation in the Middle East and the occupied Palestinian territories, and on the state of Palestinian-Israeli relations. The Special Coordinator makes it very clear that negative trends have the upper hand today with regard to a settlement in the Middle East, in which we see a logic based on violence whose victims are the civilian population. The latest events confirm the fragility and volatility of the situation. We firmly condemn the firing of rockets from Gaza towards Israeli towns, which has killed civilians, and any kind of terrorism or indiscriminate attacks. We call on all the parties to refrain from using force or taking unilateral steps, including illegal settlement activity and provocative rhetoric.

Today, when the Middle East and North Africa continue to be troubled by acute conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Libya, the lack of progress in the resolution of the central problem of Palestine is deeply alarming. The current status quo is not viable. We have no right to put up with this state of affairs. There is an alternative. It involves ramping up our collective efforts to relaunch the negotiation process aimed at realizing a two-State solution based on two States, Palestine and Israel, coexisting in peace and security, within internationally recognized borders.

We have a difficult issue on our agenda, that of reviving the channels for dialogue. We urge the Palestinians and Israelis to focus on a negotiating track based on a generally recognized international legal framework that includes the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map of the Middle East Quartet of

international mediators. The Quartet's 2016 report is still relevant, with its clear outline of the steps needed to overcome the negative trends that are obstructing a Middle East settlement. Any viable plans to achieve a comprehensive solution in the Middle East must start from those multilateral decisions and take into account the opinion of the Arab world as reflected in the Arab Peace Initiative, adopted at the Arab League summit in 2002. That is a precondition for any peace process to have effective results.

Russia will continue to take steps to restore positive momentum and a positive agenda to the Palestinian-Israeli question. Our proposal for holding a summit in Russia between the leaders of Palestine and Israel remains on the table. We believe that regional players, particularly Egypt and Jordan, have an important role to play. In our view, the most recent intra-Palestinian meeting in Moscow in February represented a contribution to the efforts to overcome the schism in the Palestinian ranks. We emphasize once again that international and regional steps to achieve an intra-Palestinian reconciliation will have effect only if they are undertaken in coordination with the legitimate Administration of the State of Palestine led by President Abbas.

We believe that it is essential to ensure that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) can function fully. It is a critical mechanism for reducing the burdens on the Palestinian refugees in the Middle East who have been forced to leave their homes because of war and conflicts. For its part, Russia will continue to help Palestinians both through its contributions to UNRWA's budget and bilaterally. We believe the Agency should continue to be an important and effective mechanism for helping Palestinian refugees until a lasting solution to the refugee problem is found. We see no other way of alleviating the situation of the refugees themselves or of the countries hosting them.

History has shown that only a negotiated settlement can guarantee that any resulting agreement will last, which is why all our efforts must be focused on relaunching a political dialogue between the Palestinians and Israelis. In the framework of that dialogue, we will have to work to resolve the complex final-status issues that include the status of Jerusalem, refugees and borders, as well as fundamental aspects of security. The principle of multilateralism, mutually respectful dialogue based on compromise and the quest

for negotiated solutions must define the paradigm for solving the problems in relations between Israel and the Arab world.

Unilateral steps, such as the recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, do not change the status of those territories, which is determined by the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. The status of those territories is the subject of direct dialogue between Syria and Israel, which was under way until very recently. Such an approach is determined and clearly set out by Secretary-General and the overwhelming majority of States, and fully corresponds to the resolutions that have been adopted by consensus in this very Chamber.

There is no doubt that no one party alone will be able to solve the complex of problems in the Middle East. Individual efforts need to be pooled; only a broad and inclusive international coalition will be able to overcome the threat of terrorism. Only active international cooperation, based on common rules, will allow us to resolve the many regional conflicts we face, including that between Palestine and Israel. We call on everyone to engage in that interaction and cooperation.

**Mr. Heusgen** (Germany): I must say that our discussions with Nikolay Mladenov and the briefings he presents belong to the most depressing exercises undertaken by the Security Council.

As our South African colleague reminded us, this organ was created for the maintenance of international peace and security. We have international law as an instrument for maintaining peace and security, and the United Nations has created the instrument of Security Council resolutions, which are binding law, for the same purpose. What we have heard today in Nikolay Mladenov's briefing and around the table has been all about the violation of international law and resolution 2234 (2016). We have heard nothing about steps that have been taken to actually implement that resolution.

