



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

Provisional

8600th meeting
Tuesday, 20 August 2019, 3.10 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Czaputowicz/Ms. Wroniecka (Poland)

Members:

Belgium	Mrs. Van Vlierberge
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Adom
Dominican Republic	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
France	Mrs. Gueguen
Germany	Mr. Michaelis
Indonesia	Mr. Djani
Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
South Africa	Mr. Matjila
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. Pierce
United States of America	Mr. Pompeo

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

Challenges to peace and security in the Middle East

Letter dated 6 August 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2019/643)

* Reissued for technical reasons on 19 September 2019.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

19-25823 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

Challenges to peace and security in the Middle East

Letter dated 6 August 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2019/643)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Bahrain, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates to participate in this meeting.

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite the following to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Silvio Gonzato, Chargé d'Affaires, ad interim, of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations; and Mrs. Nasria Elarja Flitti, Deputy Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations.

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/2019/643, which contains the text of a letter dated 6 August 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to Ms. Viotti.

Ms. Viotti: I thank the Polish presidency for convening this timely discussion.

The situation in the Middle East remains troubling and complex, characterized by protracted conflicts, geopolitical tensions that play out at the regional level, governance issues and severe deficits in socioeconomic development in a number of countries. Yet, as the Secretary-General noted to the Security Council last year,

“The mechanisms and the safeguards to manage the risks of escalation that existed in the past no longer seem to be present.” (S/PV.8231, p. 2)

Our shared aspiration must be to find ways for a region so rich in human capital and natural resources to fully realize its potential for the benefit of all. We must never lose sight of this aspiration.

In recent weeks alone, we have seen some of the challenges on full display. The series of incidents in the Strait of Hormuz and adjacent waterways have raised tensions to dangerous levels. It is crucial that the rights and duties related to navigation be respected in accordance with international law. Restraint and genuine dialogue are urgently needed in order to avoid the risk that a minor miscalculation might inadvertently lead to a major confrontation, with disastrous consequences even well beyond the region. Deep disagreements about Iran's nuclear programme are further exacerbating differences in the Gulf. Notwithstanding the concerns about it, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action remains the only agreed international framework to address Iran's nuclear programme.

In Syria, Special Envoy Geir Pedersen is sparing no effort to finalize the arrangements for the launch of the constitutional committee as a door-opener to a broader United Nations-facilitated political process in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and to implement confidence-building measures, including on detainees. However, the United Nations is concerned that the ongoing hostilities in north-west Syria might risk undermining the Special Envoy's efforts to revive the political process.

In Yemen, the United Nations continues to provide desperately needed, life-saving humanitarian assistance, while Special Envoy Martin Griffiths remains engaged in efforts to implement the Al-Hudaydah Agreement. We hope that will lead to broader and fully inclusive discussions on ending the conflict.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains the most long-standing issue on the United Nations peace and security agenda. A just solution acceptable to both sides is essential for the future of the whole region. The United Nations remains ready to support efforts towards allowing Palestinians and Israelis to live in two democratic States, side by side in peace and within secure and recognized borders, based on relevant United Nations resolutions.

As in other regions, realizing the promise of full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and international humanitarian law requires commitment and bold action, especially with a view to ending conflict, addressing the root causes of violence and sustaining peace. In the same vein, tackling the threat of terrorism and violent extremism must simultaneously address security concerns and uphold international human rights obligations. Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is intrinsically linked to conflict resolution and prevention. Inclusive growth, environmental sustainability, gender equality and opportunities for young people are all key aspects of durable solutions.

There have been some notable gains in gender equality in recent years, including substantial increases in literacy and education and access to health services. Yet equal opportunities remain limited, and gender-based violence is still widespread. Greater participation by women in governance and economic activities would not only improve family income and national economies, but also reduce vulnerabilities to socioeconomic shocks and liberate enormous potential.

While equality before the law is gradually gaining ground, there is still a long way to go in a number of situations in amending discriminatory laws and ensuring more representative participation in parliaments and leadership in political and public life more generally. We know how crucial it is in conflict-affected countries that women be able to play a meaningful role in peace processes; indeed, women's equal participation is directly correlated with more sustainable peace. Yet women continue to be marginalized. Moreover, with a push-back on women's and girls' rights at the core of terrorist and extremist agendas, it is all the more important that efforts to strengthen gender equality be central to our work in prevention, resilience and peace.

The power of youth is equally critical, as recognized by the Security Council in its landmark resolution on

youth, peace and security (resolution 2250 (2015)). Children and young people make up nearly half the region's population. Job creation is an imperative, as is investing in education, training and skills that match the needs of today's societies and markets.

The list of challenges is long, but that should not deter us. The first order of business must be preventing the most acute flashpoints in the region from boiling over. Keeping the channels of communication open needs to be priority number one, followed by confidence-building measures to move parties away from confrontation towards dialogue.

The United Nations is addressing the numerous challenges on multiple fronts: from supporting preventive diplomacy to mediating ongoing conflicts; from providing humanitarian assistance to millions of people to addressing the human rights dimension; and from supporting sustainable development initiatives to nurturing capacities to tackle climate change, including through the region's ample alternative sources of energy. The Special Envoys and Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in the region are working extensively with a wide range of regional and subregional organizations and national and regional stakeholders, including civil society and women's and youth groups, in close cooperation with the United Nations country teams. The role of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security remains indispensable.

The Middle East region has many fault lines and divisions. Yet within those challenges lies the opportunity to build on the words and intentions of the United Nations Charter towards action that will bring real change and a bright future to the peoples of the region. The United Nations remains strongly committed to that endeavour.

The President: I thank Ms. Viotti for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

First, let me very warmly thank Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti for her insightful and comprehensive briefing on the recent developments in the Middle East and their impact on international peace and security.

Let me also say that Poland fully subscribes to the statement to be delivered today by the Chargé d'affaires ad interim of the Delegation of the European Union (EU).

Middle Eastern issues have been very frequently discussed in the Security Council Chamber. Unfortunately, solutions worked out so far have not provided peace and stability. In recent years the region has been ravaged by a wave of violent conflicts in a number of its once-peaceful countries.

What we need is a positive approach in order to restore peace and economic growth in the Middle East. Uneven distribution of wealth generates inequality, disrupts social cohesion and distorts economies. Therefore, promoting entrepreneurship, especially among young people, strengthening good governance, combating corruption and ensuring access to education are key to addressing social issues and releasing the economic potential of the region.

Today's meeting comes at a critical time. Current uncertainties about the dynamics in the Middle East are again keeping the whole region in the political spotlight. The war in Syria has not ended, and any subsequent escalation might bring about shattering consequences for the Syrian people. We are witnessing in Yemen the world's largest humanitarian crisis, with 13 million people facing starvation. A political solution acceptable to both sides in the peace process between Israel and Palestine remains elusive. Growing tensions in the Persian Gulf may lead, through a minor accident or miscalculation, to a military confrontation.

These tensions have a variety of root causes — demographic pressure, weak economies and governance, violent extremism, radicalization and illegal mass migration. People in Syria, Yemen and Palestine face daily struggles with deprivation, food shortages, low-quality medical care and lack of education. It is our common responsibility and moral obligation to find a way to end the suffering of civilians and bring peace and stability back to the region. The Security Council should actively support those willing to act in accordance with international law to counter aggressive policies and activities in the region.

Security in the Middle East is integrally linked to the structure of the global order. Conflicts and tensions in the region trigger worldwide political, economic and social consequences, such as refugees and increased migration, which are among the most urgent global issues.

International terrorism represents another challenge. In Iraq and Syria, the defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant is an important step. But we

are still far from eliminating the scourge of terrorism in the region and the threat that it poses around the world. In our view, the aim is to set up financial rules and regulations in such a way as to prevent terrorists from using existing gaps to conduct their activities. The return of foreign fighters also poses a threat to their homelands.

Another challenge is the proliferation of missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction, particularly to non-State actors. The tragic consequences of the loopholes in the control regime have been repeatedly observed, *inter alia*, in the case of Houthi attacks in Yemen. It should be reiterated that resolution 1540 (2004) states that all countries should introduce domestic controls on technologies related to weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

We are also concerned, as a European Union member that is a party to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), about Iran's announcement that it will not commit to fully abide by the provisions of the agreement. Iran should refrain from actions that could further undermine the implementation of both the JCPOA and resolution 2231 (2015).

The freedom and security of maritime navigation in the region is an ongoing concern. Recent attacks and seizures of ships in the Gulf pose a direct threat to the security of maritime navigation. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea must be fully observed.

With its ample resources and strategic location, the Middle East plays a key role in securing global energy supplies. There is a need to strengthen the security of critical energy infrastructure in order to minimize fluctuations in crude oil prices and further ensure the security of supplies.

Ensuring security in cyberspace is another key challenge is. Responsible behaviour in cyberspace by nations in the Middle East can reinforce regional cyberstability.

It is often reiterated at the United Nations that there is a strong link between human rights and peace and security. The observance of fundamental human rights in the Middle East, such as free and fair elections, the freedom of speech and the rule of law, is of particular importance. It applies also to the rights of women, who are predestined to fight hatred and to build stability and social peace.

Poland organized a Security Council briefing last week (see S/PV.8596) on international humanitarian law on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. It is our common responsibility to observe international law and protect the most vulnerable groups in armed conflicts, including children, women, people with disabilities and members of religious minorities.

In two days' time, on 22 August here in New York, we will celebrate the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief — established by the General Assembly on the initiative of Poland. Advancing the security and safety of religious minorities in the Middle East is our common obligation. The rich culture of the Middle East region also requires protection. We should safeguard tangible and intangible heritage alike, which helps develop interreligious and intercultural dialogue as a vital platform for reconciliation.

We need a bold initiative to address the challenges to peace and security in the region. Poland, in line with the EU position, underscores that solutions to the Middle East's problems require multilateral approaches. Building on that assumption, in February Poland and the United States jointly organized the Warsaw Ministerial to Promote a Future of Peace and Security in the Middle East, which launched the Warsaw process. It will consist of working groups dealing with the main horizontal topics that I have just presented. The groups will cover counter-terrorism and illicit financing, missile proliferation, maritime and aviation security, cybersecurity, energy security, as well as humanitarian and human rights issues.

The working groups are scheduled to convene in October and November, and the results of their discussions will be presented at the high-level conference in the first months of 2020. We will be encouraging countries from around the globe to join these efforts. We trust that the Warsaw process will contribute to the resolution of the multifaceted problems of the Middle East and bring more stability and confidence to the region and beyond.

We need to create the conditions for stability and well-being in the region. Only then will the Middle East be able to unlock its enormous potential as a valuable contributor to global peace and security.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I call on His Excellency Mr. Michael Pompeo, Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Mr. Pompeo (United States of America): I thank Ms. Ribeiro Viotti for her briefing. I also thank our Polish friends for using their Security Council presidency to confront the complex challenges in the Middle East.

As I argued in January in Cairo, the Trump Administration is reviving America's leadership role in the region by building and supporting coalitions to tackle regional challenges. These are not talkfests; we care about outcomes, not gestures. We should consider what has been accomplished in just seven months. We helped dismantle the physical caliphate of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), and we continue to work with 79 partners in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS to help the region recover from that menace. We are working closely with United Nations Special Envoy Martin Griffiths to help bring peace to Yemen.

We are facilitating new links between Israel and its Arab neighbours through the Warsaw Ministerial and follow-up meetings, which the President just discussed. We organized the Bahrain workshop in June to bring together Government, the private sector and civilian leaders to help improve the lives of the Palestinians. We hosted the second-ever ministerial to advance religious freedom last month; protecting religious minorities in the Middle East was the centrepiece of that event.

Most recently, the United States launched our effort to protect international shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. We have welcomed the United Kingdom and Bahrain as partners and look forward to other nations joining that mission to protect the freedom of the seas.

Those are precisely the kinds of multilateral efforts that the United States supports. They are meaningful and effective, and they reflect the values of freedom-loving societies, which the Council should be working to uphold.

But now is our opportunity to do more. Just look at the challenges facing the region. Conflict in Libya still rages. More than 5.5 million Syrian refugees and nearly 6 million internally displaced Syrians have yet to return to their homes because of continuing violence. The Gulf Cooperation Council rift has not fully healed. Many countries fail to honour their people's basic human rights, and radical Islamist terrorists and their

financial benefactors are looking for new weaknesses to exploit.

Of course, the Islamic Republic of Iran and its proxies continue to foment terror and unrest in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen, with devastating humanitarian consequences. Since the United States declared our intention to bring all Iranian oil purchases to zero in April, the Ayatollah has gone all in on a campaign of extortion diplomacy. Here is just a short list of what the regime has done since July.

On 1 July, Iran surpassed its 300-kilogramme limit on its low-enriched uranium stockpile, in defiance of its nuclear commitments. On 2 July, the Iran-backed Houthis attacked Abha airport in Saudi Arabia, and they have continued to do so since that time. On 8 July, Iran reached levels of enrichment of about 4.5 per cent, breaching its nuclear commitments, which cap enrichment at 3.67 per cent. Iran continues to threaten further expansions of its nuclear programme, in defiance of its international commitments.

