



# Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

**8495**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Wednesday, 27 March 2019, 5.35 p.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mrs. Gueguen . . . . . (France)

*Members:*

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

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (S/2019/248)

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*The meeting was called to order at 5.35 p.m.*

### Adoption of the agenda

*The agenda was adopted.*

### The situation in the Middle East

#### Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (S/2019/248)

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; and Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations.

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/2019/248, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force.

I now give the floor to Ms. DiCarlo.

**Ms. DiCarlo:** During the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, the Syrian Arab Army crossed the 1967 ceasefire line on the Golan, known as the Purple Line, initially gaining territory. In a swift counter-attack, the Israel Defense Forces recaptured the lost ground and advanced further, crossing the 1967 ceasefire line and occupying a salient portion of Syrian territory. The conflict quickly reached an unstable stalemate, with tensions remaining high for months.

Following United States-led diplomatic efforts, on 31 May 1974 Israel and Syria signed the Disengagement of Forces Agreement between Israel and Syria. On the same day, the Security Council welcomed the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and, through resolution 350 (1974), in accordance with the protocol to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, established the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force.

The situation in the Golan remained generally calm until 2011, when fighting between the Syrian armed

forces and armed opposition groups began. In 2018, the Syrian Government re-established full control of the area known as the Bravo side, thereby re-establishing a status quo ante. Throughout this period, Israel has periodically stressed the critical importance of the Golan to its security.

On 25 March, United States President Donald Trump signed an official proclamation recognizing Israel's sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan. The Secretary-General has taken note of this development, including Member States' reactions to the United States decision. Let me reiterate the Secretary-General's statement that the United Nations position on the Golan is known and clear. That position is reflected in the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, notably Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 497 (1981).

We hope that the recent developments will not be used as an excuse by anyone to pursue actions that could undermine the relative stability of the situation on Golan and beyond. We will continue to closely monitor developments on the ground and will keep the Council informed, as appropriate.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. DiCarlo for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

**Mr. Lacroix:** I wish to thank you, Madam, for this opportunity to brief the Council on the situation in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) area of operation and on the activities of the Force and Observer Group Golan over the past three months, following the publication of the report of the Secretary-General on UNDOF (S/2019/248).

As noted in the report, the ceasefire between Israel and Syria has been maintained, notwithstanding a number of violations observed by UNDOF of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement of 1974. They included the crossing of the ceasefire line by civilians from the Bravo side, the presence of unauthorized equipment and personnel in the areas of separation and limitation, and the firing into the area of separation and across the ceasefire line. UNDOF protested to the parties all violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement that it observed.

The incidents of missile, rocket and other heavy weapons fire on 29 November, 20 January and 11 February, details of which the Secretary-General

outlines in his report, illustrate the continued risk of escalation of the situation in the UNDOF area of operation. It is critical that the parties at all times respect the Disengagement of Forces Agreement so as to maintain stability on the Golan. The importance of the parties maintaining their liaison with UNDOF in the first instance cannot be overemphasized. We count on members of the Security Council to support efforts to sensitize both parties and regional stakeholders to the risks of escalation and the need to preserve the long-standing ceasefire between Israel and Syria.

Allow me to turn the Council's attention to UNDOF's incremental return and full resumption of operations on the Bravo side. Since I last briefed the Council in December (see S/PV.8432), the Mission has continued to conduct operational patrols on routes in the northern and central parts of the areas of separation and limitation. In addition, UNDOF continues to carry out assessment visits and protected patrols to vacated United Nations positions and observation posts, including position 85 and observation post 57, in the southern part of the area of separation. UNDOF has also conducted, for the first time, route reconnaissance patrols to United Nations observation post 52 through the area of separation.

UNDOF also continues to make progress in the refurbishment and reoccupation of its vacated positions. The refurbishment and reoccupation of United Nations position 32 was completed on 30 December 2018 through the deployment of 35 UNDOF military personnel. On 28 January, UNDOF commenced a limited reoccupation of position 37 to support engineering work related to the refurbishment of the facilities and the security infrastructure at the position. It is expected to be completed by the end of April. Following the reoccupation of position 37 we are planning for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of position 27 in the central part of the area of separation. During the reporting period, Observer Group Golan continued to maintain temporary observation posts in the central and northern parts of the area of separation. Allow me, however, to underline that Observer Group Golan will not be deployed at observation posts in the area of separation on a permanent basis until such a time as conditions permit.

UNDOF continues to regularly utilize the Quneitra crossing, which was reopened on 15 October 2018, to move equipment and personnel between the Alpha and Bravo sides. Pending the completion of the

refurbishment of United Nations position at the Charlie gate and its reoccupation, UNDOF military police continued to deploy at the crossing point during the limited opening hours only to liaise with the respective sides on UNDOF personnel crossings. As Council members will be aware, the Quneitra crossing is important in facilitating efficient and effective UNDOF mandate implementation.

The completion of the redeployment and resumption of full operations in UNDOF's southern area of operation will be facilitated by the deployment to the Mission of a new mechanized company in July of this year, which is planned to occupy positions 85 and 68.

I can reassure Council members and troop-contributing countries that in the implementation of the Mission's plan to gradually return to the Bravo side, the safety and security of UNDOF and Observer Group Golan personnel remain paramount. There is a continued significant threat to United Nations personnel in the UNDOF area of operation from explosive remnants of war and from the possible presence of sleeper cells of armed groups, including listed terrorist groups, particularly in the southern part of the area of separation. UNDOF, in consultation with both parties, continues to review the situation in the area separation in order to assess whether the conditions on the ground would permit the return to vacated positions in the area of separation. We remain committed to supporting UNDOF in the implementation of the necessary mitigation measures, including force protection measures, at both United Nations positions and observation posts, as well as at Camp Ziouani and Camp Faouar.

The importance of the continued support to and cooperation of the parties with UNDOF is of critical importance. It remains critical that the deployment of the necessary technology and equipment to UNDOF be seamless and expeditious. The support and cooperation of both Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic remains essential in this regard. Such support and cooperation are also critical to ensuring the full freedom of movement and access to United Nations positions in the area of operations, and to reducing the delays and challenges that United Nations personnel experience in crossing the technical fence to United Nations observation posts and positions. In addition, the full utilization of the Quneitra crossing by UNDOF, in line with established procedures and without any administrative obstacles, is important, in particular as UNDOF increases its

operations on the Bravo side to facilitate effective and efficient mandate implementation.

In conclusion, I wish to acknowledge and appreciate the continued dedication of UNDOF personnel and Observer Group Golan military observers serving under the leadership of Major General Francis Vib-Sanziri. I am also grateful for the continued support of UNDOF troop-contributing countries.

I also would like to thank members of the Council for their continued and steadfast support. The presence of UNDOF on the Golan remains essential in our shared efforts to prevent regional escalation. We continue to rely on the Council's support.

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

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

**Mr. Hunter** (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for their briefings today.

The United States is concerned by the Secretary-General's reports of the continued military activities and presence of the Syrian armed forces in the area of separation. The mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) is crystal clear. There should be no military activity of any kind in the area of separation, including military operations by the Syrian armed forces. The daily presence of the Syrian armed forces in the area of separation diminishes the buffer zone that is essential for reducing tensions between the parties and keeping the peace. It is a violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and threatens the 1973 ceasefire.

The United States and the Council cannot accept Syria's efforts to establish its presence in the area of separation as a new norm. Therefore, the United States calls on the Russian Federation to use its influence with the Al-Assad regime to compel the Syrian forces to uphold their commitment to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and immediately withdraw from the area of separation. Syrian military activities in and around the area of separation have triggered misunderstandings and hostilities with Israel that have put UNDOF peacekeepers in harm's way. The freedom of movement and safety of UNDOF personnel are of the utmost importance and must be ensured by the Syrian authorities.