Today, just a few days before the Israeli elections, a new element has been added. We have heard our American colleague tell us that the United States is now violating resolution 497 (1981) by recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. That comes a year and a half after a violation of resolution 478 (1980), on Jerusalem and the establishment of embassies there.

In a few minutes, we will hear our Israeli and Palestinian friends deliver statements that will be full

of accusations against one another and how each is violating international law. I would ask them to do as I have done by putting their speeches aside and telling us how they are implementing resolution 2234 (2016). What is the Israeli Government doing to implement that resolution? How is it stopping the settlements? What is it doing to agree with Jordan on how to ensure calm on the Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount? I would ask our Palestinian colleague to focus his statement on how his Government will end the constant incitements and provocations, the inflammatory rhetoric and, in particular, the missile attacks on Israel. Germany strongly condemns the latest incident, in which innocent Israeli citizens have fallen victim to rockets fired from Gaza.

Again, we appeal for respect for international law, but not as a goal in and of itself. We believe that international law is the best way to protect civilians and allow them to live in peace and security and without fear of Israeli bulldozers or Hamas rockets.

**Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom): Like our German colleague, I shall try to be brief because I think that there have been a lot of common themes across the Council today. While I share people's dismay that so many of these issues come back to us repeatedly, I think that if there is any unity in the Council, it has been on the condemnation of violence from both sides and the need for both to make progress.

Mr. Mladenov asked us to be very clear about the condemnation of the recent rocket attacks. Dual British-Israeli citizens were injured in the latest rocket attacks, so we have no hesitation in joining him and others in condemning unreservedly what has happened and such acts of terrorism and violence wherever they occur. I note that there was another attack near the Ariel settlement on 17 March.

Along with others, we support the Egyptian and United Nations efforts to broker a ceasefire and restore the situation to calm. Violence not only creates fear and a cycle of violence among the Israeli and Palestinian populations; it also undermines the humanitarian situation in Gaza. We have been concerned by the number of Palestinian deaths in the West Bank over the past few weeks.

A number of colleagues mentioned the heightened tensions at Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount. We urge all parties to work together to restore calm and to

support the status quo under the custodianship of the King of Jordan.

The protests at the Gaza perimeter fence continue, and we remain concerned about the volume of live fire that has been used and is resulting in horrific injuries and in fatalities. That is not to take away one iota from Israel's right to self-defence and it is not to undermine or gainsay the fact that Hamas operatives cynically exploit these protests, but it is worth repeating that this perpetual cycle of violence serves no one's interests. As the German ambassador said, the emphasis ought to be on what can be done to implement resolution 2334 (2016) and reduce the violence that we see every day in the territories and in Israel.

I just want to join others who referred to the March of Return. That anniversary will be with us shortly. We urge all parties to demonstrate restraint and avoid future violence. We continue to support the need for an independent and transparent investigation into last year's events in Gaza, and we welcome the recent decision by the Israeli Military Advocate General to order five criminal investigations relating to 11 separate instances of Palestinian fatalities during the Gaza protests.

It is customary to turn to the issue of settlements. Our views on settlements remain well known. Suffice it to say that we share the Secretary-General's views on the expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. We also remain gravely concerned by the threat of evictions of Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem and across the West Bank. My Foreign Secretary wrote to the Israeli Government to condemn the planned demolition of the Palestinian village of Khan Al-Ahmar and we continue to press Israel to abandon these plans entirely.

A number of Council members have referred to the issue of the Golan Heights. The United Kingdom views the Golan Heights as territory occupied by Israel. Annexation of territory by force is prohibited under international law, and that includes the Charter of the United Nations. The United Kingdom does not recognize Israel's annexation in 1981 and we have no plans to change that position.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Nikolay Mladenov for his briefing, which complements the very comprehensive written report (S/2019/251) submitted a few days ago by the Secretary-General. I take this opportunity to welcome the circulation of that report in response to a request by France and the majority of the members of the Security Council. It is an important step towards the submission of at least two reports per year, which we have requested. We thank the Secretary-General, the Secretariat and Mr. Mladenov. It is our responsibility and the responsibility of the parties, as we have just been reminded by my German colleague, to oversee the implementation of resolution 2324 (2016). It is equally our joint responsibility to make progress and find points of agreement with a view to stepping outside our automatic pilot mode with regard to this question.