On 10 July, the Navy of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps unsuccessfully attempted to seize a United Kingdom tanker as it passed through the Strait of Hormuz. On 14 July, the Navy of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps seized a Panamanian-flagged, United Arab Emirates-owned, tanker in the Strait of Hormuz. On 19 July, the Navy of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps seized a British tanker, the *Stena Impero*, in the Strait of Hormuz, and Iran continues to detain that ship and its crew. On 19 July, the Navy of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps also seized the Liberian-flagged, British-owned, tanker, *Mesdar*. On 25 July, Iran test-fired a ballistic missile, in defiance of resolution 2231 (2015).

On another Iran-related note, we are already tracking very closely the provisions of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action that are expiring in October 2020, namely, the United Nations arms embargo and the travel restrictions on Qasem Soleimani. The whole world is able to track them, too. We now have a countdown clock on the State Department's Iran web page. Time is drawing short to continue the activity of restricting Iran's capacity to foment its terror regime. The international community will have plenty of time to see how long it has until Iran is unshackled to create new turmoil and figure out what it must do to prevent that from happening.

Clearly, from Aleppo to Aden and Tripoli to Tehran, greater cooperation in the Middle East is needed more than ever. We need fresh thinking to solve old problems. That is why Poland and the United States have created the Warsaw process and its working groups, which were recently announced. The Warsaw process is the product of this year's Warsaw Ministerial to promote a future of peace and security in the Middle East.

The creation of the working groups is another iteration of the United States mission to take on Middle East challenges with our friends, allies and partners. The seven new working groups will focus on cybersecurity, human rights, maritime and aviation security, energy security, missile proliferation, counter-terrorism and humanitarian issues and refugees. We call for all nations, which have been invited, to attend the initial meetings of the first five of those groups this fall, and we express our gratitude to Bahrain, Romania and South Korea for joining Poland and the United States in hosting them.

No one country will be the subject of those discussions. All nations will be heard and all voices will be respected. As we continue to work through the Warsaw process, we will look to reconvene nations in 2020 for a follow-up to the Warsaw Ministerial. I hope that those present will all be there.

Mr. Michaelis (Germany): Germany welcomes the initiative taken by Poland to put today's meeting on the agenda. We particularly appreciate United States Secretary of State Michael Pompeo's presence among us today.

The Middle East has always been looked at as a volatile region, and one of the truisms was, and is, that it can be destabilized easily. Unfortunately, that is what we witness today. But that is not the old story. Many trends indicate that we are looking at a new Middle East, and that new Middle East certainly does not match the vision of a prosperous and peaceful region, which spread in the 1990s. It is the story of increased tensions and mounting dangers. Allow me to distinguish five trends.

First, we see heightened tensions among the States of the region. That, for instance, holds true of the situation along the Gulf. Secondly, we observe long-term internal conflicts, which contribute to large-scale fragmentation. Syria and Yemen are two examples. Thirdly, we are looking at an interplay of intra- and inter-State conflict. That is what characterizes the nature

of the conflicts in Syria and Yemen. They increasingly involve regional and outside actors. Fourthly, powerful regional actors are displaying increasingly aggressive behaviour, thereby undermining regional stability. Last but not least, we notice an increased interest by new actors from outside the region, often pursuing a selfish and destructive agenda.

The combination of those factors makes the situation in the Middle East more volatile and dangerous than it has been for a very long time. We have to change the negative dynamics in the region and stop moving from bad to worse in the Middle East. Long-term instability in the Middle East will make us all suffer, and most certainly the people in the region. But how do we move forward in the Middle East?

It is for the nations of the regions themselves to create political environments that allow their people to lead lives without fear of repression, torture, hunger and violence, and that instead provides them with safety, dignity and liberty. Dialogue and compromise within the region that bridge religious and ethnic divides are the only sustainable way to reconciliation.

As much as the States of the region have to do their share to build peace at home and in the neighbourhood, it is not their task alone. The stability of the Middle East has always been a question of global concern. The involvement of the international community comes with increased responsibility. Only if all outside actors look beyond narrow national interests and regional actors invest in lasting stability can we make progress towards a secure Middle East. The international community therefore cannot stand on the sidelines. But which principles should guide our action? The answer is threefold.

First, we should be guided by the principle of fully upholding respect for international law. That is particularly true for international humanitarian law, which, looking at Syria in particular, is too often ignored.

Secondly, we should take de-escalatory steps and devise de-escalation strategies. Where international law is disputed or brushed aside, political processes that promote de-escalation and confidence-building need to be put in place. I believe that this has to lie at the heart of our Middle East policy. Today we are far from providing solutions to the problems of the Middle East, but we can create the foundations for the development of those solutions.

Thirdly, we should be guided by the principle of coordination and cooperation of all outside actors and choosing multilateral solutions instead of unilaterally imposed ones.

I would like to pick out three brief country files to illustrate that approach.

Concerning Syria, the bloodshed there must end. In this instance, we have not one but two platforms of dialogue of the international community. We have the small group and that of Astana, which, in theory, can reconcile conflicting interests and foster regional cooperation. Bridging those two formats will be key to bringing peace to the Syrian people. Germany stands ready to play a role in that regard.

With regard to Iran, we remain firmly committed to maintaining the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) because, under the JCPOA, Iran is subject to the world's most robust nuclear verification regime, implemented by the International Atomic Energy Agency. We believe that that is a valuable safeguard to ensure a nuclear-weapon-free Iran, and we have not seen any viable alternative to it.

At the same time, we are not naive, and we know that the JCPOA is only one part of the puzzle. Iran's regional role, ballistic programme and threats to maritime security in the Gulf need to be, and are being, addressed. We do that through political dialogue and, if need be, coordinated sanctions. France, the United Kingdom and Germany are right now looking into options of how to foster regional cooperation on maritime security. We are convinced that active de-escalation by all sides will yield positive results, whereas greater pressure and unilateral actions will do the opposite.

With regard to Israel and Palestine, overall, I have served almost eight years as a diplomat in Israel. Germany's steadfast commitment to the security of Israel is a cornerstone of its foreign policy, and it is the bedrock of my personal belief. There, as in the region as a whole, the United States is the key stability factor. I hope that it will continue its long-standing policy of supporting both parties in reaching a negotiated two-State solution. What is badly needed is a resumption of dialogue, in the absence of which violence is spreading.

In conclusion, today's debate once again underscores that the Middle East offers one of the most intricate webs of political, religious, social, economic

and cultural forces worldwide. It is a fascinating and wonderful region. The people in the Middle East deserve peace and stability. We, the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole, need to support all initiatives that bring us closer to that goal.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Poland for taking the initiative to convene this high-level debate and welcomes the Minister for Foreign Affairs on his return to New York to preside over this meeting. China also thanks Ms. Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, for her briefing.

Peace and Security in the Middle East does not only affect the fundamental interests of the countries in the region, but also global stability and development. China has always closely followed peace and security in the Middle East and has upheld an objective and impartial position advocating for a new security concept featuring common threads of cooperative and sustainable security in an effort to build a community with a shared future for humankind. I would like to make the following points.

The first concerns intensifying efforts to achieve political solutions to regional hotspot issues. The hotspot issues in the Middle East are complex and intertwined with one another. The international community should support the United Nations in playing a central role through its good offices, commit to reaching political solutions, promote dialogue and negotiations, adhere to constructive situation control and consistently take into account the legitimate rights and interests of all parties. The sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the countries concerned should be respected. China is firmly opposed to the wilful use or the threat of use of force. China opposes external intervention, power politics and bullying.

The question of Palestine is at the core of the Middle East issue. It is the root problem in the Middle East. Upholding the legitimate rights of the Palestinians is a shared responsibility of the international community. The two-State solution is the sole way to address the Palestinian-Israeli issue. The relevant United Nations resolutions, the land-for-peace principle and the Arab Peace Initiative are the fundamental principles to be followed to defuse the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The international community should hold up the banner of multilateralism, adhere to the principles of fairness and justice, advance the timely resumption of peace talks

between the Palestinians and the Israelis and create the necessary conditions for resuming talks.

Secondly, with regard to helping countries of the Middle East achieve sustainable development, the turmoil in the Middle East is rooted in poverty and underdevelopment, and its resolution ultimately lies in achieving sustainable development. Development has an impact on the livelihood and dignity of people and is an essential guarantee to achieving social stability and lasting peace.

Focus should be placed on youth education, employment and poverty reduction, the importance of which Ms. Viotti just mentioned. Only when young people achieve dignity through development will we be able to see the hope of a future. We should be open-minded in our support of countries of the region in exploring development paths in line with their national situations and building mutually beneficial and win-win partnerships to achieve economic and social progress.

Thirdly, with regard to building synergies to respond to the threat of terrorism, the Middle East is faced with a dire situation involving counter-terrorism and deradicalization, while countries of the region suffer acutely from terrorism. The international community should build consensus, unify standards, integrate policies and address the root causes and symptoms of the problems in resolutely countering terrorism and extremist forces.

The countries of the region should be able to enjoy policy dialogue, information sharing and strengthened cooperation with regard to technical cooperation, personnel training, cutting off sources of terrorist financing, combating cross-border organized crime and exchanging lessons learned in deradicalization in an effort to maintain shared security and restore regional stability and order.

Fourthly, with regard to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, efforts should be made to uphold the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and ensure its full and effective implementation, which was set forth in the relevant Security Council resolutions. It is also the only realistic and effective way to address the Iranian nuclear issue and conforms to the common interests of the international community. The parties should proceed from the overall and long-term perspective, stay the general course of political and diplomatic solutions, ensure the balance of rights and obligations under the

JCPOA and facilitate the reduction of tension over the Iranian nuclear issue.

China will continue to make efforts to achieve the comprehensive and effective implementation of the Plan of Action, while firmly maintaining its own legitimate rights and interests. China supports the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

At present, the Middle East situation remains complex and continues to evolve with ever-increasing security challenges. The challenge of responding to it has surpassed the ability of any single country. The United Nations should deepen its cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, such as the League of Arab States, and consolidate and strengthen collective security mechanisms.

We support countries in the region in developing good-neighbourly relations based on mutual respect and non-interference in others' internal affairs. Parties should commit themselves to resolving conflicts through dialogue and consultations, facilitating the de-escalation of tensions and maintaining regional security and international energy security in order to avoid igniting new crises. We welcome any and all dialogue initiatives conducive to achieving peace and security in the Middle East. We embrace the concept of collective security in the Gulf as proposed by Russia. China would like to maintain communications with all the relevant parties to that end.

China has always been committed to playing a constructive role in facilitating political solutions to hotspot issues in the region. We maintain contact and communication with the countries concerned in the region, support mutual confidence-building and promote peace talks. China has actively participated in various efforts under the auspices of the United Nations to promote peace in the Middle East. We are engaged in peacekeeping missions in places such as Lebanon and provide substantial humanitarian assistance to refugees from the relevant countries so that they can be hopeful of rebuilding their homes. We have contributed to the economic and social development of the region. We are committed to strengthening cooperation with the countries of the region through the Belt and Road Initiative in order to create new opportunities for the development of the region.

We have always cooperated with other parties on Iranian issues. We are committed to preserving the

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action as part of our efforts to address the Iranian issue. China will continue to make unrelenting efforts for the long-term security and prosperous development of the Middle East.

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to acknowledge the presence at today's meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland, His Excellency Mr. Mike Pompeo and His Excellency Mr. Andreas Michaelis for being here today. I would also like to thank Ms. Viotti for her briefing.

The Middle East is deeply divided and experiencing a tragic loss of its diverse religious, ethnic and cultural fabric. That is the situation as we face a slew of conflicts that undermine stability in the area. We see that the territorial integrity of countries such as Syria, Yemen and Libya is under threat and that millions of people have been displaced from their homes. The impact of such instability is felt in neighbouring countries and beyond.

The actions of terrorist groups are a key destabilizing factor. To meet their objectives, such groups are willing to sacrifice the lives of innocent civilians, including children. The war on terrorism must remain a priority. It is clear that, to safeguard the goal of maintaining peace and security in the region, efficient mechanisms that shed light on and punish human rights violations are needed.

In addition, despite the international legal frameworks in place to protect women and children, women and children continue to pay the highest price of the conflicts in the region. It is vital that their rights be fully promoted and protected. However, it is also imperative to protect public institutions, as they play an important role in re-establishing peace and security in the region.

Investing in education is key to achieving peace and development in the region. It is the tool that provides new generations with the vital link to a normal life. It is therefore urgent to protect educational institutions and infrastructure during conflicts, while taking into account the fact that attacks on such facilities limit the ability of children and young people to develop the skills necessary for their future.

The lack of the right to peaceful assembly, limitations on the freedom of expression, child, early and forced marriage, sexual and gender-based violence

and the lack of opportunities for women and young people to participate in decision-making processes are major constraints faced by a region striving to achieve lasting peace and security.

The dearth of opportunities as a result of economic, social and climate challenges lead to the displacement of groups of people, which, in turn, could result in clashes among them. No country is immune to the destabilizing effect of climate change. Combating climate change requires collective efforts. The United Nations should therefore continue its efforts to alleviate food insecurity. Similarly, that effect can exacerbate social, economic and institutional vulnerabilities, which could lead to new clashes. We can understand how climate change has become a multiplier of conflicts.