The United States is also alarmed by reports of Hizbullah's presence in the area of separation, which further heightens the potential for hostilities. There is no chance for peace between Syria and Israel if Hizbullah is present in the area of separation. Hizbullah has demonstrated that it is willing to risk its fellow Lebanese people in attacking Israel, and we believe that it has no qualms in risking the lives of the Syrian people as well. As we have said before, the United States strongly supports and affirms Israel's sovereign right to self-defence.

The United States welcomes the mission's progress in returning to its Bravo side operations. Recent events make clear that Syrian armed forces activities on the Bravo side go beyond those agreed to in the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. The United States encourages UNDOF and Observer Group Golan to resume inspections in the area of limitation on the Bravo side as soon as practical given conditions on the ground.

Turning to the Golan specifically, we briefed the Council yesterday that on 25 March, President Trump signed a proclamation affirming that the United States recognizes that the Golan Heights are part of the State of Israel. That announcement does not affect the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement, nor do we believe that it undermines the UNDOF mandate in any way. UNDOF continues to have a vital role to play in preserving stability between Israel and Syria, most importantly by ensuring that the area of separation is a buffer zone free from any military presence or activities other than those of UNDOF.

This decision is of critical strategic and security importance to the State of Israel, and the United States believes it can contribute to stability. As we said yesterday, 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 threats emanating from a Syrian regime that engages in atrocities and from Iran and terrorist actors, including Hizbullah, seeking to use the Golan Heights as a launching ground for attacks on Israel.

For decades, the residents of the Golan Heights have been subject to the same administration and governed by the same laws as the rest of Israel. The President's statement on the Golan reflects a recognition of the unique circumstances that led us to deem it appropriate to recognize Israeli sovereignty at this time.

To be clear, the United States supports the goal of a secure and lasting peace between Israel and all its neighbours, including Syria. Such a peace should be achieved through direct discussions. Israel does not currently have a partner for peace in Syria.

**Mr. Alotaibi** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, for her briefing and for reaffirming the international community and United Nations positions, which are in line with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Those positions state that the Golan is Syrian Arab land occupied by Israel. We also commend the briefing by Mr. Jean-Pierre LaCroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, on the work of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF).

Whether at meetings of the Security Council or by way of official statements, the State of Kuwait has repeatedly stressed over the past two days that the Golan is Syrian Arab land occupied by Israel, the occupying Power. Occupation and annexation of land by force is a matter that is rejected and violates the Charter, principles of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. The decision by Israel, the occupying Power, to impose its laws, authority and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan is null and void and has no legal effect at the international level. What I have just stated is not only the position of the State of Kuwait or that of the League of Arab States, it is also the position of the Security Council, as set out in resolution 497 (1981), adopted unanimously on 17 December 1981.

We have all seen the international rejection of any effort to illegitimately acquire territory by force, as well the rejection of any illegal measure that escalates tensions in the Middle East. We regret the decision by the United States to recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Golan. We underscore our support for Syria's just demand and right to recover the entirety of the occupied Syrian Arab Golan. We recall that the Security Council always stresses its commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria.

With regard to UNDOF, I would like to commend the Force for its efforts and work in such a critical security situation, given the risks of landmines and improvised explosive devices, as well as the threat of sleeper terrorist cells in its area of operation. We fully

believe that the Force is among the very few remaining sources of stability in the region. It is therefore important to maintain its presence and for the Council to support its work so that it can undertake its responsibilities. We reiterate the need to free the area of separation of any military presence except UNDOF troops, as provided for in resolution 2450 (2018). We call upon all parties to exercise self-restraint and avoid escalation in order to maintain security in the region.

In conclusion, the Security Council has always stressed the need to address the root causes of conflicts. We therefore emphasize once again that the Israeli occupation of Arab territories, including the Syrian Arab Golan for more than 50 years, is the root cause behind this conflict. We reaffirm that the Israeli occupation of Arab territories poses a continuing threat to peace and security in the region and the world. The solution to establishing stability in the region would not be through entrenching occupation or imposing a fait accompli. It would be through Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab lands, and the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981).

**Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom): I thank the two Under-Secretaries-General for their helpful briefings. I would like to structure my remarks under six headings, namely, the United Kingdom's position on the Golan; Security Council resolutions; what this means for the international order; Israel's right to security; the Middle East peace process; and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF).

On the first point, the United Kingdom's position has not changed: the Golan Heights is territory occupied by Israel. The turbulent history of the region is of course well known. Following the 1967 Six Day War, Israel took control of the Golan, including the disputed Shaba'a farmlands, deciding to annex the territory in 1981. The United Kingdom did not recognize that annexation then. We do not recognize it today. The annexation of territory by force is prohibited under international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. In addition, under the law of State responsibility, States are obliged not to recognize the annexation of territory as a result of the use of force.

Turning to Security Council resolutions, it is important that we uphold the relevant resolutions. Resolution 242 (1967), which the British delegation at the time had the honour to pen, was adopted

unanimously by the Council on 22 November 1967. British sponsored, it called on all parties to end territorial claims, acknowledge the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area, and, in paragraph 1, called for “withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict”. We recall that resolution 497 (1981), adopted unanimously on 17 December 1981, decided, in paragraph 1, that the Israeli Golan Heights Law, which effectively annexed the Golan Heights, is “null and void and without international legal effect”. It further demanded that Israel rescind its action. The decision by the United States to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan heights is in contravention of resolution 497 (1981).

In terms of the international order, the United Kingdom firmly believes that the rules-based international system has increased States’ ability to resolve their differences peacefully and provided a framework for the greatest sustained rise in prosperity that humankind has seen. That is why the United Kingdom thinks we should work hard with our international partners to nurture and protect those rules.

The right to self-defence is inherent. Israel has a right to defend itself. It has a right to security. And its people have a right to live in safety. We do not wish to diminish Israel’s genuine security concerns. We fully support its right to defend itself. We urge the Al-Assad regime, Iran and Hizbullah to refrain from actions that will only lead to increased instability in the region, as well as put civilians at risk. As the United States representative noted, Syria has allowed the use of its territory to launch missiles at Israel and Israeli civilians. That is not acceptable. But, at the same time, we emphasize the importance of adhering to the rules-based international system and abiding by Security Council resolutions that are designed to protect that system. That is true irrespective of the importance of the Golan to Israel’s security, or the lack of progress in peace talks.

Turning to the peace talks, resolution 242 (1967) enshrined the concept of land for peace. That has proved successful in ending the conflict between Israel, Jordan and Egypt. We believe it remains a basic principle for achieving peace between Israel, the Palestinians and other neighbours. I want to emphasize that we strongly welcome the United States efforts on the Middle East peace process. We encourage the United States Administration to put forward detailed proposals for

a viable Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement that addresses the legitimate concerns of both parties. We continue to believe that the best way to achieve that is through substantive peace talks between the parties, leading to a two-State solution.

Finally, turning to UNDOF, the United Kingdom strongly supports that mission. It should be the only armed force active in the area of separation. The presence and activity of any other armed forces, armed personnel or military equipment of any kind in the area of separation contravenes the Disengagement of Forces Agreement of resolution 2394 (2017). The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting UNDOF’s mandate, and we look forward to engaging in discussions regarding its renewal in June.

**Ms. Wronecka** (Poland): At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretaries-General DiCarlo and Lacroix for their comprehensive briefings.

Poland aligns itself with the position of the European Union with regard to the status of the Golan Heights. We consider the Golan Heights to be a territory occupied by Israel. The annexation of territory by force is illegal under international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, as well as resolution 497 (1981) of 17 December 1981. That resolution, which was unanimously adopted, states that

“all the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, continue to apply to the Syrian territory occupied by Israel since June 1967”.