I turn first to the situation on the ground, which is extremely worrisome. Once again, in recent days the Gaza Strip has found itself on the brink of a new conflict, as it has experienced three times in the past decade. The firing of a rocket into the central region of Israel, which killed several people, including children, less than two weeks after shots were fired in Tel Aviv, is something that has not been seen since the 2014 conflict. We condemned that launch in the strongest possible terms and we reiterate our unwavering commitment to Israel's security. These launches represent a dangerous escalation, which could quickly spiral out of control. The return to a ceasefire, thanks to the efforts of Egypt, which should once again be welcomed, must not blind us to the frequency of those incidents of escalation over the past several months. Everyone knows that, in the absence of a fundamental change in the situation in the Gaza Strip, a new conflict is inevitable.

The situation in Gaza is now characterized by a multidimensional crisis. On the humanitarian level, the situation in the Gaza Strip is disastrous and fuels despair among the population. The efforts of the Special Coordinator and all United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, have enabled an emergency humanitarian response that must be resolutely sustained, but a long-term response is still needed.

The despair generates a wave of protest, which Hamas and other armed groups are trying to exploit and which has as its source the plight of the people of Gaza. Those protests led to a disproportionate

and indiscriminate use of force, which has led to the deaths of nearly 200 protesters and the injuring of 6,000 people, including a large number of people who should have enjoyed protected status — including children, medical personnel and journalists — and which we have condemned. Israel must respect the right of Palestinians to protest peacefully. We call on everyone to exercise maximum restraint in the run-up to the commemoration of 30 March, which could lead to large-scale rallies.

At the political level, the inter-Palestinian division aggravates the situation of the people of Gaza and weakens the national aspirations of the Palestinians. There is an urgent need to relaunch the inter-Palestinian reconciliation process. Everyone must commit themselves to the Egyptian efforts, and we call on Mr. Mohamed Shtayyeh, whose appointment as Prime Minister I welcome, to make Palestinian unity, the return of legitimate Palestinian authorities to Gaza and the democratic strengthening of the Palestinian Authority the priorities of his future Government. Furthermore, France also reaffirms that the Gaza Strip must be an integral part of the State of Palestine.

There can be no solution to the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip in the long term without lifting the Israeli blockade, in accordance with Palestinian aspirations to live in dignity and in line with Israel's security concerns. In the immediate term, the measures taken by Israel following the most recent rocket attacks — from the closure of crossing points to the limiting of fishing zones — must be lifted.

Secondly, developments in the settlement policy in the West Bank, which are described in detail in the Secretary-General's report, are of particular concern and are leading to the automatic erosion of the two-State solution on the ground. During the three-month period covered by the report, 2,500 housing units advanced in the approval process and 650 units were opened to tender. At the same time, the policy of legalizing so-called wildcat settlements, which are illegal even under Israeli law, has continued, as has the practice of demolishing Palestinian structures and expropriating and forcibly relocating their inhabitants. The latter trend is particularly alarming in East Jerusalem, in particular in the Old City and its surrounding neighbourhoods, such as Sheykh Jarrah.

With more than 600,000 settlers, including 200,000 in Jerusalem, we are close to the point of no return. The

fragmented territorial unit that is taking shape before our eyes has already meant that two peoples must coexist in an unequal manner on the same territory. If the process continues unchecked, the Palestinians will be forced to abandon their national aspirations, which are first and foremost the establishment of a State; and, for Israelis, the renunciation of the democratic nature of the State of Israel. Settlement, which is illegal under international law, is also dangerous because of the tensions it raises on the ground. That is reflected in the increase in acts of violence over the reporting period, as noted in the report, in particular in Hebron. A total of 71 settler attacks against Palestinians and 46 Palestinian attacks against settlers were carried out.

We know that the destinies of the Israelis and the Palestinians are intertwined: neither of the two peoples will achieve their aspirations over the long term at the expense of the other. France, which is a friend of both Israelis and Palestinians, has only one objective: the implementation, through negotiation, of the two-State solution, on the basis of parameters agreed by the international community. In that respect, the findings set out in the Secretary-General's report are particularly worrisome: the trajectory is negative and the irreversible trend jeopardizes the two-State solution, which are far from being offset by the few positive developments that occurred during the past quarter. France especially regrets the decision of the Israeli authorities, noted in the report, to freeze a part of the tax revenues they are required to pay to the Palestinian Authority under the Paris Protocol, at a time when the Palestinian Authority's financial situation is already very precarious. We call on all parties to fully respect their obligations under the Oslo Accords, in particular those under the Paris Protocol. In today's context, everyone must refrain from any measure that could make it even more difficult to resume dialogue.