Control over weapons of mass destruction and chemical arsenals must be a priority on the Council's agenda. We must seek to combat illicit weapons trafficking by strengthening arms control mechanisms. Illicit weapons trafficking exacerbates conflicts, strengthens terrorist, rebel and criminal groups and undermines stability in areas where calm has been restored.

Lastly, we encourage the Council to reaffirm its responsibilities and make every effort to ensure that it stabilizes and reconciles communities and restores the peace and security lost as a result of conflict.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, for being with the Security Council once again and for convening today's important debate. I also thank Secretary of State Pompeo for taking the time to join the Council today, and I welcome State Secretary Michaelis.

Last year we commemorated the centenary of the end of the First World War — a war that did much to shape the modern Middle East. Many of the conflicts in the region have their origins in the First World War and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. The end of the First World War also led to the establishment of the League of Nations. That, in turn, laid the foundation for the United Nations. Many of the conflicts that have wrought so much destruction in the region — from Syria to Yemen and from Libya to Gaza — continue to feature prominently on the Council's agenda. The region's current trajectory is troubling and fraught with the risk of still further conflagration and conflict. Ms. Viotti mentioned the difficulty of managing escalation in today's world. And while our efforts at

multilateral solutions have not always worked out as well as we might have hoped, the alternative looks decidedly worse.

Experience tells us that, however imperfect, de-escalation and dialogue, political processes and support for the rules-based international system are the best means to address tensions that risk undermining our collective interests in security, stability and prosperity. We know that is true around the world, and it is quite true of the situation in the Middle East today. That is why the United Kingdom remains a steadfast supporter of the United Nations and the Council's efforts to resolve international conflict.

Secretary of State Pompeo and State Secretary Michaelis mentioned the importance of regional efforts. In recent weeks, a number of members of the Council — most recently our Russian colleagues — have also mentioned the importance of finding a way to collectively address some of the underlying challenges. That may well be an idea whose time is yet to come, not least because the region itself needs to be ready for such work. But we believe it is important that we look in an exploratory way at what might be possible and where we might start. One option might be to start with the most recent trouble spot — the Strait of Hormuz — and begin serious, inclusive dialogue between regional and international actors, as the State Secretary of Germany set out.

Secretary Pompeo touched today on Iran's role in the region. My country has great respect for the Iranian people. We respect Iran's culture. It is an ancient culture and one that features alongside the great developments in classical history in Europe. We accept that Iran has a legitimate role in the Middle East. And we accept that, like all of us, it has a right to self-defense. But we cannot ignore the fact that the way it pursues its national interests contributes to several of the regional problems we are discussing today.

When I addressed the Council in the resolution 2231 (2015) format in June, I reiterated that the priority of United Kingdom policy towards Iran was to prevent Iran achieving a nuclear capability that would threaten the stability and security of the Middle East region and beyond. As the representative of Germany set out, we continue to judge that this objective is best served by efforts to preserve the nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). We urge Iran to return to full compliance with the deal. It is in none

of our interests to see the deal unravel. It is an essential part of the global non-proliferation architecture. And it is critical for our national security and for the shared security of our partners and allies. There is no better solution. There is no alternative.

The United Kingdom, with France and Germany, has been consistently clear that we will work to support the deal. We remain fully committed to the delivery of the INSTEX mechanism, thereby ensuring that legitimate trade with Iran can continue. We continue to participate in core projects within the deal, including taking on the role of co-chair of the Arak modernization project. We also welcome President Macron's efforts to find a way through to dialogue in close coordination with the three European signatories.

The JCPOA is not a licence for Iran to roam free across the conflicts in the Middle East. Iran continues to support proxies across the region that undermine regional security and violate Security Council resolutions, whether resolution 1559 (2004), on Lebanon, or 2216 (2015), and the arms embargo on Yemen. We regret that, rather than backing a political solution in Syria in line with resolution 2254 (2015), Iran has instead chosen to support Al-Assad in pursuing a military solution, including through organizing and sending sectarian militias to Syria, which has helped fuel that conflict. This pattern of Iranian behaviour poses a serious danger to peace and stability.

Secretary Pompeo mentioned that on 19 July a British-flag tanker, *Stena Impero*, was boarded by Iranian forces while transiting through the Strait of Hormuz inside Omani territorial waters. The *Stena Impero* remains seized. As the Chef de Cabinet noted, it is imperative that we defend the freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz to reassure the global shipping industry and to deter further attacks. This is not just the British aim; it is in every nation's interests, and it requires the coming together of international nations to support maritime security in the Gulf.

I will not touch much today on Syria, because the Council has very many meetings on that sad conflict. But I will simply note that there can be no reconstruction without a sustainable, United Nations-led political process on the basis of resolution 2254 (2015).

With regard to the Iranian vessel *Grace I*, we have welcomed Gibraltar's recent actions and legal proceedings to implement European Union (EU) sanctions, which are in place to pressure the Al-Assad

regime towards negotiations. We understand that Iran has provided assurances to the Government of Gibraltar that the vessel and its cargo will not go to an EU-sanctioned entity such as Syria. Iran needs to abide by those assurances.

We urgently need a cease fire in Idlib to prevent further suffering. We need answers as to why and how international humanitarian law is being so flagrantly violated by the regime and its allies. I want to recall, if I may, that such crimes confer individual and personal responsibility on the perpetrators. The violations also continue to create space for radicalization and further extremism, and Da'esh continues to pose a serious threat across the region.

We cannot take for granted the progress that has been made in Iraq in providing security and stability for the Iraqi people. The United Kingdom, alongside the international community, will continue to support the Government of Iraq to ensure that the conditions that gave rise to Da'esh are tackled.

The situation in Libya is in danger of deteriorating still further. Over the past four months, it has become clear neither side can win a military victory. The only winners in the current conflict are the terrorist and extremist groups that look to exploit the chaos and instability for their own ends. As others have said, the way forward is for the parties to comply with their obligations under international law and commit to political dialogue and a lasting ceasefire.

Likewise, a political solution is urgently needed in Yemen — not only to end the conflict but to alleviate the immense humanitarian suffering. We urge the parties to agree the latest United Nations proposals to allow for wider political discussions. The events of concern in Aden serve to highlight the need for an inclusive political process. We welcome the initiative taken by His Majesty King Salman to resolve the situation.

In the context of heightened tensions in the region, it is more important than ever that the Lebanese Government and all Lebanese parties implement Lebanon's policy of disassociation from regional conflicts. We call on all parties to implement the relevant resolutions in full, particularly resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). For our part, we will continue to help build the strength and capacity of the Lebanese State to resist encroachment by Hizbullah. We will help Lebanon achieve economic stability, while making swift progress on implementing the commitments

made at the Conference for Economic Development and Reform through Enterprise.

I want to take this opportunity to commend the role played by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in maintaining calm and stability along the Blue Line. But I stress at the same time the importance of enabling UNIFIL to deliver its mandate unimpeded. It is unacceptable that UNIFIL is still unable to access Hizbullah tunnel sites in southern Lebanon. Other speakers have addressed the question of a sustainable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As the Chef de Cabinet said, it is the longest-running international peace and security issue here. For the United Kingdom, our position on the two-State solution remains unchanged. We urge the United States Administration to bring forward its detailed proposals for viable peace agreement that addresses the legitimate concerns of both parties.

Efforts by the United States to support the development of the Palestinian economy are very welcome. It is essential that political progress be made in order to unlock economic opportunities. But, as we have said in the Council before, until there is political progress, steps need to be taken to address the constraints imposed on the Palestinian economy by the Israeli occupation. We want to see increasing external trade opportunities for the Palestinians. We want to see the financial sustainability of the Palestinian Authority realized. Only a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian State, based on the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as a shared capital of both States, can bring about a lasting solution.

I have concentrated today on the geopolitical and international peace and security aspects as the most immediate challenges facing us. But you, Mr. President, and a number of other speakers, rightly drew attention to the vital importance of economic and social development, notably for women. I agree on the importance of this area. But I want to make clear that it is, however, not an excuse for certain Governments to divert funds that could be better spent at home on the very real things that help build the State towards violence, persecution and adventurism. You, Sir, spoke about good governance, education and youth. I want to stress our new Prime Minister's interest in advancing girls' education in particular. But it is also true that investment, equality before the law and the rule of law are also fundamental, and Secretary Pompeo set out

how the Warsaw process includes economic and public policy factors.

To go back to where I started, we cannot see the countries of the Middle East exploit fully the opportunity to modernize their economies when we see the sort of push-back on women's rights that the Chef de Cabinet mentioned. The current tensions and instability in the Middle East serve no one. I want to call again for de-escalation, for full respect for international rules and for engagement in dialogue through which the region can discuss its problems transparently and in the interests of the populations there who have suffered so much.

Mrs. Van Vlierberge (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first of all to thank Ms. Viotti, Chef de Cabinet, Executive Office of the Secretary-General, for her informative briefing on this difficult subject that concerns us.

Building peace and security for all in the Middle East and the Gulf region is indeed a major objective of the efforts of the United Nations and its Security Council. We are therefore pleased to be able to address this issue in a cross-cutting manner today, under your leadership, Mr. Minister, and in the presence of Mr. Pompeo and Mr. Michaelis. Belgium fully endorses the statement to be made by the Chargé d'affaires ad interim of the Delegation of the European Union.

The Middle East and the Gulf region are currently plagued by many tensions and conflicts that are periodically on the Security Council's agenda. The conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Libya, the deadlock in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the risk of instability in Lebanon, tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, the Iranian nuclear issue and the fight against Da'esh and Al-Qaida: all these elements threaten regional security but also, through their internationalization, endanger international peace and security, of which the Council is the guarantor.

However, these agenda items are all too often addressed in isolation. As demonstrated by the informal interactive dialogue on the Middle East and North Africa held in the Council last 21 March and the briefing on cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States on 13 June (see S/PV.8548), it is crucial to develop a regional and multidimensional approach. Such a regional approach makes it possible to take into account the root causes of tensions and conflicts as well as regional dynamics and the common

security challenges underlying them, and can be divided into three essential and interdependent areas that remain relevant: political and security aspects, with a view to defining and building a common space of peace and security; economic and financial aspects, with a view to building an area of shared prosperity; and social, cultural and human aspects, with a view to promoting new, inclusive social contracts based on education, economic opportunities for young people, equality for women, respect for human rights and the equitable sharing of national wealth.

With regard to the first point — security aspects — weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and nuclear weapons, remain a central focus. The use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, is unacceptable and contravenes international standards. For my country, disarmament, non-proliferation and the fight against impunity for the use of chemical weapons are priorities. It is essential that responsibility for chemical attacks in Syria be established.

In the same spirit, resolution 2231 (2015) remains the best available multilateral basis for engaging Iran on nuclear non-proliferation issues and their impact on regional stability and international security. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action must be preserved, and the challenges it currently faces must be overcome. Through the verification mechanisms agreed with the International Atomic Energy Agency, it allows for much-needed confidence-building.

Belgium intends to build peace and consensus and therefore will continue to give its full support to strengthening the role of the United Nations and its Security Council with a view to taking a regional, horizontal and multidimensional approach to tensions and conflicts in the Middle East and the Gulf. Only a concerted approach that includes all actors in the region and addresses all issues can ensure stability and peace in the region in a sustainable manner, with full respect for multilateralism and a global order based on the rule of law.

Finally, let us recall that during the Arab Spring of 2011, people mobilized to demand more rights, freedom, equality, democracy and economic opportunities. Some of those expectations have remained unfulfilled. Any sustainable solution in the region must be based on ownership of those expectations by societies and populations.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's debate, which allows us to address all the issues related to the Middle East in a spirit of dialogue. Because the conflicts in the region have common roots and are interlinked, this cross-cutting approach is relevant as a complement to the individual issues on the Security Council's agenda. I welcome the participation of the Secretary of State of the United States, Mr. Pompeo, and I fully endorse the incisive analysis presented by the German Secretary of State, Mr. Michaelis. I also wish to associate myself with the statement to be delivered by the Chargé d'affaires ad interim of the Delegation of the European Union.

First, I would like to come back to the extent of the challenges facing the region. First, I am thinking of the security challenges resulting from the persistence of the terrorist threat, despite the territorial victory over Da'esh in Syria and Iraq. Beyond the military response, the challenge of violent radicalization will not be solved without the implementation of inclusive political solutions, accompanied by an increased effort for the stabilization of liberated territories and for reconstruction where the political conditions are met. France will also continue to mobilize so as to dry up the sources of terrorist financing, in accordance with resolution 2462 (2019), adopted last March.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery to State and non-State actors is a threat to all, to which we must provide collective responses. I would like to reiterate here our vigilance with regard to compliance with the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons, given that both the Syrian regime and Da'esh have used them. France also reaffirms its full commitment to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). There is currently no alternative to prevent nuclear proliferation in Iran. As we have already had occasion to say, we deplore the American withdrawal from the agreement. The remaining participants, including France, remain committed to preserving the JCPOA and continue to comply with their commitments.