Poland believes that a settlement of the question of the Golan Heights should occur only as a result of negotiations between the parties to the conflict, in line with international law.

I would like to express Poland’s full support for the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in fulfilling its mandate and to underscore its critical role in ensuring long-term stability in the region. I want to focus my intervention on two issues, which are violations of the ceasefire and the need to enhance the mission’s capabilities.

We are deeply concerned about the continued military activity in the area of separation, including the presence of unauthorized weapons and equipment, firing into and across the area of separation and the crossing of the ceasefire line. We are particularly alarmed by the

repeated instances of firing of anti-aircraft missiles, surface-to-air missiles, rockets and heavy machine guns on the Bravo side, as well as by the increased presence of Syrian armed forces within the area of separation. All of those activities constitute clear violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, pose a threat to the maintenance of the ceasefire and affect the security of UNDOF personnel. I would like to stress once again that the parties must respect the terms of the Agreement and refrain from maintaining a military presence in the area of separation or taking other actions that could endanger the ceasefire. It is vital that they cooperate closely with UNDOF and maintain their liaison with the mission in order to prevent any escalation.

We commend the mission's efforts to intensify its operations in the area of separation and the actions undertaken to ensure a limited return to operations on the Bravo side, despite the challenging security conditions. As we await the re-establishment of the mission's presence across the whole area of separation, it will be crucial to ensure that the parties facilitate the enhancement of the mission's capabilities and enable it to conduct its operations without any administrative restrictions.

In conclusion, I would like to express our appreciation for the work of all the civilian and military personnel of UNDOF and the Observer Group Golan, carried out under very challenging circumstances, and to underscore the primary importance of assuring the safety and security of United Nations personnel.

**Mr. Safronkov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Under-Secretaries-General Rosemary DiCarlo and Jean-Pierre Lacroix for their informative briefings on the situation in the Syrian Golan. We believe it is essential to highlight the following points.

In the summer of 2018, as a result of measures taken by the Syrian Government with assistance from Russia and in coordination with regional and international partners, the situation in the Syrian Golan underwent major changes and was stabilized. The main obstacle to the full implementation by the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) of its mandate, in the form of the presence in the area of separation of various armed groups, including terrorist groups, was removed. That also eliminated one of the security challenges for Israel and United Nations personnel. The success of this effort was made possible

only thanks to cooperation on the part of key players. In our communications with the parties to the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement, we help to ensure the necessary conditions for the full functioning of the United Nations operation. Russian military police units play an important role in that process. Thanks to efforts on the Syrian side, work on the Quneitra crossing point between the Alpha and Bravo sectors has been resumed. That is another important element in normalizing the situation and restoring it to its pre-crisis state. Demining work is continuing in order to accelerate the mission's full deployment in the Golan.

UNDOF has historically continued to be an effective mechanism for reducing tension, preventing incidents and escalation and resolving claims between Syria and Israel. In the long term, this kind of mechanism has the potential to restore trust between the parties. We cannot allow the positive momentum I have outlined to be undermined by unilateral steps that not only complicate efforts to improve the situation in Syria and establish a political process, but also create serious obstacles to the normalization of relations between Israel and Arab States.

Despite opinions and warnings that have been expressed at the international and regional levels, the United States has formalized its recognition of Israel's sovereignty over part of the occupied Syrian Golan. We assert that such steps not only violate norms of international law, they are a violation of Security Council resolutions, run counter to the principle of land for peace, developed at the Madrid Conference under the sponsorship of the Russian Federation and the United States, and represent a total disregard for the Arab Peace Initiative, which was approved at the League of Arab States Summit in 2002 and has historic significance for the work of opening the prospects for achieving a comprehensive, fair and lasting settlement in the Middle East.

Russia's position remains unchanged. The Golan Heights are a territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, occupied by Israel as a result of the 1967 war and then illegally annexed. We adhere strictly to resolution 497 (1981), according to which unilateral decisions to establish other laws, jurisdictions or administrations in that part of Syria's territory are null and void and have no legal effect. An overwhelming majority of the international community supports a similar approach. The General Assembly affirms that through its annual adoption of a resolution entitled "The occupied Syrian

Golan". The question of ending the occupation should be resolved in the framework of the Middle East settlement process through direct negotiations, based on the existing internationally recognized foundations. It is hard to deny that politics is at work here.

We are concerned about the possibility that these unilateral decisions could not only complicate the prospects for finding a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East, but could also lead to worsening instability in the region. The negative reaction from the Arab world confirms this kind of worrying prognosis. It is alarming to have to conclude that the decision on the Golan is the latest addition to the sad list of unilateral steps that the United States has taken recently. They include its withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action for Iran, in violation of resolution 2231 (2015), which has inflamed the international situation; the move of the United States Embassy to Jerusalem, flying in the face of international legal resolutions on the city's status, which has fundamental and sensitive significance for representatives of the monotheistic religions; and its assistance in establishing a Kosovo army, circumventing resolution 1244 (1999), which permits the presence there of multinational forces alone. We urge the United States and anyone who might be tempted to follow its poor example to refrain from aggressive revisions of international law, which, like the Charter of the United Nations, will always remain the sole framework for States' civilized conduct within the system of international relations.

The world's response to this series of unilateral steps and unlawful decisions confirms our conclusion that the so-called rules-based order arbitrarily established by certain States is doomed to failure and has no future. We urge them to reject this immoral and artificial concept, which is insulting to other States. Taking all of this into account, we want to emphasize that whatever the United States' reasons may be for its unilateral decisions, they do not change the international legal decisions on all the issues pertaining to a settlement in the Middle East. We fully agree with the Secretary-General that the status of the Syrian Golan may not be changed, because it is enshrined in the relevant Security Council resolutions.

A return to respect for international law would also assume fundamental significance in affirming the status of the United States as an objective and impartial mediator, an honest broker and an even-handed partner that through its cooperation with regional and

international players will be able to make a significant contribution to achieving a Palestinian-Israeli and Arab-Israeli settlement through direct negotiations between the parties on a basis of the relevant international legal resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

**Mr. Meza-Cuadra** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the convening of today's meeting and the informative briefings by Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo and Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix.

Peru deplores and notes with concern the continued military activity in the ceasefire zone and the escalation of tensions that the Secretary-General describes in his most recent report (S/2019/248), especially in the incidents of 29 November 2018, 20 January and 11 February. We reiterate our call to the parties and those who have influence on them to refrain from actions that violate the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. We welcome recent progress in the gradual return to the Bravo side, which should continue to be a priority for the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). We are pleased that the mission has been able to consolidate its presence in Camp Faouar and increase patrols in the area. We would also like to highlight the positive effects of the gradual opening of the Quneitra crossing point in terms of increasing the mobility of personnel and equipment between the Alpha and Bravo zones. We hope that completing the refurbishing of the position known as the Charlie gate will contribute to this momentum and go a long way to facilitating the mission's work.

We also commend the selfless work being carried out by the UNDOF contingent against a backdrop of obvious tension, and emphasize the importance of ensuring their security and physical integrity, which requires strengthening their capabilities with new technologies, vehicles and physical facilities. In that regard, and with regard to the Golan Heights, Peru reaffirms its historic position on the inadmissibility of acquiring territory by force, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of international law and in strict compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize Peru's great appreciation for the presence and stabilizing role of UNDOF and reiterate our full commitment to this important mission.

**Mr. Trullols Yabra** (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Ms. DiCarlo and Mr. Lacroix for their informative briefings.