At a time when a peace plan has been announced for the next few weeks by our American partners, we would like to kindly recall that any attempt to deviate from the parameters agreed by the international community would be doomed to failure. Those parameters are not optional or a menu from which one can pick and choose at will; rather they are a package that forms the bedrock of any peace plan and any future negotiations.

Twenty-five years after Oslo, there might be a temptation to break away from the agreed framework based on international law and Security Council resolutions and pursue unilateral decisions. However,

I think we are all aware of the dangers posed by the temptation to pursue a unilateral path. A unilateral approach would widen the divisions that must be decreased and exacerbate the resentment that must be overcome, and therefore cannot lead to peace in the region. Beyond the Middle East, such an approach would undermine the international rules-based order.

That is the message that France reiterated, together with several Arab and European partners, at the Dublin meeting in February. The same logic applies to the establishment of embassies in Jerusalem, which challenges the status quo of the city, which is guaranteed by several Security Council resolutions, namely, 476 (1980) and 478 (1980). And let us make no mistake, that also goes for the issue of the Golan Heights — a territory that has been occupied by Israel since 1967 and is defined as such by the Council since the adoption of resolution 242 (1967). The acquisition of territory by force is illegal under the Charter of the United Nations. France does not recognize the Israeli annexation of the Golan in 1981. It is considered null and void by several Security Council resolutions, including resolution 497 (1981). The recognition of Israel's sovereignty over the Golan is contrary to international law, in particular the obligation States have to not recognize an illegal situation.

It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that those fundamental principles, which condition international peace and security, are respected. That is why silence by the Council on this subject is ever more deafening and incomprehensible. For France it is entirely unacceptable, which is why we will continue to spare no effort in that regard.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): I thank the French and German presidencies of the Security Council for their response to the calls for the Council to urgently address the dangerous situation unfolding in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. I would also like to thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing, and the Secretary-General for his written report (S/2019/251), which has been circulated, on the implementation of resolution 2234 (2016).

Before I proceed to read out my written statement, let me say that I would be extremely happy to not deliver a statement and instead engage in a discussion, as my friend the Ambassador of Germany stated. But I am only a representative of Palestine — although I support the implementation of all the resolutions of the Security Council and international law, beginning with resolution 2334 (2016) — if a way can be found. He is a member of the Security Council and the representative of mighty Germany. I listened very carefully to the presentation delivered by my good friend the President, the representative of France, and I completely agree with him. However, if the Security Council comes to me to tell me that it does not have the political will to implement its resolutions, does it think that if I come here and selectively respond to certain questions asked by some of those present that this is the solution the predicament that we face?

I tell the Council, those here in the Chamber and all those watching us from every corner of the globe, that I am committed. I would be happy if the resolutions were implemented, and I would not deliver a statement. Can the Security Council get a similar commitment from the other side of the table, which is the one refusing to implement those resolutions? There is another member in the Chamber that is powerful and protecting the occupying Power from honouring and respecting the Council's resolutions. If that is the predicament we face, including the lack of agreement within the Council to send the Council to see with its own eyes the tragic reality of the Palestinian people under occupation — it cannot even reach that basic agreement to go visit — then the solution would be for me to respond to some questions.

I beg the Council to find a way to implement its resolutions, beginning with resolution 2334 (2016), and I promise that I will not deliver a single statement, if the Council finds the political will and methods to bring to account those who are violating the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016). The Council will not see me making statements or objecting to its ruling in that regard, that is, on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016).

I was not planning to respond, but then I was asked to; however, I have a statement that I need to continue reading because I have to address the issue at hand until the Council collectively finds a method of implementing its resolutions as they relate to us. There is no other option for now but to listen to more

statements. Members of the Council might think that my statement is accusing the other side — they can think that way — but I have to defend my people, who live a life of misery under occupation, whether in the Gaza Strip, the occupied West Bank or occupied East Jerusalem. It is my duty to defend my people, who live that miserable life.

History does not begin with the firing of a rocket or doing something wrong. The history is well-known to all those present, and it is the tragedy of the Palestinian people, who live under occupation. That tragedy has to end, on the basis of ending the occupation and upholding the independence of the State of Palestine. As articulated by my good friend the Ambassador of France, the parameters must be respected, which is why I always look to all those present, for they are defenders of those parameters — the global consensus on how to solve the problem.