We are extremely concerned about Iran's recent actions in breach of its obligations under the agreement. There is no legal provision authorizing non-compliance with any part of its commitments. That is why we must all work to preserve this agreement and achieve Iran's return to full compliance with its obligations. France remains resolutely committed to this goal, in collaboration with its partners. Beyond that, we must

build together a long-term strategy, which cannot be reduced to a policy of pressure, sanctions and containment. Only a comprehensive approach will make it possible to resolve the various outstanding issues on nuclear energy after 2025-2030, on the continuation of Iran's ballistic activities and on regional stability.

Secondly, I am thinking of the political challenges facing the region, which is plagued by conflicts that threaten its stability and as a result of which the civilian population is the first to suffer. We see this in Syria and Yemen, where violations of international humanitarian law are daily occurrences. The intensification of the Syrian and Russian bombardments in Idlib is particularly worrying in this regard. I therefore reiterate France's call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and the full implementation without delay of the Sochi agreement between Russia and Turkey. France, like Germany, believes that the coordination of the so-called small group and the Astana group would facilitate progress.

In Yemen, rapid, full and unhindered humanitarian access to all populations must be ensured and the Stockholm Agreement implemented. Beyond that, Yemen requires an urgent resumption of political dialogue without preconditions.

In this context, beyond an emergency crisis response, we must work towards pluralistic and inclusive political solutions that guarantee the region's stability in the long term. The priority must be to prevent new conflicts and to de-escalate them through dialogue. That imperative is particularly important given the current tensions in the Gulf. In that regard, we must work with the States of the region, which are on the front line, with our international partners and within the framework of the multilateral organizations concerned in order to establish an inclusive and balanced dialogue and, in the longer term, confidence-building measures, such as ensuring the freedom of navigation in straits.

We must also promote the development of inclusive political solutions under the auspices of the United Nations. We must work to bolster strong State institutions that respect the rule of law and human rights, and protect freedoms and all components of pluralistic societies in the Middle East. In that regard, I would like to encourage the Iraqi authorities to continue their efforts to rebuild the areas liberated from Da'esh and reconcile all Iraqis. In Syria, only a credible political solution will be able to reduce the destabilizing

potential of the crisis and allow for lasting peace. Women must participate fully in the peace process and in the implementation of those political solutions — it is a moral imperative and an additional opportunity to maintain peace and security.

I would like to reiterate France's commitment to multilateralism, the role of the United Nations and respect for international law. Any unilateral decision that deviates from international law significantly weakens the order based on international legality and compromises our collective ability to successfully conclude peace processes.

In that regard, I would like to reiterate that lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians can be achieved only through a just and balanced solution, based on the establishment of two States living side by side in security, within recognized borders, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, in accordance with internationally agreed parameters and the resolutions of the Council. In that connection, we support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, whose work on behalf of Palestinian refugees is essential for regional stability.

The Council has a critical role to play because it is the main guarantor of international law. Among other things, it must call on all belligerents in conflicts to respect applicable law, in particular international humanitarian law and human rights law, and to provide unanimous support for the efforts of the United Nations, including by supporting the Council and the Special Envoys and Representatives of the Secretary-General.

France will continue to defend multilateralism as a way of ensuring and maintaining international peace and security. It is by calling multilateralism into question that today we weaken our security, particularly with regard to international institutions, mechanisms and instruments that combat impunity and non-proliferation.

In conclusion, France has no intention of renouncing its principles or its commitment to responding to the crises in the Middle East, or its desire to see the Council play a greater role in addressing them. The Middle East is a traumatized region, with too many countries devastated and societies ravaged by the scourge of war, from which our important Organization has the primary duty to protect us. The people of the region aspire to live in peace and security. That requires us to learn from the past and, above all, to not repeat our mistakes.

It is urgent that we stop this destructive violence. We can do so if we use the dynamics of competition and the balance of power among nations in order to seek collaborative and just solutions and implement a policy of balanced dialogue so that the countries and the peoples of the region can find points of convergence, define the modalities for sustainable neighbourly relations and opt for non-violent, pluralistic exercise of power. That begins with the adherence to, and implementation of, all the relevant Council resolutions.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the initiative of the Polish presidency to convene this high-level debate, and thank it for the concept note (S/2019/643, annex), which calls on us to reflect on the current challenges to peace and security in the Middle East. We particularly welcome the presence of the Foreign Minister of Poland and thank Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti for her important briefing this afternoon.

Peru has forged and maintained ties with the Middle East thanks to its Hispanic heritage. We recognize the rich cultural, religious and ethnic diversity of its peoples, as well as their unwavering yearning for peace and prosperity. It is therefore regrettable that the region continues to be a place of numerous violent confrontations, of varying scale and intensity, in which serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights devastate the civilian population.

The hundreds of thousands of victims in Syria after more than nine years of bloody fighting, the constant famine and outbreaks of disease in Yemen and the confinement and lack of hope and opportunities for the people in Gaza are just a few examples of that harsh reality. This tragic panorama is further compounded by the threat posed by terrorist groups and criminal organizations, as well as by the use of the Middle East as an ideal market for the large-scale sale of various types of military equipment.

We believe that the international community can help by supporting the establishment of robust and inclusive institutions that can prevent and resolve the differences that naturally arise among the peoples of the region. That entails building capacities to meet the expectations of the people, including protecting and promoting their human rights and recognizing their legitimate aspirations, especially those of minorities, women and young people. It also means consolidating the rule of law to promote economic growth and aligning

humanitarian assistance with development plans that offer hope and opportunities to the civilian population, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Another great challenge we must address is the plight of the millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, which requires not only the availability of financial resources but, primarily, the political will to ensure them a safe and dignified return under internationally accepted parameters.

This Organization in general, and the Security Council in particular, has a crucial role to play in that regard — to demand strict adherence with its resolutions, thereby ensuring full respect for international humanitarian law and human rights as a fundamental measure to protect civilian populations, strengthening international cooperation to effectively combat terrorism and safeguarding non-proliferation regimes on weapons of mass destruction.

Special priority should also be given to conflict prevention, which requires coordinating strategic actions for mediating and facilitating dialogue, developing early-warning systems, building confidence and promoting good practices and assisting countries interested in replicating them. In short, we must preserve an international order based on norms as a minimum basis for coexistence in today's convulsed and interdependent world.

To that end, Peru stresses that any analysis of the realities of the Middle East must address the urgent need to find a solution to the question of Palestine, which includes promoting the resumption of direct negotiations leading to the two-State solution. The Arab Peace Initiative, which remains fully valid and relevant, should contribute to that objective.

We also take this opportunity to reiterate our strongest condemnation of the attacks and actions taken against vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, which jeopardize the freedom of navigation in an area of global strategic importance and exacerbate tensions. We urge all actors concerned to exercise restraint in these dangerous circumstances and to avoid taking new unilateral actions that could trigger a conflict with unpredictable consequences.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing that we are at a critical juncture in which the efforts of the international community must aim, as a matter of

priority, to avoid further fragmentation of the Middle East and to achieve its long-term stability.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for choosing today's topic. I also welcome the Secretary of State of the United States and the State Secretary of the Republic of Germany, and I thank them for being with us today. I furthermore thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General for her briefing.

The State of Kuwait aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the United Arab Emirates on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

The Middle East continues to take up a significant portion of the Security Council's agenda—approximately 30 to 40 per cent. The region, which has witnessed many wars and crises over more than seven decades, is the cradle of the three monotheistic religions and of human civilizations and cultures. It has the oldest cities in the world and has vast natural and human resources. It is unfortunate, therefore, that it is experiencing such chronic security and political crises.

I would like to address the topic from three aspects.

First, let me touch on conflicts and means of prevention. The United Nations in general, and the Security Council in particular, is dealing with more than eight issues in the Middle East: one of them has been on the agenda for more than half a century, namely, the Palestinian question, and the others for many years, including Syria, Yemen, the Sudan and Libya. Currently five Arab countries are bearing witness to the occupation of parts of their territories.

Our region, which is countering terrorism on five fronts, is witnessing six internal conflicts. Of the 14 United Nations peacekeeping operations, six are in Arab countries, and more than one third of refugees and displaced persons around the world come from the Arab region. The one common denominator is occupation, which is the *raison d'être* of and justification for the violent and terrorist ideological movements that exacerbate those conflicts.

In more than one meeting and forum and on more than one occasion, we have reiterated that settling the Palestinian question entails ensuring the rights of the Palestinians to their land and their State, along with reaching a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement through the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions; ending the occupation; and

establishing a Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The policies of Israel since it joined the United Nations have had one thing in common: non-adherence to the Charter of the United Nations, the non-implementation of resolutions of the Security Council and international legitimacy, continued violations and a lack of accountability. The Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, the Syrian Golan and Lebanese territory is the root cause of numerous problems in the Middle East.

The efforts under way for many years to achieve security and stability in the Middle East have not gone beyond managing and containing these crises and conflicts and addressing their implications. We must move from addressing the root causes of these crises to prevention. We would recall that the Charter of the United Nations is our guarantee and primary means of preventing conflicts. There have been initiatives on the table now for several years that Israel has rejected, such as the creation of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

The State of Kuwait has, since the first years of its independence, consistently sought to enhance regional security by creating the Gulf Cooperation Council in 1981 and providing mediation efforts to resolve differences in the region. We even helped to open channels for regional dialogue with the Islamic Republic of Iran, based on mutual respect; the principles of good-neighbourliness; non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries; respect for the sovereignty of all countries; the adoption of confidence-building measures; and the avoidance of any unilateral actions or measures that could exacerbate matters and undermine security in Gulf waters, which would threaten the safety of water passages and undermine oil security in the world while endangering international peace and security.

Secondly, I turn to the humanitarian aspect. Yesterday we celebrated World Humanitarian Day, and today we would recall that our efforts must be focused on people and based on law. We must seek to provide a decent life for the peoples of the region and the world in times of peace and war. We have joined France and a group of countries to defend civilians and civilian facilities, including hospitals and schools, against being targeted in time of war. We suffered from such acts ourselves during the occupation of Kuwait, when

international humanitarian law was violated countless times. We therefore took it upon ourselves to guarantee that everyone upholds respect for international humanitarian law.

The number of refugees and displaced persons from Arab countries now exceeds 24 million, out of the 70 million around the world; that is more than one third. Those present can only imagine how many lives, properties and opportunities have been lost and how many people have had to emigrate from Arab countries in search of a better life. Political solutions to the problems of the region therefore remain our priority, and ending the occupation is one of those solutions. We hope that the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, will play a greater role in guaranteeing that their resolutions are implemented.

Thirdly, on education and culture, conflicts and wars have displaced many people, and we are now dealing with the social and humanitarian consequences. However, we can invest in the future and ensure that refugees, migrants and displaced persons do not suffer any further. We can provide them with a decent life by investing in education above all. That is one of the areas in which Kuwait is providing assistance to our brethren and friends through official assistance or through our local sector, with a view to fostering a generation that builds peace. Investing in the future does not make us forget the past.

We belong to a region of deep-rooted civilizations where peoples from different religions and cultures have coexisted for hundreds of years. No one opinion can erase others, and no crime involving the destruction of the cultural heritage of humankind can be justified. Conflicts have led to trading in monuments of Middle Eastern civilizations and to the crimes committed by terrorists such as Da'esh and others when they destroyed cultural landmarks and monuments. Their wars have razed neighbourhoods and cities to the ground, seeking to erase the living memories preserved by our previous generations. Not do we forget the continued practices of the occupying Power aimed at obliterating the cultural identity of East Jerusalem and of Palestinians throughout occupied Palestine.

In conclusion, we thank once again the Republic of Poland for having chosen today's topic. We have tried to address its various dimensions, which can be summarized as follows: respecting people and international law.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I, too, wish to thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, for her briefing on the situation in the Middle East. We listened attentively to the statements delivered by our colleagues. In addition to you, Mr. President, we wish to welcome the presence of the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Michael Pompeo, and the State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, Mr. Andreas Michaelis.

It is no secret that the Middle East is currently enduring serious crises that are of an existential nature for a number of States. In order to attempt to arrive at solutions to such crises, it is important to look not only forward but also back, so as to understand the mistakes that were made and try to avoid making them in future.

In our view, the most meaningful conclusion that we should draw from the experience of the past two decades is as follows.

No unilateral action of any kind can bring us closer to the resolution of either the protracted or new problems plaguing the region. The situation becomes all the more devastating when certain States Members of the United Nations attempt to delegitimize other Member States. The resulting policies, aimed at destabilizing and overthrowing regimes that certain capitals deem undesirable, have not only failed to lead to the settlement of the problems in the region but have also created new, exceedingly dangerous problems for the region, leading to greater bloodshed. It is clear to us, as it is to most of our partners, that the only way to extricate ourselves from this situation is ensure that the United Nations and its Security Council play a central role in coordinating international and regional efforts in this respect. It is indeed in this Chamber that we must reaffirm that this premise needs to be the point of departure for all relevant efforts and initiatives.