First and foremost, we want to emphasize the crucial importance for regional stability of maintaining the existing ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic, particularly in the light of the increase in tensions between the parties over the past three months, with frequent military activity, including firing into the area of separation, and crossings over the ceasefire line on both the Alpha and Bravo sides, with the risk that this represents for the civilian population and United Nations personnel. We join the calls to exercise maximum restraint, avoid any breach of the ceasefire and the area of separation and ensure compliance with the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. We emphasize this in view of the renewed attention being given to non-compliance with the relevant resolutions of the Council and the General Assembly where the occupied Syrian Golan is concerned. We also want to recognize the essential work of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), particularly as a liaison between the parties in order to maintain an atmosphere conducive to peace. It is therefore essential to emphasize to the parties the importance for UNDOF of providing guarantees, facilities, access and freedom of movement so that it can perform its functions effectively.

My delegation would like to express the Dominican Republic's firm foreign policy position based on the fundamental principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, non-intervention, respect for human rights, international law and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as a means of ensuring the maintenance of world peace. Those fundamental principles are consistent with the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territories by force, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The issue of the Golan Heights, considered occupied territory under Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 497 (1981) and General Assembly resolution 72/16, is a key and sensitive element in the set of issues pertaining to the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

We call for multilateralism and adherence to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations to prevail. The same is especially relevant in the current context, in which the Syrian people desperately

await a secure and stable environment. The recent developments that we have addressed in the Council allow no hope of progress to achieve lasting peace in the region. We should also not forget that the ultimate goal of all these processes are the human beings who live in our countries — in the case of Syria the almost 13 million people who currently have serious and urgent humanitarian needs.

Finally, we believe that unilateral positions in flagrant violation of international law — and especially of the resolutions of the Council — should be avoided. We call on those who want peace to prevail in the region to act accordingly.

**Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, for their briefings.

The Belgian position in relation to the Golan Heights remains unchanged. In accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 497 (1981), we do not recognize Israel's sovereignty over the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967, including the Golan Heights, and we do not consider them part of the territory of the State of Israel. The acquisition of territory by force is illegal under international law. Any unilateral declaration of a change in the border is contrary to a rules-based international order and the Charter of the United Nations. We reiterate our deep concern about the wider consequences of the recognition of illegal annexation, particularly in the region.

Turning to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), I would like to commend the quality of the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/248) and to express our support for his observations and recommendations. UNDOF plays an indispensable role in preserving regional stability. The parties have an obligation to comply with the terms of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, according to which there should be no military presence in the area of separation other than UNDOF.

We are concerned about ceasefire violations, which only increase tensions and further undermine stability in a part of the world where it is already sorely lacking. We therefore call on the parties to the conflict and UNDOF to improve their communication in order to

create more trust and prevent any deterioration of the situation. The parties must exercise the utmost restraint at all times.

We share the Secretary-General's deep concern about the significant threat posed by the presence of unexploded ordnance, explosive remnants of war and mines to United Nations personnel in the Force's area of operation, particularly in the southern part of the area of separation. It is essential that the parties support all UNDOF efforts in that regard in order to ensure that the mission has the security it needs to carry out its work.

In conclusion, the Security Council plays a key role as the ultimate guarantor of compliance by all States with their international obligations in the context of the maintenance of international peace and security. With that in mind, we cannot accept situations in which the law is imposed by force. It is up to the Council to oppose unilateral acts that undermine not only the international legal order but also any prospect of peace.

**Mr. Heusgen** (Germany): The position of the German Government with regard to the occupied Golan Heights is clear. I refer to my statement yesterday (see S/PV.8489) and to the common European position. Security interests, as urgent as they may be, do not justify annexation. However, the presence of troops of the Syrian regime and of Iranian-backed militias close to the border violates the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and constitutes a threat to Israel. Those presences should end.

Today's meeting was scheduled partly in response to a request by the Syrian regime, which called for this meeting

“in order to discuss the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan and the recent flagrant violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions by a permanent member State”.

That request is deeply cynical. The Syrian Government has grossly violated the international laws of war for the past eight years and is responsible for grave war crimes and crimes against humanity. In response to peaceful protests, the Syrian regime has reacted with brutal violence against its own population. It has bombed protected facilities, including hospitals, schools, markets and civilian homes. It has used indiscriminate and illegal weapons, including cluster bombs and internationally banned barrel bombs, to kill and terrorize civilians.

The Syrian regime has repeatedly used chemical weapons against its own population — a flagrant violation of international law — and continues to refuse to fulfil its obligation to the Council to account for discrepancies in its declarations on chemical weapons. The regime has arrested, disappeared, tortured and killed tens of thousands of dissenters, activists, journalists, students, professors, medical workers, lawyers and others, including minors.

There are horrific reports and accounts of sexual violence. We have seen the Caesar photos displayed in the halls of the United Nations Building in New York. They provide horrifying evidence of the crimes that are happening behind bars in Al-Assad's hell-hole prisons and detention facilities. Tens of thousands are dead, killed by that ruthless regime out of sight of cameras. Those detention atrocities, testimonies by incredibly brave torture survivors, the Caesar photos and regime documents all form the basis of the criminal cases now being investigated by the German Federal Prosecutor, the international arrest warrants issued by Germany and actual arrests being carried out in Germany. It is profoundly cynical for a regime known for its atrocious crimes and for its ruthless brutality against Syrians to come to the Security Council and criticize others for violating international law.

**Ms. Sabelo** (South Africa): We thank you, Madam President, for calling this meeting at this important juncture, especially given the recent developments regarding the Syrian Golan Heights. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for their briefings on this matter.

My delegation supports the work of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the region and acknowledges the important role it plays in stabilizing the region, including through its continued engagement with all parties concerned.

South Africa is deeply concerned about the recent decision by a member of the Security Council to recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Syrian Golan Heights. That unilateral action does nothing to assist in finding a long-term peaceful solution to the conflict in the Middle East.

The Security Council has adopted numerous resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967) and 497 (1981), calling for Israel to relinquish its occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights and other occupied territory.

Yet, in 2019, we are still discussing Israel's violations of the Council's decisions in the Chamber of the Security Council. Resolution 497 (1981) declares that the Israeli annexation of the Syrian Golan Heights is null and void and without international legal effect. Israel's continued occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights is therefore evidence of its continued violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The recent decision by a member of the Council to recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Syrian Golan Heights is a blatant violation of international law and the resolutions I mentioned. South Africa, along with other members of the international community, rejects that unilateral decision. That decision marks the failure of the Council to take action against the continued violations of its resolutions and the inability of the international community to resolve that protracted conflict. Israel has continued to defy international law in its attempt to alter the facts on the ground by the construction of settlements, appropriation of water resources and expulsion of Arab occupants from their land.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to note that, if the Council were dealing with another country on its agenda and such flagrant violations occurred, there would be no hesitation to act. Yet on this matter we allow the violations to persist with impunity and thereby undermine the Council's credibility, which highlights its double standards. We support the call for all parties to work towards a just and durable peace. Only through a comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East that addresses the Syrian and Lebanese tracks as well would that just and durable peace prevail.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo and Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for their briefings.

Recently, the ceasefire between Israel and Syria has, by and large, held; however, there continue to be violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement in the area of operation of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). The Secretary-General has articulated his deep concern over the escalation of tensions. The parties concerned should implement the relevant resolutions and the Disengagement of Forces Agreement in earnest, exercise restraint and cease and desist from any action that might exacerbate tensions along the ceasefire line.

It is particularly important to safeguard the safety and security of UNDOF personnel and facilities so that they can implement their mandate with assured freedom of movement, safety and security. China commends the constructive role of UNDOF in maintaining the ceasefire between Syria and Israel, as well as in maintaining regional security and stability. We support UNDOF's full return to its mission area, conditions permitting, to continue the effective implementation of its mandate. We call upon all parties concerned to continue providing support and cooperating to that end.