Many of those here often say that we all know what the solution is, and it is very simple. That solution consists of ending the occupation and upholding the independence of the State of Palestine with a view to reaching a two-State solution, living side by side, and a just solution to the refugee question, which we all know is a simple solution and acceptable to us and the Council. But there are forces, which the Council knows well, that are refusing that solution and acting every day to prevent it, even though it is a solution that emanates from the global consensus. I also took serious note of the position that the Ambassador of France, the President of the Council, reiterated, which is shared throughout the Council, that any solution or formula that is put on the table that does not take into account the global consensus of what is known as the parameters has no chance of resolving the conflict.

May I now proceed to read out the rest of my statement?

Week after week, in official communications, we have alerted the Security Council to the escalation of Israeli violations against the Palestinian people, who remain captive under Israel's medieval military occupation and blockade. We have urged the Council to heed the early warnings and act to halt the deterioration of an already tense and volatile situation, which all have deemed not only unsustainable but explosive. Time after time, we have called on the Council to uphold its duties under the Charter of the United Nations in order to avert the outbreak of another deadly cycle of violence

and to protect innocent civilian lives. We have appealed to the Council to implement its own resolutions with a view to ensuring accountability and salvaging the prospects for peace.

Yet all that has been to no avail. The Council has been silenced by the obstruction of a permanent member, which has, in turn, emboldened Israel, the occupying Power, to persist with total impunity in its systematic acts of violent aggression, incitement, provocation and collective punishment of the Palestinian people and rabid colonization and de facto annexation of our land.

And so today we again find ourselves at the edge of the precipice, fearing for the lives of our people as Israeli officials ratchet up their threats of war against the besieged Gaza Strip. Once again, the Israeli occupying forces have taken to the skies to drop bombs and missiles on our defenceless civilian population, terrorizing and traumatizing them in a blatant act of aggression and collective punishment in grave breach of international law. While perhaps the cyclical wars on Gaza have come to be seen by some as the norm, there is nothing normal about imprisoning, isolating and terrorizing 2 million people — more than half of them children and young people — for more than a decade. There is nothing normal about a people being repeatedly trapped and slaughtered, including children who pose absolutely no threat to life, just like the families sheltering in their homes fearing the next nightmare of Israeli attacks. There is nothing normal about the targeting and injuring of more than 29,000 civilians — peaceful demonstrators — with live ammunition and other deadly weaponry by one of the most powerful armies in the world.

As we approach the one-year anniversary of the Great March of Return, with deep worry about such continued savagery by the Israeli occupying forces, the Security Council cannot ignore the findings of the independent, international commission of inquiry of the Human Rights Council, which, with the exception of one incident on 14 May 2018 and another on 12 October 2018, found reasonable grounds to believe that in all other cases the use of live ammunition by the Israeli forces against demonstrators was unlawful and that demonstrators were shot in violation of their right to life or of the principle of distinction under international humanitarian law. Nothing under international law — whether international humanitarian law or international human rights law — can ever justify the dehumanization, desperation and devastation imposed

upon our people — even the need for security, which is neither mutually exclusive nor zero-sum. Implications that the security of one must be achieved at the expense of the humanity and welfare of the other are as offensive as they are illegitimate. The law is more than clear. It is not the occupied people that must ensure the safety of the occupier, but the other way around. No rhetoric or propaganda can change that reality.

What we are witnessing at this moment did not begin yesterday; it is part of the long-running campaign of violence and terror waged against our people by Israel, the occupying Power, and its military forces and extremist settlers. What we are witnessing is pretext after pretext exploited by warmongering Israeli officials — once again in the context of an election campaign — to harm, kill, injure and maim defenceless Palestinians in order to prove their might and bravado and gain a few votes. Just listen to the words of Israeli Government and military leaders themselves as they boast of their intentions to annihilate, punish and devastate Gaza, threaten to bomb the Palestinian people back to the stone age and continue in vying with one another to spill more Palestinian blood. Yet that is met with silence. But one can just imagine the condemnation, shaming and calls for action were such threats and inflammatory rhetoric uttered by anyone else.