Geopolitical engineering, interference in the internal affairs of others and the imposition of military solutions have led to the collapse of entire States, tragic situations and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people in the region. It would be no exaggeration to say that many countries have consequently been taken hostage by the opportunistic goals of external players and been forced to wage proxy wars that have proved detrimental to their national interests.

We listened attentively to the statement delivered by Mr. Pompeo. I even asked my colleagues to analyse

it word for word, as so much hinges on it. As it turns out, he used many words with negative connotations, including “challenges”, “deterrence”, “conflict”, “regime”, “limitations”, “counteraction” and “threat”. Only once did he use the word “cooperation”, and that was in the context of building a coalition against Iran. Not once, however, did he use the word “dialogue”. In our view, the two latter terms must underpin any and all diplomatic efforts.

We also noted that he spoke at length in emotionally charged terms about the Persian Gulf. We, too, are extremely concerned about the situation in the region. The only difference is that from the outset his goal has been to build a coalition against Iran, portraying that country as the main and virtually sole source of problems — a kind of evil empire. We believe that the recent tensions in the Persian Gulf have largely been artificially fomented and stoked. Against the backdrop of the ongoing exchange of accusations, we are seeing an increased military presence, including on the part of extraregional States, which increases the risk of armed conflict. Any incident could potentially spark a conflict with devastating consequences.

We urge all parties to exercise restraint, work towards de-escalation and settle problems politically and diplomatically. First and foremost, that translates into refraining from the imposition of ultimatums, sanctions or threats. Given the need to develop a stable collective security mechanism in the region that is based on equitable dialogue, the Russian Federation has proposed and presented, *inter alia* within the United Nations, a blueprint for collective security in the Persian Gulf region aimed at resolving conflict situations and developing confidence-building and oversight measures.

We believe that the security system in the Persian Gulf must be inclusive, universal and comprehensive. All States in the region should be involved in it on an equal footing, and the appropriate organizational structures should be established. Such a system would serve as a prelude to building a shared post-crisis architecture for the Middle East region. The exclusion of any party is unacceptable. As experience has shown, situations involving the creation of improvised temporary coalitions, based on mutual interests, can have only unfortunate consequences.

Such unilateral initiatives include the ministerial conference held in Warsaw in February, which was

mentioned today. We repeatedly and publicly stated our stance vis-à-vis that event during the preparation stage. We noted that decisions on the format and agenda of the conference had been taken hastily and covertly in the absence of serious consultations with the United Nations and key regional and extraregional stakeholders. We pointed out that such an approach was contrary to the declared goal of developing a collective strategy for the Middle East. We explicitly stated that we considered this to be yet another attempt to impose a unilateral solution on the international community with the goal of advancing parochial geopolitical agendas. The outcome of that event fully justified those assessments. Frankly, we see no added value in the efforts made in the Warsaw format.

We believe that the Russian proposals can and should be complemented and elaborated. They should be perceived as a call for a constructive dialogue on ways to achieve long-term stabilization in the Persian Gulf region. We stand ready to engage closely with all stakeholders through both official channels and social, political and expert circles. In particular, I would note that in order to step up expert dialogue on this issue, an international expert round table has been scheduled for 18 and 19 September in Moscow at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

We have always firmly believed that negotiations are possible in every situation, provided that the parties concerned are willing to embark upon them a spirit of mutual respect, based on the principles of international law, diplomatic practices and civility. Like the vast majority of States in the region, we therefore cannot accept a situation whereby calls for Iran to come to the negotiating table are interspersed with direct provocations and harsh sanctions. Given such an approach, one could hardly expect the Iranian side to respond.

Frankly, we see no logic in the fact that our United States colleagues, who are in breach of resolution 2231 (2015), are now calling on Iran to begin negotiations without any preconditions. We cannot accept the fact that 80 per cent of Iranian trade is subject to the illegal unilateral sanctions of the United States, which, moreover, are extra-territorial in nature, aimed at forcing all parties to bow to the will of Washington, D.C.

In that regard, it is fitting to recall here that by trampling on the norms of international law, the United States is essentially attempting to punish those countries

that are complying in good faith with the provisions of resolution 2231 (2015). Nevertheless, I assure the Council that even in such difficult circumstances, we will continue to seek to persuade both our Iranian and American colleagues to move back from the edge of this precipice and begin resolving their differences through civilized dialogue, which entails the end of policies based on ultimatums, sanctions and blackmail.

As was already the case many decades ago, the settlement of the Middle East issue lies at the heart of the region's problems. The status of Middle East peace process remains unsatisfactory. The situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is not improving. In East Jerusalem, Israel is continuing its settlement activities and the demolition of Palestinian structures. Those actions are not only illegal under international law but also constitute one of the major obstacles to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

At the same time, persistent attempts are being made to unilaterally impose alternative settlement schemes that would undermine the long-standing and internationally recognized parameters for resolving the Palestinian problem. We believe that the intention to drag out the efforts at finding a lasting comprehensive solution to this issue is counterproductive. In the absence of encouraging political horizons, no economic surrogates can create the conditions necessary for the full realization of the national aspirations of the Palestinian people. The basic principle of the two-State solution remains the cornerstone of a stable and peaceful future for Palestinians and Israelis both.

We urge all parties to be guided not by narrow political interests but by the universally recognized legal framework for a settlement in the Middle East, including the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative. For our part, we are committed to coordinating our actions with our Palestinian and Israeli partners, States in the Middle East and North Africa and the members of the Middle East Quartet of international mediators.

Alongside the Palestinian issue there exists a new generation, if I may put it that way, of regional crises. The counter-terrorism operation conducted by the Russian Aerospace Forces in Syria has led to progress in the fight against terrorism. The eradication of the terrorist hotbed in Syria aligns with the interests not only of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa but also those of Europe, as it will reduce the terrorist

threat in that area and the flow of migrants therefrom. I would like to underscore that we have never agreed that terrorists could remain in Syria or be comfortable in that country. We therefore call for collective efforts and the abandonment of double standards in the fight against terrorism. I will be frank: we continue to advocate a wide-ranging counter-terrorism front.

We are continuing to strive to bring about a political settlement in Syria, in cooperation with the United Nations under the Astana format.

We advocate the unification of regional efforts. It is important now to address without preconditions issues related to the socioeconomic recovery of the Syrian Arab Republic and to the issues faced by refugees and to cast aside the practice of their forced detention in third countries.

The focus of our attention needs to be on the situation in Libya. We are of the view that the only way to help the Libyans emerge from the crisis is to consolidate the positions of international actors. Developments make clear the consequences of foreign military interventions. In Libya, such intervention has led to the total collapse of its statehood. We call upon all Libyan stakeholders to cooperate with the United Nations and not to advance unilateral agendas. That approach is also necessary in Yemen, where all parties must act on the unifying basis of the United Nations to restore its statehood, combat terrorism and transition to building good-neighbourly relations.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that it is no exaggeration to say that the alarming trends I have just described have created an impasse in the Middle East, compounded by a propaganda war in the spirit of the grimmest chapter of the Cold War. The number of fake news reports circulated by various non-governmental organizations, which receive financing from a number of Western capitals, is astoundingly high. Regrettably, unilateral decisions are being taken on the basis of such false and highly contentious information, which not only undermines efforts to resolve conflicts but also weakens the entire system of international relations. Such decisions are employed as pretexts for identifying enemies. At the same time, genuine threats, which require collective efforts, are ignored. That is an approach that will not get us very far. The sooner our Western partners understand that concept, the sooner we can finally address the problems plaguing the area — outstanding and new issues alike — based on

the aspirations of the peoples of the region. I assure the Council that we stand ready to do so under any format of multilateral or bilateral cooperation or dialogue, under the auspices of the Security Council, on the basis of a positive agenda, without any double standards or hidden goals and with, of course, unconditional respect for the sovereignty of the States of the Middle East and the rights and aspirations of their peoples.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): We thank you, Mr. Minister, for presiding once again over the Council's deliberations. We thank the Polish delegation for having convened today's debate on the challenges to peace and security in the Middle East. My delegation also appreciates the insightful briefing of Ms. Viotti, Chef de Cabinet in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

We also welcome the Secretary of State of the United States and the State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany to the Council and thank them for their statements.

South Africa welcomes the debate on the threats and challenges to peace and security in the Middle East, and we wish to emphasize that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to those challenges, given the diversity of the challenges facing each of the countries in the region. The destruction of property and infrastructure caused by bombings in the Middle East is unprecedented and devastating. The satellite pictures of the region show destruction resembling the kind of ruins last seen during the Second World War, 74 years ago. The unprecedented human suffering and the destruction of physical and social infrastructure should be stopped.

Millions of women and children have perished and been permanently disfigured. Millions have been internally displaced and millions more made refugees in faraway lands — some since childhood. They have never known peace. The upsurge in the radicalization of young people and terror-linked insurgent groupings, which are causing havoc in the region and beyond, are of great concern to South Africa.

South Africa firmly believes that the question of Palestine and Israel remains the core issue and that its resolution will have a positive impact on the entire region for many generations to come. South Africa is deeply concerned about the humanitarian cost of the various conflicts in the Middle East, which remains the most acute of any other region, as can be illustrated by the prolonged and continued suffering of refugees,

internally displaced persons and those caught up in the midst of armed conflict in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere.

We call on the international community to pay equal attention to Yemen, which remains the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, and call on the parties to the Yemeni conflict to respect international humanitarian law, including the Stockholm Agreement.

South Africa regrets the withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). We continue to urge our friends in the United States of America to reconsider their position in that regard. The JCPOA is the most important diplomatic achievement in the area of nuclear non-proliferation in a very long time. It is a significant multilateral success that contributes to the maintenance of international peace and security. We also urge Iran to continue abiding by its obligations under the JCPOA.

South Africa believes that in order to address the root causes of the peace and security challenges in the Middle East, the Council needs to display the necessary political will and good faith to resolve long-standing and festering conflicts such as the question of Palestine, which has been a source of tension in the region for many decades.

South Africa believes that only multilateral and collective action and a continued commitment to preventive diplomacy and inclusive dialogue, as opposed to confrontation and conflict, will reduce such tensions, culminating in a more peaceful and prosperous region that is rich in diversity, culture and civilization.

In conclusion, we would also like to emphasize the importance of the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and of the objective of achieving a nuclear-free Middle East. In Syria, the Geneva agreement should be implemented. In Yemen, the Stockholm Agreement should be implemented. The peace process between Israel and Palestine should be relaunched. The zone of peace and stability and the economic boom enjoyed by the Gulf countries could be utilized to stimulate an environment of peace across the Middle East, and perhaps begin a grand debate about the future of the Middle East.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): First of all, I would to commend you, Sir, and the delegation of Poland for having organized this important debate in the Security Council focused on peace in the Middle East. I would

also like to join others in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Mike Pompeo, Secretary of State of the United States, as well as His Excellency Mr. Andreas Michaelis, State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany. I should also like to thank Chef de Cabinet, my old friend Her Excellency Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, for her briefing, which provided insights into what is happening in the Middle East. Allow me to make the following points.

First, multilateralism should be our guiding principle to bring about lasting peace and security in the region. Any effort that deviate from or, worse, run counter to, this path would only complicate our joint attempt to arrive at a lasting solution. We therefore need to reinvigorate the spirit of multilateralism, based on the rule of law and the Charter of the United Nations. All parties, including those trying to mediate conflicts, must ensure respect for international law and the principle of multilateralism. That is neither favour to anyone, nor disfavour to others. For Indonesia, this is central because, no matter how grand any proposal, everything will be in vain unless guided by commitment to multilateralism and international law.

Secondly, let me turn to the importance of investing for peace in the region. Peace is not something we can take for granted; it is something in which we have to invest. Our concept of peace goes beyond the absence of war. Community empowerment, development, education, human rights and democracy, as well as addressing the threat of terrorism, should be part and parcel of the picture. It should also address the massive humanitarian problems facing millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, who are in need of prompt and adequate attention. Saving human lives should be the focus of our action in the Security Council. I am glad that we agreed on and adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2019/8) on international humanitarian law under your presidency, Sir.

Investing in peace also means strengthening the capacities of affected communities to cope with their situation. In the context of the Security Council, investing for peace in the region should also be displayed through our collective actions in addressing the various root causes of the challenges facing the region. But that can be achieved only if members of the Council are willing to put aside their differences, or at least to narrow the gap of disagreement. Indonesia will continue to be actively involved in the endeavour of bridging gaps and finding solutions.

Thirdly, the Palestinian question at the heart of the problem. Despite the plethora of conflicts in the Middle East, let us not forget that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the core issue that intertwines them all, with implications for other issues beyond the region. While we might for years have had responses to the situations in such places as Yemen, Libya, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has immense ramifications for the cycles of violence and mistrust in those other scenarios. It is a long-term conflict that generates long-term instability. To that end, Indonesia reiterates that we must go back to the root causes of the spaghetti-web of issues.

For us, an ecosystem of peace, stability and prosperity in the region remains almost unthinkable or unattainable until Palestinians have gained their right to independence, based on the pre-1967 lines. Our position on this issue is very clear and has been voiced on many occasions before the Security Council.