The Golan Heights is recognized by the international community as occupied territory. The Security Council has adopted a raft of resolutions that urge Israel to withdraw from the Golan Heights. China is opposed to any unilateral action or attempts to alter that fact. China does not wish to see any further escalation of tensions in the region.

**Mr. Ipo** (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, for their detailed briefings on the activities of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF).

My delegation remains concerned about the escalation of tensions caused by numerous violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement, despite the ceasefire being upheld. The continuation of military activities, the ongoing presence of armed forces in the area of separation on the Bravo side, the shots fired over the ceasefire line, as well as the ongoing presence of unauthorized weapons and equipment in the area of limitation on the Alpha side are acts that undermine the fragile calm and undermine efforts to stabilize the region.

In that context, Côte d'Ivoire calls on all parties to uphold the spirit and letter of resolution 2450 (2018) and urges them therefore to cease their operations in the area of separation and withdraw all military equipment and armed personnel. We remain convinced that all the issues emanating from the underlying tensions in the region could be resolved through comprehensive negotiations, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Côte d'Ivoire also underscores the importance of stakeholders maintaining close collaboration with UNDOF in order to avoid an exacerbation of the

situation along the ceasefire line and to create the conditions for the return of the Force to the positions it abandoned in 2014, so as to better carry out its mandate. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the support of all parties for UNDOF's efforts to return gradually to the Bravo side, thereby enabling it to intensify its operations in the area of separation. Côte d'Ivoire encourages the various parties to enhance their collaboration to ensure that UNDOF has all the necessary means and resources to carry out its mandate. It urges them to uphold their commitments by working to lift the restrictions imposed on the Force's movement and promoting immediate and unhindered access for United Nations personnel to the area of separation.

We stress the need for UNDOF to carry out its mandate in a secure environment. Accordingly country remains concerned about the security threat posed by the presence of unexploded ordnance, explosive remnants of war and mines in its area of operation. We therefore urge the parties involved to closely cooperate with the United Nations mission in carrying out demining and clearance operations in the area concerned in complete safety and security.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to pay tribute to all UNDOF military and civilian personnel for their deep sense of responsibility, courage and dedication to their task, despite a difficult security environment. We also acknowledge the fundamental and crucial role played by UNDOF in promoting peace and stability in the Golan Heights. We call on the Council and the international community to support those efforts.

**Mr. Esono Mbengono** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to once again thank the Under-Secretaries-General, Mr. Lacroix and Ms. DiCarlo, for their detailed briefings.

With regard to the sovereignty of the Golan Heights, I believe many members of the Security Council have clearly expressed their positions, in line with the relevant resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly, which is that Israel does not have sovereignty over the territories that it has occupied since 1967. That position fully aligns with the Government of Equatorial Guinea's, which is long-standing and unwavering. It is furthermore in line with the position of the African Union.

We must be aware that changing the status of that territory would constitute a direct violation of

resolution 242 (1967). The international community recognizes that the Golan Heights is occupied territory, as recognized by the General Assembly and the Security Council in the various resolutions they have adopted, which stipulate that Israel must withdraw from that territory.

On the other hand, Equatorial Guinea deeply values the high-profile work being done by the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in its 44 years of existence. Its role and mandate in maintaining stability in the area of separation is most appreciated.

The regional context remains delicate and fragile due to the internal conflict in Syria, a part of which is taking place near the area of separation and the border between Israel and Syria, which sometimes leads to crossfire between the two sides, with UNDOF often being caught in-between the offensives.

We note that UNDOF's operational environment has undergone some changes in recent months owing to the fact that the Syrian Government has retaken control of areas that had previously been occupied by various armed groups. There is no doubt that this will have an impact on and implications for UNDOF's capacity to implement its mandate, including its full operationality on the Bravo side. To that end, the Council must urge parties to stress the need for UNDOF to continue using the Qunaytirah crossing, without impediment of any sort.

Along these lines, we would recall here that as military offensives in the area of operations undermine the full implementation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, the Security Council must continue resolutely to call on the parties involved to exercise greater moderation and show greater prudence in all their activities around the border so as to prevent any deterioration of the situation, which is already quite volatile.

In that context, it is important not only that the Syrian Government and the armed groups operating in the areas of separation refrain from any action that could have a cross-border impact, but also that the Israeli Government refrain from any violation of the Disengagement Agreement and do everything in its power not to further fuel tensions in the area. The goal here is to prevent a fresh escalation of tensions — voluntary or involuntary — in the area.

We should also recall here that in keeping with resolution 2450 (2018), there should be no non-UNDOF military forces in the area of separation. In that regard, I wish to underscore the need for the parties to withdraw all of their military equipment and armed personnel from the area of separation in order to avert the possibility of an increase in hostilities.

Finally, we recognize that UNDOF operations have been limited in recent years by the Syrian conflict and cannot function regularly or normally on the Bravo side. This underscores once again the importance of reaching a lasting political solution in Syria and thus relaunch peace negotiations between Israel and Syria.

**Mr. Syihab** (Indonesia): Let me begin by thanking Under-Secretaries-General DiCarlo and Lacroix for their briefings.

Allow me to make three important points.

First, we take note of the Secretary-General's latest report on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) (S/2019/248) and share his grave concern at the escalation of tensions between the parties to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. In that regard, we urge all parties to abide by the terms of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement and maintain the ceasefire. The ongoing tensions in the area of separation could potentially pose a threat to civilians and United Nations personnel on the ground. Full cooperation with UNDOF is critical to preventing any escalation.

Secondly, we would like to underline the importance of the safety and security of UNDOF peacekeepers as well as that of other United Nations personnel on the ground. We support the mission's priority regarding the return of UNDOF to full operationality on the Bravo side. We deem it important to allocate immediately the resources necessary to support the mission's full operationality on the Bravo side.

Thirdly, I wish to reiterate Indonesia's position in strongly rejecting the recognition by the United States of the Golan Heights as part of Israel, as clearly stated by the Indonesian Vice-Minister yesterday. This action could be provocative and disrupt the ongoing efforts to create peace and stability in the region, and also undermine the long-standing ceasefire between both parties. Unilateral recognition by the United States would not only complicate the already complex situation

in the region, but also jeopardize the credibility of the Council as well as multilateralism.

Indonesia recognizes the Golan Heights, occupied by Israel in 1967, as an inalienable part of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. This position is in accordance with the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity as enshrined in the United Nations Charter as well as the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981), which underline that the acquisition of territory by force is prohibited under the United Nations Charter and international law. They also call for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from the territory of the Golan Heights and state that 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.

We urge all parties to maintain their commitment to respecting international law and the United Nations Charter and to work together to create an environment that is conducive to the ongoing peace process in the region.

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

I, too, wish to thank Rosemary DiCarlo and Jean-Pierre Lacroix for their enlightening briefings. I thank in particular Mr. Lacroix for the information he provided on his mission to the region.

At the outset, I wish to reiterate France's full support for the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), which is carrying out a difficult mission in a deteriorating and volatile security context and in a country, Syria, that has been devastated by a war whose atrocities France has consistently denounced.

I shall focus on three main points.

First, France's position on the American decision to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan is clear. All of the 28 States members of the European Union (EU) clearly stated today that their joint position is unchanged. The EU, in line with international law and resolutions 242 (1967) and 497 (1981), does not recognize Israeli sovereignty over the occupied territory of the Golan. That statement reflects the one we made along with our European partners in the Council yesterday.

France does not recognize the Israeli annexation of 1981, which was recognized as null and void by several Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 497 (1981), adopted unanimously. Under resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Golan is and remains an occupied territory. The recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan runs contrary to international law, in particular the obligation of States not to recognize an illegal situation.

Any attempt to move away from international law and the Council's resolutions and to replace them with unilateral decisions is doomed to failure. Not only will this approach not lead to peace in the region, in Syria or between Israel or Palestine, but it will also significantly weaken the order based on international law, which all of us here support.