We must once again put on record — contrary to the blatant distortion and deception by Israel — the fact that the Palestinian leadership has repeatedly and unequivocally condemned acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror. We reject any libellous claims otherwise. We have condemned rocket fire against civilian areas. That cannot be denied. We have stood firmly against terror and have committed to respect international law in that regard without exception, including the Council's demand in resolution 2334 (2016) for the cessation of all acts of violence against civilians, including all acts of terror, as well as provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric. That commitment and our long-standing commitment to non-violence and the pursuit of peaceful, political and legal means for the realization of our people's rights and a just peace have been demonstrated over and over again — also, regrettably, to no avail. Moreover, that makes all the more repugnant Israel's attempts to paint the leadership and entire people with the broad brush of terrorism and its vicious claims concerning the social assistance to the families of Palestinian prisoners and

martyrs who have suffered much under the unjust and absolutely illegal occupation.

Palestinian families — defenceless children, women and men — are bracing themselves for the prospect of yet another barbaric military aggression by Israel against Gaza, where the population has yet to recover from the lasting impact of the destruction and human loss caused by past Israeli wars, and coping capacities have been depleted by the collective punishment of the illegal Israeli blockade and the humanitarian catastrophe that it has deliberately inflicted on them. The Security Council must make its voice heard and act to deter further violence and the escalation of this dangerous situation. The Council is duty-bound to maintain international peace and security and must not turn a blind eye to Israel's violations and acts of aggression. It must demand the occupying Power to respect its legal obligations without exception, including to ensure the safety and welfare of the civilian population under its occupation pursuant to the fourth Geneva Convention and ensure accountability in the case of continued breaches. This is matter of urgency to avert another onslaught and save innocent civilian lives.

We urge that the warnings be heeded and call for serious action to prevent further brutality from raining down on our people. We recognize and pay tribute to Egypt and its efforts to secure a ceasefire. We also recognize the efforts of the Secretary-General and Special Coordinator Mladenov in seeking de-escalation and the protection of civilian lives. We recognize, as well, the vital humanitarian assistance that continues to be provided by United Nations agencies on the ground — even during these turbulent times, with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in the lead constituting a vital lifeline for the most vulnerable among our people — our refugees. At the same time, we must call on the Security Council, which today received the ninth report (S/2019/251) of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) — in writing, which we welcome — to remain vigilant in also demanding an end to all other illegal Israeli policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Israel cannot be absolved, under any pretext, of its obligations to completely and immediately halt its settlement activities, which are destroying the contiguity of the State of Palestine and the viability of the two-State solution within the 1967 borders, in grave breach of international law and in

flagrant contempt of the Council. Furthermore, those who are complicit in those crimes must not be spared censure or accountability, including with regard to attempts at the annexation of Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, in blatant violation of the prohibition on the acquisition of territory by force, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the rules-based order.

The Security Council must also demand that Israel, the occupying Power, cease immediately all acts of provocation and incitement, including by its extremist settlers, and all military incursions, including attacks on worshippers and the sanctity and historic status quo of holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem, including Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Such reckless and unlawful actions could lead to the outbreak of a religious conflict with a far-reaching and disastrous impact.

Today we once again appeal to the Council to uphold its responsibility to put an end to this illegal occupation and historical injustice against the Palestinian people. We urge the Council to act before it is too late, based on the principles and parameters long enshrined in the relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016). We urge it to protect the innocent lives endangered by this man-made disaster and, beyond that, to seek solutions and to stop managing crisis after crisis, tragedy after tragedy, generation after generation, instead of resolving the conflict. The lives of our people and their future depend on this; the prospects for a just solution depend on this; and peace and security in the Middle East depend on this.

I conclude by offering my apologies to my good friend the Ambassador of Germany.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

**Mr. Danon** (Israel): I wish to say to my colleague from Germany that I agree with him that it is about time that we leave statements aside and speak directly. It is really easy to speak about both sides showing restraint; but rockets are flying into our cities. The last rocket that landed in Israel landed in in my community in Israel, where I live, 100 feet from my house and from where I am raising my children. So it is comfortable to come and speak about ideas and implementation, but once rockets start flying into our cities, we will defend our people. That is the first thing we will do, and then we will talk. We will continue to have a dialogue. But the first thing we are committed to doing is to defend our people and to defend our children, who last night had

to sleep in shelters because of the rockets coming from Gaza. We are determined to do whatever is necessary to protect our people, even if it means burying the leaders of Hamas in the tunnels of Gaza.