In conclusion, I should like to recall that the violence and atrocious humanitarian conditions in those conflict areas come down to the ability and willingness of the Security Council to function. This is our political challenge and moral obligation. Let us avoid the temptation to ignore the blood of other people's children. Let us avoid being characterized as an institution willing only to issue proclamations, presidential statements and resolutions just because they are convenient.

The challenge of achieving peace everywhere on Earth is in our hands. That holds particularly true for places such as the Middle East, where conflicts often lead to greater bloodshed and mutate into further conflict. The more we delay taking action to find peace in the Middle East, the more complex, fragile and dangerous the situation will be. We will sink into the quicksand of conflict only to find ourselves, one day, with no more air to breathe.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like once again, Sir, to welcome your presence among us and to express our admiration for, and commend your dedicated participation in, the work of your country's presidency of the Security Council. I should also like, through you, to thank Poland for having included this important debate on the programme of work for the month of August, which is a critical time for the peoples of the Middle East.

My delegation would also like to thank the team represented by the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeira Viotti, for the very detailed briefing she has just given us. We welcome the presence with us today of Mr. Mike Pompeo, Secretary of State of the United States, and Mr. Andreas Michaelis, State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany.

Today's meeting affords us an excellent opportunity for the Security Council to address threats to peace and security in the Middle East in an in-depth, comprehensive and objective way. An acceptable level of calm has not been seen since the previous century, least of all now, as rising ethnic, cultural, religious, economic and ideological tensions fuel open military conflicts and ever-more-frequent terrorist acts.

The protracted and deteriorating nature of these internal conflicts, along with sectarian violence, is polarizing countries across the region. In general, we note that many of these conflicts are interlinked and risk spreading throughout the region, with consequences affecting other regions through humanitarian crises, unprecedented flows of migrants and refugees, smuggling and trafficking in persons, illicit arms trafficking and asymmetric threats that undermine security.

Furthermore, as if the situation were not alarming enough, Equatorial Guinea is particularly concerned at certain statements and decisions relating to recent unexpected developments in the Persian Gulf and the surrounding region charged with significant potential to generate high-risk unrest and uncertainty and further stoke tensions in the Middle East. This risks jeopardizing billions of dollars in trade in a region that has for several years contributed not only to the development of its coastal populations but also to progress in many other parts of the world.

In the face of all those concerns, our delegation would like, first of all, to underscore the crucial need for a joint comprehensive strategy aimed primarily at creating an atmosphere of trust among the various peoples of the region. To that end, bearing in mind that the same ethnic and religious families coexist in many countries of the Middle East, national politicians must show leadership and promote policies of national cohesion that seek to harmonize and normalize the coexistence of those religions and cultures. Reaching that objective would not only facilitate the coexistence

of the various peoples of the Middle East, but would also improve relations among nations in the region.

Moreover, the United Nations plays a critical role in any process to bring peace and stability to the Middle East, be it through the Security Council or through the good offices of the Secretary-General. The Council, as the primary organ for the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security, has a key role to play in facilitating and supporting genuine and broad efforts to prevent and address violence, as well as in creating and sustaining initiatives for lasting peace in the Middle East.

In that connection, the unity of all Council members on all key issues is critical. Due to their proximity and knowledge of the environment, regional and subregional organizations can also support the efforts of the United Nations in preventive diplomacy, mediation and confidence-building.

With regard to the ongoing conflicts and wars, we know that reaching a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and past agreements continues to be a top priority and a necessary condition to achieving peace and security in the region. In this conflict, there has always been a desire to see just and sincere collaboration by influential countries in the region.

We have all seen how the wars in Syria, Yemen and elsewhere have wreaked havoc on their own civilians, including women and children. Millions are now refugees and are creating a heavy burden for destination countries, to which we pay tribute for their hospitality. What these conflicts and wars are missing is political solutions to put an end to human suffering and enabling the dignified return of the displaced to their countries of origin. We therefore stress the importance of respecting international law, particularly international humanitarian law and human rights law, in ongoing conflicts, as well as of combating terrorism, which is spreading due to the destabilization of State institutions.

I conclude by expressing our concern about regime-change policies, interventionism and interference in the internal affairs of other States, which, in some cases, have been political instruments that have resulted in regime change and weakened institutions, giving way, in turn, to loose border controls and the emergence of chaos in certain States, as we see today

in Libya — the effects of which are being acutely felt in West Africa and Central Africa.

Mr. Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the holding of this meeting on peace and security challenges in the Middle East and we welcome your participation, Mr. President, in this debate. We thank Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, for her briefing. We also welcome to today's meeting Mr. Michael Pompeo, Secretary of State of the United States, and Mr. Andreas Michaelis, State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany.

The peace and security challenges facing the countries of the Middle East have always garnered the attention of the Council. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the crises in Syria and Yemen and the Iranian nuclear issue continue to make up a large part of our work. The complexity of these issues and the multifaceted threats they represent require the search for innovative solutions through the concerted action of the United Nations and regional organizations, as well as enhanced regional cooperation.

A review of the situation in the Middle East reveals a lack of prospects for political settlements, a lack of democratic governance, deadlocked peace processes, high geopolitical and religious tensions and humanitarian tragedies. That bleak scenario, to be generous, is compounded by the serious threat to security and stability represented by the emergence of peripheral non-State actors, including armed groups and terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

In view of this seemingly hopeless situation in the Middle East, Côte d'Ivoire calls for dialogue as the best way to strengthen mutual understanding and build the necessary trust for the comprehensive settlement of these crises. We therefore urge all stakeholders in Middle East conflicts to decisively commit to constructive negotiations, with the support of regional, subregional and multilateral actors, in order to build the foundations for lasting peace.

We have a proverb that says that war will never be rich enough to buy peace and that dialogue is the weapon of the strong, not the weak. For negotiations to be successful, they must be inclusive and take into account all important regional issues — dialogue among cultures and religions, minority rights and the

participation of women and young people in peace and development processes.

With regard to the Iranian nuclear issue, Côte d'Ivoire underscores that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), adopted on 14 July 2015, is a solid guarantee for the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as well as for regional and global peace and security. My country therefore calls on all the parties concerned to promote dialogue within the framework of the JCPOA in order to ensure peace and stability in the Middle East. In the same vein, my country remains convinced that the recent regrettable situation in the Strait of Hormuz can be resolved only through inclusive dialogue conducted in good faith.

With regard to the Palestinian conflict, Côte d'Ivoire calls on all the parties to renounce violence and unilateral actions, with a view to promoting a solution of two States coexisting in peace and security, within the framework of the pre-1967 borders and each with Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant Council resolutions.

As for the Syrian conflict, my delegation renews its support for the efforts of Mr. Geir Pedersen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, and calls on the parties to promote political dialogue and work towards the establishment of the constitutional committee, in keeping with the relevant provisions of resolution 2254 (2015).

Finally, with regard to the situation in Yemen, Côte d'Ivoire urges the parties to implement the December 2018 Stockholm agreements, to cease hostilities and to resolutely pursue the political settlement endorsed by Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, as discussed in the Council this morning (see S/PV.8598).

My delegation would like to note with regret the lack of Council unity on these issues, which renders its action ineffective, while civilian populations continue to face humanitarian crises and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are a daily reality in the region. Côte d'Ivoire therefore calls for the establishment of a strategic partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations, including the League of Arab States, for the prevention and peaceful settlement of disputes in the Middle East.

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

I now give the floor to the representative of Bahrain.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to thank you, Mr. President, and the Polish delegation for convening this important meeting on threats to peace and security in the Middle East.

I also wish to welcome the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Pompeo, and thank him for his statement, as well as the State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany. I welcome, as well, Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, and thank her for her briefing.

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain has affirmed that security and stability throughout the world hinge on the free flow of trade. Security undoubtedly rests on what takes place in this important region. The challenges that the region has been encountering are complicated, deep-rooted and liable to change the region for many decades to come. It is therefore incumbent upon us, as the international community, to undertake all the necessary efforts to guarantee stability in the region, and that all countries should be committed to the principles of good neighbourliness, mutual respect and the non-intervention in the internal affairs of others. In doing so, we will avoid long-term destabilization in that part of the world.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is convinced that the achievement of lasting security, peace and development in the region is a shared responsibility and that it is necessary for us to agree on shared mechanisms that ensure collective security in the Middle East, in cooperation with allied States. That is key to achieving peace and security for States and peoples alike. We must also reject all those who attempt to destabilize this strategic region, which is already riddled with various threats, foremost of which is terrorism.

One of the most significant challenges facing our region is the disastrous consequences and damages resulting from terrorism. That is a noxious scourge that

claims lives, destroys infrastructure and imperils the stability and security of States. It prompts us to reiterate our firm condemnation of terrorism in all its forms, regardless of the perpetrators, places or reasons. We also reaffirm the need to make joint efforts to counter the extremist thinking of terrorist groups and dry up their sources of financing.

In that regard, I wish to recall the eleventh meeting of the Counter Da'esh Finance Group Meeting, which was held in Bahrain from 16 to 17 April. The international efforts that have been undertaken to assiduously counter Da'esh were under discussion during the event. The potential of Da'esh to perpetrate attacks has been significantly downgraded in many countries, as well as diminishing its capacity to finance and wage attacks. Such progress requires us to persevere in our efforts to ensure that we defeat Da'esh and similar terrorist groups, completely eradicate them and end their channels of financing. The transfer of funds to those terrorist groups outside of the global monetary system represents one of the greatest challenges we face, as Da'esh, Hizbullah and Al-Qaida illegally use such funds.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms its firm position regarding the Palestinian question and the right of the Palestinian people to establish their independent State, within the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of the two-State solution, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant resolutions of international legitimacy. Together with the United States of America, we held a meeting from 25 to 26 June to address the need to facilitate a promising economic future for the Palestinian people. During that meeting, there was an exchange of ideas on laying the foundation for a prosperous future for the brotherly Palestinian people.

The Iran-backed coup militias continue to place obstacles before the Government of Yemen and threaten the security of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In that regard, we condemn the terrorist attack perpetrated against the Saudi Shaybah oilfield, which was targeted by the Houthi militias in a cowardly terrorist act that constitutes a destabilizing and significant threat against the oil reserves of the whole world. We support and extend our solidarity to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the measures that it has been taking to defend its security and interests.

As part of our policy and initiatives, based on effective participation to achieve security and peace through cooperation with our international partners, allies and brethren, we held an important military meeting at the international level, on 31 July, regarding the situation prevailing in the region, as well as the ways to step up cooperation and coordination to tackle repeated acts of aggression and the practices that we reject that seek to subvert maritime security in Arab Gulf waters and the Strait of Hormuz, and jeopardize stability in the region and the world.

The Kingdom of Bahrain will host a meeting on maritime and air security later this year, in conjunction with the United States of America and Poland. That initiative is in line with the role the Kingdom of Bahrain plays in contributing to establishing security and stability within the region, as well as to countering the threats faced by the region as a result of Iranian practices, which represent a grave danger to maritime and air routes.

To conclude, we reaffirm that achieving international peace and security requires that we all work hand in hand and forge innovative mechanisms to tackle challenges. We will continue to work alongside the international community to settle conflicts in a peaceful manner and establish peace and security in the region and the world.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on the assumption of your country to the presidency of the Security Council for the current month. Our delegation has reviewed the concept note (S/2019/643, annex) that you circulated in preparation for this debate, and we thank you for your initiative to convene this meeting.

As usual, and as we have witnessed in many previous meetings, some Member States of the Security Council have intentionally derailed the debate from its objective, namely, the diagnosis and treatment of the root causes of the challenges that impede the achievement of peace and security in the Middle East. They obstruct identifying the causes of occupation, aggression and the destructive external intervention in the affairs of the countries of the region in various forms, including by aiming to forcibly overthrow systems of Government and investing in terrorism over

peace, as my friend the Permanent Representative of Indonesia rightly mentioned.

Such causes include the fabrication of crises, their prolongation and dragging the entire region into bloody artificial wars to the detriment of the welfare, prosperity and security of the people. From the beginning of the twentieth century to this day, the Middle East has borne witness to tragic events as some colonial States have preferred to serve their own narrow interests and ambitions over the principles of law, justice, ethics and peace. Successfully meeting the challenges facing the region therefore requires upholding principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, which is the common denominator to all. Those countries must stop attempting to distort the Charter and manipulating its provisions.

Ever since the founding of the United Nations, the challenges facing the Middle East have taken up a major part of the Security Council's agenda and that of the United Nations. Although those challenges are regional in nature, they are of concern to everyone in the world. Dealing with them seriously and in accordance with the law is not merely a regional matter, but rather in the interests of the entire world. In that regard, my country's delegation would like to stress the following points.

First, any objective perspective concerning the reason for tensions in Middle East must admit that the main reason for this conflict and the absence of peace and stability in the region has, and always will be, the Israeli occupation of Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan. That is not owing to any racial, religious or sectarian factors, which are fabricated reasons being propagated in order to fragment the countries of the region, redraw their borders and weaken the resilience of our peoples faced by Israeli bullying.

The lack of the necessary mechanisms for enforcing the implementation of the Security Council's own resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict has led to the continuation of the occupation and enabled it to continue its crimes against our people in the occupied Arab territories. It has encouraged the United States Administration to shirk its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions, which was apparent in the United States President's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan, and the attempt to pass off a suspicious deal, which is tantamount to the crime of the century.