As we indicated yesterday regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: any unilateral initiative that contravenes international law and the resolutions of the Council is doomed to failure. The Council must ensure respect for these fundamental principles, which underpin international peace and security. To that end, I regret that the American decision undermines our collective action.

Secondly, in a tense context, at a time when the threat of regional escalation is high, the role of UNDOF is crucial. The deteriorating security situation makes its role in ensuring respect for the ceasefire both more difficult and more necessary than ever for regional stability. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/248) notes that there have been several worrisome developments in that respect. First, there has been firing from both sides of the ceasefire line since the Syrian regime retook control of the southern part of the country last summer. The exchanges of fire, rockets and missiles of 29 November, 20 January and 11 February are of particular concern in this respect.

Military activities are continuing, in violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, in the areas of separation and limitation. This continues to pose the threat of an escalation between Israel and Syria, in particular through the increased, unauthorized presence of the Syrian armed forces in the area of separation. The report notes also that there were several crossings of the ceasefire line, also in violation of the Disengagement Agreement.

In addition, reports of the presence and activity of pro-Iranian armed groups, including Hizbullah, in

the area of separation and beyond are of concern. They raise fears of increased instability in the area. The situation in the Golan must be prevented from fuelling further conflicts. In that particularly difficult context, I commend UNDOF's efforts to gradually redeploy to the east of the ceasefire line. We therefore reiterate our support for the Secretary-General's request to provide UNDOF with the appropriate technological means to carry out its mission. It is also important that UNDOF be appropriately staffed. The parties, who have consistently reaffirmed their commitment to UNDOF, must allow the deployment of the equipment necessary for ensuring the security of the Force and the personnel needed to carry out its mandate. I reiterate the commitment of France to ensuring the Force's freedom of movement and the safety of its personnel. Movement restrictions imposed on UNDOF on both sides of the area of separation prevent it from fulfilling its mandate. The security situation poses a direct threat to its personnel, which is why the plan to redeploy UNDOF to the east of the ceasefire line must consider that risk of increased exposure.

Thirdly, it is the responsibility of the Council, first of all, to avoid that recent developments lead to uncertainty about the future of UNDOF. Council members must therefore unambiguously reiterate their commitment to its mandate. We call on the parties to respect all their commitments under the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces of 1974 and — I repeat — to allow the deployment of the required equipment and personnel. It would be useful for countries exercising influence over the parties to call on them to do so. In addition, the role of the Force in maintaining the ceasefire and preventing an escalation of tensions must be upheld and strengthened. That is the goal of the Force Commander's liaison efforts between the two parties. In that regard, in consideration of the latest developments in the situation in the Golan, we could collectively consider ways to strengthen the role that UNDOF plays in deconfliction as a liaison between the two parties.

In conclusion, I reaffirm that France's commitment to fostering the return of lasting peace in Syria and the region, based on international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions, will not waver,

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting following the urgent request of the Government of my country to consider the consequences of the unilateral decision taken by the President of the United States concerning the occupied Syrian Arab Golan. Before I read out my statement, I would like to make several comments.

First, I will send a detailed letter tomorrow to the delegations of the members of Security Council reflecting my Government's position on the reality of the situation concerning the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the occupied Syrian Golan. We revisit that position every six months. Members will therefore receive detailed information on the renewal of the mandate of UNDOF in the Golan. I am raising this issue as today's topic does not concern UNDOF, but rather the consequences of a thoughtless step taken by the United States Administration against an occupied territory, based on what we have heard from the majority of Council members.

Secondly, I would like to make a correction concerning a term that some, but not all, of my colleagues used. The "occupied Syrian Golan" is the official term that we find in the records of the United Nations and the relevant Security Council resolutions, not the "Golan Heights". The latter is an Israeli term created by Israel after 1967 and dates back to medieval times, when armies occupied hills, mountains and strategic sites. At the time, the Israelis meant that the Golan was a strategic plateau, or strategic heights, that needed to be controlled so that Israel could conduct manoeuvres at the Syrian front. Therefore, the Golan is not Heights. It has rivers, valleys, mountains, plains and cities.

Thirdly, since the very moment we started our meeting — at around 5 p.m. — Israel has been conducting aerial aggression on the Sheikh Najjar area in Aleppo city, 500 kilometres away from the Golan. Material damage has been incurred, and the Syrian air defence forces were able to intercept some of the missiles that were launched by the Israeli planes.

Those were the three comments with which I wanted to begin my statement.

I should now like to read out part of a message that I received a little while ago this afternoon, addressed to the members and the presidency of the Security Council written by a little Syrian girl from the Golan. This is her photograph. I will show it to my United States colleague in case he cannot clearly see it. Herewith is the message of the little Syrian girl from the Golan, whose photo I just showed the Council:

"My name is Dimashq Imad Al-Marai. I am 10 years old. I am from the town of Majdal Shams in the occupied Syrian Golan. I was born under the Israeli occupation. I say to the world that, as children of the occupied Syrian Golan, our future will not be determined by Trump or the occupying Israeli entity, but by our history and our present as well as our innocent dreams to live in the occupied Syrian Golan — the land of our fathers and our grandfathers. We will always dream of freedom and of returning to our dear fatherland, Syria".

My country, the Syrian Arab Republic, condemns the illegal announcement by the President of the United States of America, on 25 March, concerning the legal status of the occupied Syrian Arab Golan. My country's Government considers the piece of paper signed by President Trump and offered as a gift to the Prime Minister of the Israeli occupying Power as a mere unilateral measure by a party that enjoys neither the political, legal or moral authority to decide the destinies of the peoples of the world or dispose of territories that constitute an integral part of my country, the Syrian Arab Republic. Such United States practices are dangerous because they represent the current American Administration's reckless and unprecedented tendency to undermine international law, humiliate the United Nations and ignore all terms of reference, legal heritage and the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as the unavoidable need to end the Israeli occupation of Arab lands and Israel's return to the 4 June 1967 borders.

In resolution 497 (1981), to which all members referred in their statements, the Security Council recognized that the Golan is an occupied Syrian territory and that any measures taken by the Israeli occupying Power concerning that occupied territory are null and void and have no legal validity.

Everyone on the Council, including the representative of the United States, acknowledges that the peace process in the Middle East was launched at

the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991 on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981), all of which stipulate the illegality of seizing land by force and do not recognize Israel's authority or sovereignty, as an occupying Power, over any of the lands occupied since 5 June 1967. Those resolutions also mention the need to put an end to the Israeli occupation of those lands as a sine qua non condition for establishing a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

That is a legal issue that no United States Administration in the past has denied, I repeat, that no American Administration in the past has denied until the current Administration. As I just said, a piece of paper signed by the United States President and offered with a pen to Benjamin Netanyahu before the eyes of the world is merely a unilateral conduct that has no legal or political validity. However, that unilateral conduct clearly demonstrates that the United States Administration does not respect the United Nations and that it withdrew its recognition of the international resolutions. Today the Administration underscored its rejection and opposition to all efforts to achieve just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and the world. That means that the United States Administration has ended its role as a mediator for any peace process in the Middle East and is making that known, thereby increasing escalation and confrontation in the region and the world.

That official proclamation by the United States puts the United Nations and the international community at a crucial crossroads. It is either an affront to the entire world or a real historic challenge to the United Nations and the Security Council, since the Council has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, defending international legitimacy and the Charter of the United Nations, as well as for defending the terms of reference and international legal legacy accumulated over decades based on the refusal to recognize the Israeli occupation of the Golan and the condemnation of that occupation, as well as calling to put an end to it once and for all.