I want to challenge my colleague from Germany. Next month, Germany will preside over the Security Council, so perhaps we should have a closed meeting, without cameras. He could call on both sides. We can leave our statements at our Missions and come here and talk. We are here to talk. We will continue to defend our people, but at the same time, we are here to talk.

On Monday, 25 March, at 5 a.m., Hamas fired a long-range rocket from Gaza into Israel. The rocket travelled more than 120 kilometres past Tel Aviv and landed directly on a private home in the farming community of Mishmeret. The home was completely destroyed. Neighbouring houses and cars sustained damage, and seven civilians, including a grandmother, a baby — her grandchild — and two other children were injured. This was an act of terror for which the Hamas terrorist organization is responsible. Hamas terrorists manufactured this long-range rocket, filling it with steel bullets and metal fragments in order to maximize the damage. They fired it from the centre of a Palestinian civilian area in Rafa and sent it into a civilian area populated by families in Israel. On either side, and from start to finish, Hamas deliberately placed innocent people in the line of fire, making it guilty of a double war crime.

Throughout the day, Hamas continued to fire more than 130 rockets into Israel. In response to these sustained terrorist attacks, Israel took swift action, targeting Hamas military infrastructure in Gaza. Israel will continue to act forcefully so long as these attacks continue.

For 12 years, since 2007, Hamas has fired more than 12,000 rockets and mortars into Israel; that is 1,000 rockets and mortars per year, launched from civilian areas into civilian areas. Hamas's stated goal in firing rockets and mortars into Israel is to destroy my country, but its other goal is to distract the attention of the world, and our attention, from its oppressive rule of Gaza. Over the past week, Hamas arrested, beat up and shot at Palestinian protesters demonstrating against the terrorist regime. People did not see it on CNN or the BBC, people did not hear about it; but they were killing people on the streets of Gaza.

We heard nothing from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. We heard nothing from the so-called Human Rights Council, which did not even mention Hamas in its recent report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the occupied Palestinian territory, under agenda item 7. Instead, it blamed Israel for all of the ills in Gaza. These bodies simply reaffirmed what has always been true: for the United Nations, all people deserve human rights, except for the people of Israel. And it is the Palestinian people in Gaza who are paying a heavy price for the crimes of their leadership. Ask the Palestinian representative what he really thinks about the Hamas regime in Gaza, about the way it handles the Palestinian people in Gaza.

We have entered a new reality. Hamas has gained the ability to launch long-range rockets deep into Israel, past Tel Aviv and into Mishmeret. For me, the terror attack on Mishmeret, where the most recent rocket landed, was too close to home, because Mishmeret is my place of residence. It is where my family lives and where I am raising my children. I know the family whose home was hit; my house is only a few hundred feet away. Imagine if a rocket was fired at your home. Think about it targeting your kids. Now imagine that the terrorists who launched the attack said it was an accident, as Hamas did; you would never accept that. You would not think twice about taking action. Just think about a rocket in Paris, in Lima, in Berlin, in any capital. If a rocket landed tomorrow morning and someone said, no, it was an accident, you would put your people first, and you would likely have the support of this body behind you.

So let me be very clear. Monday's events were no accident. Hamas committed a heinous crime against Israel, a deliberate and direct act of terror against our people, just like every one of the 12,000 attacks before it. We will not hesitate to take action.

Israel's expectations of the international community are twofold. The Security Council should issue a clear condemnation of Hamas and its prompt designation as a terrorist organization. The United Nations must condemn Hamas and its terrorism against Israel unequivocally, and the Security Council must designate Hamas as a terrorist organization.

Twelve thousand rockets and mortars should be enough evidence to warrant such a designation. Some countries will, as we heard over the past hour, claim

the moral high ground by telling Israel to exercise maximum restraint. They will try to rationalize the attack with the argument of "both sides". I do not see both sides. I see a terror organization and I see a country that is defending its people. Make no mistake. We will not accept a reality in which our children become the targets of Hamas. We are determined to protect our people. If the terror attacks continue, the leaders of Hamas will feel the might of the Israeli Defence Forces. They will be buried in the tunnels of Gaza.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of Germany has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