Moreover, as we have repeatedly underscored, that has encouraged the Special Coordinator for the Middle East, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, to not perform his mandated duties. Anyone who questions the existence of an organic link between what is happening in our region, on the one hand, and the quest to entrench and prolong the Israeli occupation of Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, on the other, is delusional, misinformed or naive.

Secondly, the United Nations was founded on the principles of the sovereign equality of States and non-intervention in their internal affairs. Moreover, it was founded on the principle of refraining from the threat or use of force. Respecting those lofty principles calls for, inter alia, compelling the United States and its allies, including the Turkish occupation forces, to cease their illegal military presence on my country's territories and their pro-terrorism aggression and crimes against Syrians and civilian infrastructure.

We have seen how the Erdoğan regime has brought Uzbek, Tajik, Caucasian, Turk, Uighur, European and Arab mercenaries and terrorists across the border between Syria and Turkey into Idlib to support the terrorist Jabhat Al-Nusra and other terrorist entities affiliated with it. It has also brought in weapons and ammunition to support those terrorists. Furthermore, some have demonstrated the degree to which they have colluded by calling those foreign terrorists the "moderate armed Syrian opposition".

Thirdly, we call for the immediate and unconditional lifting of the coercive unilateral measures, which the United Nations has consistently declared illegitimate and which have had a devastating impact on the people of the region and their ability to achieve development, while leading them to leave their homes as refugees and migrants. Those coercive measures are also a form of economic terrorism complementing the terrorism of terrorist groups. They are an expression of hypocrisy when seen against the backdrop of starving people, while depriving them of their basic needs and proclaiming concern about the welfare of the Syrian people and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development so that no one is left behind.

Fourthly, we must deal firmly with the threat posed by Israel's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) to the security and safety of the people in our region and compel Israel to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as a non-nuclear

State, and place all its activities and facilities under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency in accordance with resolution 487 (1981). In that regard, we renew our call for adopting the Syrian initiative aimed at establishing a zone free of all WMDs and, above all, nuclear weapons in the Middle East. Draft resolution S/2003/1208 on that initiative was submitted by my country during its membership on the Security Council in 2003 and continues to be held prisoner in the Council's filing cabinets.

Concerning the situation in the Gulf region, my country condemns policies that fabricate crises and ignite new wars in the region the goal of which is to distract the peoples of the region from pursuing their main cause, which is ending the Israeli occupation, and countering attempts to impose hegemony and plunder the region's wealth. If we fail to do that, we will witness new wars in which the people of our region will be the primary victims. The repercussions will not be limited to the Middle East but will go well beyond.

In conclusion, the time has come for the peoples of our region to live as others throughout the world — in prosperity, safety and stability — reclaim their role in enriching human civilization, the cradle of which is in the Middle East, and establish the values of peace and coexistence among peoples, civilizations and cultures. That requires the Security Council to adopt a serious and effective approach to dealing with the reasons underlying the instability that I just mentioned and to move away from a policy of selectivity and double standards, which has been the salient characteristic of the Council's way of dealing with the issues of our region, mistakenly called the Middle East.

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

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Turkey): I thank you, Madam President, for organizing this timely debate on a theme that is of paramount importance to the maintenance of international peace and security.

For centuries, the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa lived together in peace and harmony, regardless of their race, religion, language, sect or ethnicity. They did so and flourished politically, economically, socially and intellectually, with a sense of shared destiny, embracing at the same time their differences as a source of richness.

Today's reality differs dramatically from that historical background, and the region is confronted with ever-growing complex challenges. Sectarian and divisive policies, the brutal repression of legitimate demands for democracy and unresolved armed conflicts resulting in mass displacements, coupled with feelings of resentment owing to growing discrimination, have created a breeding ground for relapse into violence.

Today the main challenge in the region remains keeping the prospects for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict alive. It is regrettable that the vision of a two-State solution, which is the only feasible path to resolve that long-standing issue, has been deliberately weakened owing to unilateral and illegal practices in the occupied Palestinian territories. Any peace plan for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should endorse an independent, sovereign, contiguous and viable Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security. There is no other alternative to viable peace.

Concerning Syria, in addition to the horrific crimes of Al-Assad's brutal regime in the form of indiscriminate air strikes, barrel bombs, chemical weapons, artillery shelling and, as recently seen once again in Idlib, the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, there are other menaces facing the civilian population in Syria, such as the well-documented crimes of terrorist organizations such as Da'esh, Al-Qaida and other affiliated groups, as well as the Kurdish Workers Party and its Syrian brand — the Democratic Union Party and the Kurdish People's Protection Units. Let us not forget that only a political solution based on resolution 2254 (2015) can end the Syrian civil war.

In that context, I would also like to refer to hallucinatory remarks of the representative of the Syrian regime with regard to my country. I repeat that I do not consider him to be my legitimate counterpart. His presence here is an affront to the millions of Syrians who have suffered countless crimes at the hands of the regime. Therefore, I will not honour his delusional accusations with a response.

We are also deeply worried about the deteriorating situation in Yemen. We call upon all parties in Yemen to refrain from further deepening the political and humanitarian crisis in the country. There can be no military solution in Yemen. Inclusive political dialogue is the only way to establish peace and security in the

country. Turkey will continue to support international efforts aimed at promoting security and stability in Yemen, as well as protecting the unity and integrity of the country.

We also see no military solution in Libya. Peace and stability in Libya can be achieved only through political dialogue and compromise. Regional and international actors have a crucial role to play in ending the conflict and paving the way to peace and stability in Libya. The divisions within the international community make it impossible for the Council to assume its most-needed role. There is an urgent need to return to the United Nations-facilitated political process.

In conclusion, the international community—first and foremost the Council—should play a more constructive and assertive role in resolving the conflicts in the Middle East. That requires, first of all, respect for the basic principles of international law enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including respect for political unity and territorial integrity, the peaceful resolution of disputes and good neighbourly relations.

Secondly, members of the international community should respect and implement United Nations resolutions that pertain to the security and stability of the region, including those on Palestine. That is *sine qua non* for a basis for mutual understanding.

Thirdly, it is essential that the international community avoid approaching the conflicts in the Middle East from a zero-sum perspective. Peace, security and stability in the Middle East are in our common interests. We are all affected by armed conflicts, wars and crises in the Middle East, and by ensuing mistrust, alienation and radicalization. If peace is to triumph, we should constitute a solid foundation for better dialogue, understanding, cooperation and collaboration within and with the region.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Gonzato: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Liechtenstein align themselves with this statement.

Conflict resolution for the Middle East, followed by post-crisis management, is one of the most difficult tasks international diplomacy currently faces. The EU fully supports the United Nations, and in particular

the Security Council, as the key actor for upholding respect for, and compliance with, international law, such as United Nations and Security Council resolutions relevant to the situation in the Middle East. Only if all sides comply with their obligations under international law, including adherence to all resolutions of the Security Council, can credible peace take root. Otherwise sustainable peace is a stake.

A key challenge to peace and security in the Middle East is terrorism fuelled by radicalization and violent extremism. Even if Da'esh has been territorially defeated in Syria and Iraq, it continues to pose a serious threat. Terrorist threats also exist elsewhere, including in Yemen and Gaza. In fact, while there is a concentration of such activity in the Middle East region, terrorism can strike in all parts of the world.

Another element to consider is the lack of trust among key parties and the absence of a political horizon for many citizens. Many countries in the Middle East are witnessing an erosion of the social contract, which puts serious strain on social cohesion and territorial integrity. That has led to the fragmentation of society and the multiplication of subnational armed forces and armed actors with narrow interests. Without trust and inclusiveness, no political solution can be successful.

Let me explain how we see all those factors in relation to the situation across the Middle East.

The EU is extremely concerned about the measures taken by Iran since the beginning of July that are inconsistent with its nuclear-related commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). We call upon Iran to reverse those steps immediately, refrain from any further steps that could lead to escalation and come back into compliance with its obligations. We recall our firm commitments under the agreement, including with regard to the lifting of sanctions for the benefit of the Iranian people. In that regard, we regret the re-imposition of sanctions by the United States, following its withdrawal from the JCPOA.

Our support for the JCPOA, endorsed unanimously by resolution 2231 (2015), goes hand in hand with our efforts to promote stability in the region. We remain committed to the preservation and full implementation of the JCPOA — a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, which is in the security interests of all. We are determined to work with the international community to achieve those goals. We are also gravely concerned about Iran's

ballistic missile activity and transfer of missiles and relevant technologies to State and non-State actors in the region. We call upon Iran to refrain from any activity that is inconsistent with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The EU supports a balanced and comprehensive approach with Iran, including dialogue, with a view to addressing all issues of concern, being critical when there are active divergences and cooperative when there is mutual interest. We are determined to continue pursuing efforts to enable the continuation of legitimate trade with Iran, including through the initiative by France, Germany and the United Kingdom to operationalize the special-purpose vehicle INSTEX, which is registered as a private entity and will support European economic operators engaged in legitimate trade with Iran, in accordance with EU law and resolution 2231 (2015).

The freedom and security of maritime navigation in the Gulf is currently at stake. The European Union always supports the freedom of navigation, which is essential to all our economies. Everybody must fully respect international law, including, notably, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which is rightly recognized widely as the constitution of the oceans, reflecting customary international law. The EU has called upon all actors in the Gulf region to exercise restraint. Prompt de-escalation is necessary to minimize the risk of miscalculation, which remains high.

Also with respect to Iran, de-escalation and restraint are of fundamental importance. In recent high-level meetings in Iran, Kuwait and other countries in the region, we underlined our concerns about the prevailing situation and, in turn, our partners have expressed their own determination to work to promote calm and stability.

The EU continues to insist on full respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law in Yemen. That includes respecting and protecting civilian lives, as well as respecting the work of humanitarian aid workers. Furthermore, the European Union remains fully committed to the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen. The EU urges all parties to cease violence and engage in dialogue immediately, in particular by fulfilling their commitments to the United Nations-led process in an inclusive and sustainable political process.

The same must be said of the Syrian conflict and the protracted violent repression against the civilian population in Syria, which has continued to take innocent lives for more than eight years. Successive ceasefire agreements have been violated. The EU has repeatedly expressed its grave concerns about the escalation of violence in Idlib, caused primarily by the Syrian regime and Russia, which threatens the safety and security of 3 million people. The EU reiterates its call for a durable ceasefire to be ensured under the terms agreed upon in the Sochi memorandum, as well as for the need to ensure unhindered, safe and sustainable humanitarian access.

The EU insists that there can be no military solution and that only a political solution in line with resolution 2254 (2015) can bring about sustainable peace and stability. The EU fully supports the work of the United Nations Special Envoy, including efforts in support of the creation of a balanced and inclusive constitutional committee that would allow for progress in the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva towards a credible, negotiated, Syrian-owned political solution to the conflict.

The European Union stresses that, with a view to finding sustainable solutions, it is also key to pave the way for free and fair elections, to support Syrian civil society, including women and their equitable and meaningful engagement in the political process, and to identify measures to build confidence among parties to the conflict, including on the issue of detainees and missing persons.

The EU will be ready to assist in the reconstruction of Syria only when a comprehensive, genuine and inclusive political transition, negotiated by the Syrian parties to the conflict, on the basis of resolution 2254 (2015) and the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2013/522, annex), is firmly under way.

The European Union considers accountability and justice as prerequisites for sustainable peace in the region and, given the lack of jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, will continue to support the work of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria and the Independent Commission of Inquiry. We will continue to provide funding for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in order to identify and hold accountable the perpetrators of chemical attacks in Syria. Promoting accountability and justice is a key

element of reconciliation in post-crisis management, not just in Syria but also in Iraq, where we support the evidence-gathering work being carried out by the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh.

With regard to the Middle East peace process, let me begin by reaffirming the EU's commitment to a just and comprehensive resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a two-State solution and an agreement that ends the occupation that began in 1967, ending all claims and fulfilling the aspirations of both parties, including Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters. The EU's firm and united position on those resolutions and parameters has been set out in detail on numerous occasions. We reaffirm our readiness to work with both parties and our partners in the region and the international community towards the resumption of meaningful negotiations to resolve all final-status issues and to achieve a just and lasting peace.

Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law and constitute a significant obstacle to peace, as reaffirmed in resolution 2334 (2016). The ongoing Israeli settlement policy threatens the prospects for a two-State solution.

Recent and increasing violence in Gaza, including the firing of rockets into Israel, and violence in the West Bank remind us that restoring a political horizon for peace between Israelis and Palestinians is essential to reduce violence and contain extremism in the region. In the light of recent tensions, which threaten to exacerbate the risk to the whole region, the EU recalls the special significance of the holy sites in Jerusalem and calls for the upholding of the status quo put in place in 1967 for the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif in line with previous understandings and with respect to Jordan's special role.