My country highly appreciates the international and United Nations positions following the unjust proclamation of the United States Administration. My country would also like to thank all the countries that supported the holding of this important meeting. We see in the positions taken and the statements made by the majority of Governments in the world, as well as most members of the Council, a serious and significant step

in the right direction, showing that world public opinion is isolating the United States and Israel, that they are operating outside international law and that they are a direct threat to international peace and security.

Let me be clear and direct. Through the illegal proclamation made by its President, the United States is violating its obligations under the Charter, the principles of international law and Security Council resolutions given that the United States is a permanent member of the Council. Since the United States delegation likes to always talk in its statements about accountability for violations of international law, the crucial question that we ask today is the following: who is going to ask for the United States to be held accountable for violating resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981)? Is not the United Nations supposed to deal with such flagrant violation of its resolutions and terms of reference by reassuming its role and legal mandate, which were taken away by the United States, with a view to implementing resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981)?

In the eyes of the people of the Syrian Arab Republic, the United States is a country that is now an enemy. It is an outlaw country that occupies part of our land following its direct involvement in the killing of thousands of Syrians and the destruction of our economy, our natural resources, our bridges and silos, as well as our infrastructure. It did so by supporting terrorism or imposing an economic embargo or through direct military aggression against our country. The United States has led the so-called international coalition to combat Da'esh. The Syrian people see the piece of paper signed by President Trump as a threat to international peace and security. That was a failed attempt to manipulate history and geography, as the deceased former President Charles de Gaulle used to say. The United States President and the extremist of the new conservatives believed mistakenly that the terrorist war against Syria would be enough to break the will of the people of our country or that eight years of fighting against extremism and terrorism would change the priorities of Syria and those of its Government, its people and its army.

The questions I pose to the very conscience of humankind, States Members of the United Nations and those that look to 2030 for achieving sustainable development that leaves nobody behind is the following: have they closely considered the real consequences of the acknowledgement of the occupation by the United States, a permanent member of the Council and a host

country to the United Nations, which was established by signing the Charter in San Francisco? Have they considered the real reasons behind the violations by President Trump's Administration of international treaties and conventions that aim to uphold international stability? Who was behind its withdrawal from international councils and bodies, such as the Human Rights Council and UNESCO? Who was behind ending funds to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East? All these questions are posed to the members of the Council.

The United States Administration is trying to protect the Israeli occupying Power by diverting attention away from the real threats to international peace and security due to the Israeli occupation and by fabricating conflicts based on unfounded, dangerous religious and sectarian lies and falsehoods. That could further undermine the stability of the region, or cause wars and chaos, which would lead to a complete lack of control in the region?

Today we are describing indisputable facts. Members know that the one that fabricates and fuels wars and conflicts in the world is a party that does not respect international law and to which we cannot trust responsibility for international peace and security. If the Security Council had dealt with the invasion and destruction of Iraq in 2003 from the very beginning, we would not be in the current unprecedented situation of contempt for international law and for United Nations resolutions relating to international peace and security. Ultimately, the inaction of the United Nations in response to that dangerous United States position will leave the countries and people under occupation with only one choice, that is, the principle of "what was taken by force can only be restored by force".

The message of the Syrian Arab Republic, its people and its leadership to the American and Israeli sides is that the Syrian Arab Golan is ours. It will return to us. Do not be misguided by thinking that someday our land will be part of a hypocritical deal or a pawn in an electoral game, in which those two sides support each other so that the extremists in Israel can succeed in the elections and the American Administration can gain the support of the Israeli lobbying groups in the United States. The United States Administration may want to show some generosity towards the Israelis. If they wish to do so, we would invite them to not put their hands on what does not belong to them. The United States is endowed with lands that extend far and

wide. It can give a couple of states — North and South Carolina, for example — to the Israelis if it needs to win their satisfaction. Why not? South Carolina is a great piece of land. In fact, it is the state of Senator Graham Lindsey, who encouraged President Trump to issue his proclamation.

In conclusion, my country's delegation rejects all attempts by the representative of Germany — and I say Germany instead of the German regime, because it would be shameful to use the term regime under the dome of the international legitimacy — to steer this meeting away from its objective. I will not respond to his non-diplomatic way of addressing the subject of my country, especially in light of the fact that Germany is a non-permanent member of the Council. My country is a founding Member of the United Nations, meaning that we were victorious against the Nazis. The United Nations arose from the ashes of the Second World War, which caused the death of 80 million people, due to a wrong political reading by his country at the time. That is similar to my German colleague's incorrect political reading of what is going on in my country today and the purpose of this meeting.

I will not extend my remarks, but simply wish to say that my German colleague has brought shame on his own country. This is my advice to him. I have spent scores of years in the Organization and it is shameful that we cannot communicate with each other based on the established legal rules and proper way of communication under the dome of international legitimacy.

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

**Mr. Danon** (Israel): I thank Ms. DiCarlo and Mr. Lacroix for their briefings.

Two days ago, the United States recognized what has been true for the past 52 years — the Golan Heights is and will always be Israel's sovereign territory. We thank the United States for its just and historic proclamation. This step, like the many others it has taken before, shows the willingness of the United States to honour reality on the ground. It reflects once again the sincere commitment of the United States to ensuring Israel's security and right to self-defence. We implore Member States to join the United States in recognizing that the Golan Heights is Israel's sovereign land.

From the moment Israel was founded, the Syrian regime has maintained a policy of aggression with the

goal of wiping Israel off the map. The Syrian army joined four other Arab armies in attacking our newly born Jewish State in 1948. For the next two decades, the Syrian army rained deadly fire from the Golan Heights into Israeli civilian areas and filled the territory with bunkers, barbed-wire fences and minefields.

In 1967, Israel, as nations around the world recognized, was forced to engage in a war of self-defence. Israel must ensure that this territory will never again be used to target our people. Since 1967, the Golan Heights has proven critical to our very survival. Just six years later, in a most vile act of war, Syria launched a surprise attack against Israel on Yom Kippur, the holiest day for the Jewish people. In that decisive moment in Israeli history, it was the Golan Heights that proved invaluable to Israel's fate. With the high ground under our control, Israel was able to observe Syria's initial act of war and successfully launch a counter-attack. The State of Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights is vital, both for preventing future Syrian acts of aggression against Israel and for ensuring the safety, security and stability of our region.

Addressing the Council today is the representative of a regime responsible for one of the most horrific humanitarian crises of the present day — a representative who is complicit in the murder of hundreds of thousands of his own people. The Syrian Ambassador comes here to talk about the Golan Heights. Shame on him. Where was he when his Government was gassing children? Shame on him for dropping barrel bombs on his people. Shame on him for inviting the Iranians into his country.

I ask the Council today — to whom exactly does the United Nations want to give the Golan? To the thousands of fighters directed by Iran? To the Shia foreign militias? To the jihadi factions? To whom? Their fighting has repeatedly spilled over into Israel's sovereign territory, and sniper fire and mortar shells have frequently fallen into Israel. As Israel opened its doors to treated injured Syrians in the Golan Heights, President Al-Assad made clear that Hizbullah, operating in Syria, should use the Golan Heights to attack Israel.

At Iran's command, Hizbullah has seized the opportunity to establish a Syrian terror front from which to attack Israel. Hizbullah's Syrian terror network ranges from the town of Hadar, at the northern end of the Golan Heights, to the towns of Arnah, Khan Arnabah and Quneitra. The terror network is

currently focused on intelligence gathering. We have that information. We are watching.

But those efforts are just the backdrop for a larger and more dangerous Hizbullah terror operation to attack Israel. Hizbullah's Syrian terror network is exploiting the civilian population living near the Israeli border and using Syrian observation points in the area as outposts for that terror operation. The Syrian Government has given the Iranian regime freedom of movement and operation in its own sovereign land. It has recklessly given up its territory for the Iranian regime to establish military entrenchment and expand its control from Tehran all the way to the Mediterranean.