**Mr. Heusgen** (Germany): Very briefly, I would like to thank both the Palestinian and the Israeli representatives for partially responding to my request to put aside their speaking notes, but I regret the fact that neither of them responded to the questions that I put. Can the representative of Palestine not say how the Palestinian Government plans to stop the incitement, provocations and inflammatory rhetoric? What is it doing to stop rockets falling on the Israelis. I did not hear once from our Israeli colleague how Israel wants to implement to resolution 2334 (2016) with regard to the settlements or what Israel plans to do so that the crisis that we read about Al-Haram Al-Sharif is stopped and it negotiates with the Jordanians. Both representatives said basically the same. The Israeli representative said, as I understand, that as long as the children in his city or village where he grew up cannot sleep in peace and be safe from Palestinian Hamas rockets, he cannot respond to the issue of implementing resolution 2334 (2016). The Palestinian representative said the same thing: as long as Palestinian children cannot be sure that the next morning when they wake up there will not be bulldozers in front of their house to tear it down, he must read out his statement.

We therefore did not make progress on substance, but I wanted to take up the proposal of the Israeli representative. In view of the German part of the joint German-French presidencies, I am very happy to pick up with my colleagues his idea of having an informal meeting of Security Council members with the Israeli and Palestinian representatives behind closed doors so that we can perhaps prolong the debate.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine has requested the floor.

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): I apologize for taking the floor again but with regard to incitement, which we believe comes from the other side, if members think that it comes from our side, we accept the following proposals, namely, first, to form a commission from members of the Security Council to observe our behaviour and that of the other side. Whatever the Council decides in advance, I say that we will accept. Observe our conduct. Do not trust what we say or what they say. The Council is a third party. Let the Security Council establish a commission and review our educational books. Or if it does not want to, offer us UNESCO to do the same thing so that we can get to the bottom of the so-called provocation and incitement. I do not claim that we are a group of angels. We are not. We are human beings. But in order to resolve this puzzle, let us have a credible third party to come and evaluate our conduct and our curriculum and the conduct and the curriculum of the other side. So that is to deal with the first question that the representative of Germany raised.

Secondly, with regard to the rockets, we welcome a commission, to be established by the Council, since the Security Council is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. Let it be stationed on the Gaza side or on the Israeli side, in Al-Khalil or in East Jerusalem, and observe our conduct and their conduct. It should try to be an element for deterrence so that no one conducts their behaviour in violation of international law. It cannot be that the Council just keeps talking to us. It can see the problem. It should assume its responsibility and act. Who is going to stop the Council from observing the situation? Members say that they want to have a special commission or a special body that the Council forms to see who is violating international law, including all the kinds of behaviour that members mentioned, such as rockets.

Those are ideas. I hope that my colleagues in the Security Council will consider them seriously so that we do not continue with the eternal cycle of the Council asking us to do something and thinking that we are not doing it and it asking the other side to do something and it is not doing it. Step up to the plate. The Council is an objective party. Whatever decision it takes should be the most objective decision because the Council is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. Security Council members are also supposed to be defenders of international law. I

say here on behalf of the Palestinian people and their leadership, we accept any such proposal. If the Council is strong enough and powerful enough, it should see if the other side would accept such proposals. By the way, I accept having a discussion without statements, but I do not want it to be behind closed doors. I want the whole world to see the conduct of us all. It must be televised in all corners of the globe. If the idea is not to read statements, I accept it. If the idea is to have a very frank discussion in the Security Council, I accept it but let it be aired to all corners of the globe. Let the whole world see who is trying to work with the Council to open doors for peace and who is obstructionist and trying to block doors for peace.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of Israel has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

**Mr. Danon** (Israel): Unfortunately, the Council can see what we are dealing with. It can have another commission, another resolution and another empty debate. In the end, in order to have a sustainable negotiation, both sides need to speak directly, and we deal with Egypt. Today, we celebrate the peace agreement that we signed with Egypt 40 years ago. But we found a real partner. When Sadat came to Jerusalem, he said that he recognized Israel and that he was sitting with us and negotiating with us. We can have another committee. We are not against a commission to check the incitement. We know the facts. They showed the Council the books. The Security Council can check the budget of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Seven per cent goes to pay the families of terrorists. It should not deny it. Mr. Mladenov is here. He can come and give a report about the textbooks in Israel and in the PA, about payments — it is paying the salaries of terrorists. We are not against a commission but eventually, in order to move forward, it is necessary to have a real direct negotiation. That is the only way to move forward.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I would like to see a positive element in these limited but non-scripted exchanges.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers no request for the floor. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.*