In February 2018, an Iranian unmanned aircraft armed with explosives was launched into Israel from Syria with the intention of attacking Israelis. In January this year, the Iranian regime committed a grave act of aggression against Israel by firing a medium-range surface-to-surface missile into northern Israel from Syria. The situation today, here in the Chamber, is that the Syrian regime is not even representing its own people anymore. It is serving its puppet master in Tehran.

No nation in the world would give up strategic land to its most dangerous enemy. Without the Golan Heights, Israel would find Quds Force soldiers on the tip of the Sea of Galilee. We will never let that happen.

For years, the Al-Assad regime has slaughtered its people. It has allowed Iran to entrench itself inside Syria. Does the international community honestly think Israel would give the Golan Heights to a war criminal? The war crimes of the dictator from Damascus will someday be stopped.

Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights is forever. The Jewish people's roots in the Golan Heights go back thousands of years. The Golan is mentioned in the Tanakh — the Bible — multiple times. It is home today to tens of thousands of Israelis. As Prime Minister Menachem Begin said in 1981:

“There can be, in our country or beyond its borders, no serious person who has studied the history of the land of Israel who would attempt to deny that for many generations the Golan Heights were an integral part of the land of Israel.”

International recognition of the Israeli Golan Heights ensures the security and stability of our region. Those States that pay lip service to Israel's inherent

right to self-defence now have the opportunity prove the weight of their words.

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

**Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom): I want to respond to the unwarranted and intemperate comments of the Syrian Permanent Representative against Germany and the German Ambassador. I want to stress that Germany is our partner and our ally in Europe, the European Union and NATO, at the United Nations and throughout the world. Germany makes a major contribution to the work of the United Nations. It is the second-largest contributor to the United Nations and it upholds the values of the Charter of the United Nations.

We all know that the United Nations was founded out of the ashes of the Second World War and we all know what events led up to that war and its outcome. It is true that Syria was a founding Member of the United Nations, and that is a matter for all countries to be proud of. But as many millions of ordinary citizens in Syria know to their cost, Syrian authorities do not uphold the values of the Charter of the United Nations, they do not uphold the Chemical Weapons Convention, and they have tortured and starved their own people. If there is any threat to the values of the Charter of the United Nations, it comes from Syria and not from any member of the Security Council today.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I give him the floor.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*) I would like to clarify first that I spoke about Nazi Germany during the Second World War. I did not talk about Germany today. I spoke about Nazi Germany during the Second World War. I addressed my colleague, the representative of Germany, and spoke about his comments. I did not speak about Germany. I spoke about the comments of my colleague, the representative of Germany. That is what I would like to clarify to Her Excellency the representative of Britain.

With regard to the statement of the representative of Israel, first, the majority of representatives in this Chamber, with the exception of the United States representative, did not absolutely acknowledge the United States action, which proves that this action violates resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and

497 (1981). That is an important lesson which the representative of Israel must understand. He should grasp the lessons learned and the wisdom of what happened today. Fourteen out of fifteen members told him and all those who protect him that this thoughtless behaviour is wrong. Annexing land by force is wrong and illegal and violates the Charter of the United Nations and Security Council resolutions. We are not reinventing the wheel in that regard. The Israelis would like to reinvent the wheel. That is my first point.

Secondly, there has never been and will never be a Member of the United Nations that makes the Organization work as hard as Israel makes it work because of the occupation. It would take a mathematician or a computer specialist to calculate how many millions of hours have been spent by this international Organization and by tens of thousands of diplomats from all over the world working on the Israeli occupation of Arab territories since 1948? How many millions of hours of work and how many billions of dollars have been spent on that issue? Israeli politicians, prime ministers, ministers, ambassadors and military officers continue to deny the great truth that there is an Israeli occupation of Arab territories and that occupation should not be there. It is very simple. That is the law. There should be no occupation.

Thirdly, every time Israelis are cornered, Americans come to save them, and when Americans find themselves cornered, just like the Israelis, a Hollywood spectacle begins. Israelis are well known for that. Council members have heard and seen the cheap show that the Israeli Ambassador performed. He strangely used the word "shame", as if he, his country, his authorities and his politicians know what shame even means. The majority of the United Nations Member States have been saying "Shame on you, Israel", since 1948. Out of 193 Members, at least 150 have said,

(*spoke in English*)

"Shame on you, Israel" and "Shame on you, Israeli Ambassador", at least 100 times at each session of the General Assembly. They do not get it.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

Fourthly, Syria has been participating in a peace process. Today, the Israeli Ambassador is saying that the annexation and occupation of the Golan are a security necessity for Israel, as if he does not know the history of the political talks between Syria and Israel.

His former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin sent us a written letter in which he acknowledged that the Golan is a Syrian territory across the borders of 4 June 1967. Warren Christopher, the former United States Secretary of State, acknowledged it, because he received the letter and transferred it to us. Of course, a Jewish Israeli extremist assassinated former Prime Minister Rabin in Tel Aviv. Israel is governed by extremists. Israel does not seek peace. If Israel genuinely sought peace, we would have achieved peace back in the days of former Secretary of State Warren Christopher and former President Bill Clinton. Back then, the time was right for peace.

Sixthly, it is not in Israel's interest to avoid peace, because in the absence of law the only alternative is reclaiming the Golan by force. I say that here and now in the Council and to the Representative of Israel in order to convey the message to his Government. There must be law in the world or everyone will adhere to the law of the jungle. The Golan is a Syrian territory, whether Israel likes it or not and whether or not it is protected by the United States. The United States can protect it for 5, 10 or 15 years, but what then? Things will change. Not acknowledging our right will lead to war. If Israelis want to live in peace they must do so within recognized borders based on justice, the land for peace principle and the return of occupied territories to the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese people. Not acknowledging our right will lead to war. That is not in the best interest of Israel.

There are those today who try to weaken and hurt Syria but that phase will end — be it tomorrow or the day after, it will end. Only then will Israel see how we will liberate and recover the Golan if it does not heed the international law. Israel's American partner issued a licence to Genie Energy, a company owned by Dick Cheney, the former Vice-President of the United States, to start oil exploration in the Golan. A United States company is exploring for oil in the Golan. There is also another project under way using giant fans for solar energy. Israel has seized tens of thousands of acres from Syrian farmers in the Golan to launch its solar power project.

Despite all of those violations, we hear that Germany has provided Israel with Dolphin-class submarines capable of carrying nuclear weapons. Why? Does Israel need submarines to carry nuclear weapons? Who is threatening Israel with nuclear weapons? Who has nuclear weapons to threaten Israel? Israel is the only State that is not a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It refuses to subject its nuclear facilities to the IAEA. All Council members know that. Israel is being supplied with submarines, F-35 and F-16 aircraft and advanced maritime weapons. Who is threatening Israel? It is Israel that threatens its neighbours. Israel poses a threat to international peace and security.

I apologize for taking up so much time.

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

**Mr. Danon** (Israel): I never thought that I would agree with the Syrian Ambassador. I agree with him only on one issue today. The United Nations is obsessed with Israel, considering the number of resolutions, debates and statements on the issue. I regret that because I really believe that if the United Nations had focused on what happened in Syria in the past few years, perhaps we would have been able to prevent the massacres, the use of chemical weapons, the rapes and what Syria did to its own people.

Today, we feel for the Syrian people, whom the Ambassador represents. We feel for them because they have to deal with such a regime. I would like to say directly to the Syrian people that the day will come when they will have a real representative, who will represent their needs and make their voices heard. There will be someone else in Damascus and someone else sitting in the Chamber, who will be recognized by the international community. We are thinking about and praying for them.

*The meeting rose at 7.35 p.m.*