With regard to Lebanon, the EU stresses the importance for progress on the structural and economic reform commitments undertaken at the Conference for Economic Development and Reform through Enterprises in Paris, as well as reforms related to the security sector, as pledged at the Rome II meeting, in March 2018. Moreover, the EU is a strong supporter of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)

and reiterates its crucial role in maintaining peace and stability in the south of Lebanon as well as in the region. As such, the EU emphasizes the importance of UNIFIL being able to deliver its mandate in full. The EU also insists on full respect for, and the implementation of, resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006) by all parties, including the call for the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon.

On counter-terrorism, the European Union maintains its firm commitment to assisting and working closely together with our partners in the region. Besides Da'esh, the reappearance of Al-Qaida in the region continues to provide fertile ground for violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism, as do other terrorist organizations sanctioned by the EU, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

The regular counter-terrorism dialogues with our regional partners, including Israel, Egypt and Jordan, provide the framework for enhanced joint efforts aimed at diminishing terrorist propaganda from the Internet, halting resources financing terrorism and ensuring due accountability for terrorist atrocities, which constitute grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, war crimes and crimes against humanity. We are pleased that the Global Coalition Against Da'esh is pursuing these objectives.

Another key challenge to bringing about peace and security in the Middle East is the lack of trust and the need to create conditions for peace among the population. Strengthening democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is an essential strategy for building trust among different groups in societies and between the Government and its citizens. It is important to act against any form of incitement to hatred and violence, including by using the education system to promote mutual tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

This analysis leads to the conclusion that sustainable solutions to the conflicts in the Middle East can be found only through multilateral cooperation: by policy and actions coordinated by the international community, some of which are translated into international law; or, in other words, by means of a rules-based international order to which the parties on the ground and international actors commit themselves.

I would like to underscore that international law includes international humanitarian law and human rights law. Only a few days ago, we celebrated 70

years of the Geneva Conventions. The EU's support for international law is one of the key building blocks of the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy. Our clear policy is in favour of the full implementation of international humanitarian law at all times, everywhere—in Syria, Yemen and, equally, in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Our commitment to the fight against terrorism and our work with partners on the ground to build confidence exemplify our commitment to the multilateral approach. Many actions have been agreed at the international or multilateral level, of which I have mentioned several. Most are led by the United Nations. The EU, for its part, will continue to support peace and security in the Middle East, including through the United Nations.

The lack of implementation of agreed policies and of enforcement of international law is the real challenge to bringing about peace and security in the Middle East. It has almost become fashionable simply not to agree on a course of action or follow agreements. Narrow interests often prevail over the international need for compromise and mutual gain. The international community must therefore seek methods to make agreed policies implementable and to ensure full respect for international law.

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

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to say that my country endorses the statement to be delivered by the representative of the United Arab Emirates on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

I would like to thank you, Madam President, for your valuable initiative in organizing this meeting on the maintenance of international peace and security and the particular challenges facing peace and security in the Middle East.

I likewise thank you, Madam, for the concept note (S/2019/643, annex) prepared by your delegation, which raised a number of questions and ideas that deserve consideration. The note refers to the root causes of the conflicts in the Middle East. Some believe that these conflicts are ethnic or religious in nature and stretch back hundreds, or thousands, of years. In reality that is not the case at all, especially when it comes to the two main entities responsible for threatening peace and security in the region, namely, Israel and Iran.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has never been an ethnic or religious conflict. Indeed, Muslim Arabs have lived with their Jewish and Christians counterparts in peace and security throughout the Arab-Islamic rule in Palestine. That situation changed only when the Zionist movement, a colonialist and racist one, took control of Palestinian territories and homes at the beginning of the twentieth century. After that, Zionist gangs, such as the Irgun and others, embarked upon ethnic cleansing that targeted Palestinians, turning them into refugees and depriving them of their right to life, dignity and self-determination.

It is not a matter of historical revenge, therefore, between Palestinians and Jews in Palestine, but rather basic principles recognized by international law and United Nations resolutions, starting with the unjust partition plan presented in resolution 181 (1947), which insisted on the need to create an independent Palestinian State, as well as resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 497 (1981), 672 (1990), 694 (1991), 1860 (2009) and 2334 (2016), all of which reaffirm the need to create a Palestinian State along the 4 June 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital.

Although the world has recognized the imperative need for the two-State solution, Israel continues to delay and refuses to recognize the historic right of the Palestinian people to their land. Worse yet, Israel continues its provocations, most recently its entry by force into the Al-Aqsa Mosque and its aggression against that sanctuary on Eid Al-Adha. We condemn that aggression in the strongest terms.

In addition, some speak of a centuries-old conflict between Shiites and Sunnis and maintain that disagreements with Iran are an embodiment of that conflict. That is also completely false. Indeed, although Shiite doctrine has existed in certain Arab regions going back nearly 1,200 years, it did not spread to Iran until the sixteenth century, during the reign of Safavid, who managed to convert Iran into a Shiite country, but did not manage to do the same beyond it. That is why to speak of a historic religious conflict lasting over 1,000 years is an illusion. Shiite Muslims have lived in the Arab world alongside their brothers from various Sunni sects in cooperation, peace and security.

The disagreements with Iran surfaced only after the Iranian revolution, which gave the Shiite doctrine a decisive, even exclusive, role in certain domains. The Iranian revolution did not stop there. It called for

exporting the revolution to the Muslim world. Indeed, the Iranian Constitution stipulates the pursuit of the revolution within the country and abroad.

Recognizing those historic realities is a starting point for ensuring international peace and security in the Middle East. It is imperative to recognize the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and their right to create an independent State. Amid the violence, settlements, displacement and destruction of homes, it is imperative to recognize the right of the people of the region to live in peace, free from interference in internal affairs, free from exported revolutions through militias, such as the Houthis and Hizbullah, and without being pitted against their own countrymen.

The Security Council must use every means to reaffirm the basic principles of international relations and reject occupation, violence, oppression, sedition and incitement to violence, of which Israel and Iran are guilty, and through which they have destabilized the Middle East region. Recognizing those basic principles will enable the entire region to dedicate their human, intellectual and natural resources for cooperation, development and fighting terrorism and dealing with causes of its expansion, such as foreign occupation, marginalization, social injustice and ethnic and religious discrimination among people of the same country.

My country reaffirms its commitment to the principles of international law. We support all measures to ensure peace, stability and security in the region. We also support development in the region, for we are convinced that comprehensive development in the Middle East will usher in stability, eradicate terrorism and defuse conflicts.

My country is always working to cooperate, discuss and peacefully settle all conflicts. Nevertheless, we must reaffirm that calls for dialogue must go hand in hand with an end to threats and interference in internal affairs, such as attacks against, and attempted assassinations of, diplomats and representatives, cyberattacks against infrastructure, propaganda, sedition and support for, and sponsoring of, militias and terrorist groups. If those practices do not practically stop, all calls for dialogue will be nothing more than talk and will serve only hegemonic and expansionist aims.

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

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to congratulate the Republic of Poland on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of August. We thank you, Madam President, for holding this important high-level meeting, and we wish you every success.

The Middle East region is deeply divided, with attempts to destroy its diverse ethnic, racial and cultural fabric, with decades-long conflicts, new conflicts, the emergence of terrorism and new forms of violent extremism that undermine peace, sustainable development and human rights. Countries' safety and their very existence are at risk. Millions of people have been forcibly displaced from their homes, which in turn has destabilized other countries.

We must recognize that the main reason for racial, ideological and sectarian conflicts has been the presence of political, social and economic problems and the spread of hate speech, which has sparked conflicts that have claimed the lives of millions of innocent people. The region needs stability based on a system of collective security, respect for sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs and the rejection of violence and extremism. The security of our region is both collective and interconnected.

Iraq, with its geopolitical significance, its potential and its cultural diversity, could help build understanding that strengthens security and political stability in the region. We also believe that any clash in our region will jeopardize the security of Iraq. We therefore suggest holding constructive dialogues between the countries concerned in order to defuse tensions and overcome differences among all parties so as to avoid further escalation and prevent more war in our region, with negative repercussions for all.

The Government of my country reaffirms that the Israeli occupation is the cause of tensions in our region. We can hardly fathom stability and security in the region without reaching a solution that renders justice to the Palestinian people and meets their legitimate aspirations to freedom and to establishing a viable, independent State. We also reaffirm the need for further consultations to reach a political solution that prevents more despair and acts of violence and extremism in the region and beyond. We must all work on creating the necessary conditions to achieve comprehensive peace.

At the same time, the uniqueness of the Holy City of Jerusalem must be addressed as part of a

comprehensive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which must also include the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. That is the only way to achieve peace, stability and security.

The pillars of lasting security and peace in the region are not limited to security and political agreements, but they also require combating corruption, enhancing the role of women, supporting young people and meeting their aspirations and addressing the challenges of climate change.

Corruption is one of the root causes of political crises and societal divides in countries. It is one of the reasons for emerging conflicts, and it is also linked to the illegal arms and drugs trafficking and violent extremism. Countries must consolidate good governance, combat corruption and adopt correct and effective policies to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

Furthermore, we must support women so that they can hold leadership positions in the economic, political and administrative spheres. That is key to achieving sustainable development in our countries, as modern civic States that guarantee the rights and dignity of all. We must also meet the aspirations of young people for a better future so that they do not fall victim to the grasp of extremist ideas and join armed groups. Young people must be integrated in their societies and become productive citizens. We must step up the level of education and increase opportunities of employment in order to meet their needs and allow them to build, instead of destroying, their societies.

Lastly, one of the threats to peace and security is the unequitable use of water resources and the spread of desertification, which has had a negative impact on the environment. It has led to wide displacement within and outside national borders. We therefore need clear regional frameworks that regulate the equitable and reasonable use of water.

In conclusion, Iraq reaffirms that the best way to maintain regional security is peace and cooperation among the countries of the region and a joint stance against terrorism and extremism, with a view to achieving our collective security, while respecting the sovereignty of countries and rejecting any intervention in the internal affairs of States. We must strengthen the ties of friendship and deepen economic and cultural

integration. Peace and harmony could help launch the process of sustainable development in our countries.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Takht Ravanchi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting. I also thank the Chef de Cabinet to the Secretary-General for her input.

The main and longest-running conflict in the Middle East is the question of Palestine. As long as it remains unsolved, peace and security in the Middle East cannot be restored. The unlawful occupation of Palestine is the main cause; it can therefore end only by an end to the occupation. There is no magic solution. All initiatives so far have disregarded that principle and failed. The so-called deal of the century is bound to fail for the same reason. The land of Palestine is not up for sale, and the aspirations, honour, dignity and inalienable rights of an entire nation cannot be bought.

The United States, by supporting the occupation, has been responsible for the prolongation of the conflict. That is the case with respect to almost all other conflicts in the region. One can easily track the United States involvement in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen, supporting some terrorist groups and many other unlawful acts, including cyberattacks in the Middle East.

Yesterday marked the sixty-sixth anniversary of a United States-United Kingdom-orchestrated coup against the democratically elected Government of Iran. After the Islamic revolution, instances of United States interference in Iran include supporting Saddam Hussein in his aggression against Iran; downing an Iranian passenger flight, which killed all 290 on-board, including 66 children; supporting several coup attempts; and perpetrating economic terrorism that targets ordinary and vulnerable Iranians, such as patients by using food and medicine as a weapon against them.

One of the main causes of the instability and insecurity in our sensitive region is the military presence of the United States, which has deployed over 70,000 troops across the Middle East and maintains an active military presence in all littoral States of the Persian Gulf, except Iran. The number of foreign military installations in the Middle East has increased from four in 1990 to 41 in 2018, almost all of which are United

States installations, which is the highest concentration of foreign military installations in the world.

In addition to the illegal withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, another destabilizing factor is the unbridled flow of American weaponry into the region, which has turned it into a powder keg. Unfortunately, some countries in our region, such as Saudi Arabia, are recipients of that deadly weaponry, with the illusion that they can buy security by relying on the United States. In fact, the only beneficiary of that accumulation of weaponry in the region is the defence industry of exporting countries.

Likewise, we should not lose sight of the destabilizing nature and impact of the divide-and-rule strategy of the United States, through which it has persistently sowed division among the countries of the region. The Iranophobic statements of United States officials also serve the same purpose. They disseminate fabrications against Iran to justify their policy in the region, with the aim of excluding Iran from playing its role in the region. Iran has been in this region for millennia and will remain there for millennia to come. Any attempt to exclude or by-pass Iran from the region is therefore an illusion and doomed to fail.

While we are not seeking confrontation, we cannot and will not remain indifferent to the violation of our sovereignty. In order to secure our borders and interests, we will therefore vigorously exercise our inherent right to self-defence. As a country with the longest coastlines in the Persian Gulf and the Oman Sea, Iran is determined to continue ensuring the safety and security of maritime navigation in the area, particularly the Strait of Hormuz. The interference of foreign forces in that strategic waterway, under whatever pre-text, is destabilizing and therefore unacceptable. Any attempt at artificial coalition-building for securing navigation in the area will fail.

We believe that the littoral States are responsible for the security of the Persian Gulf. That is the basis of our initiative to create a regional dialogue forum, which is in line with paragraph 8 of resolution 598 (1987). We will continue consultations with our brothers in the region to realize such a lofty goal.

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

Mr. Ahmed (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the delegation of Poland

for organizing this debate to discuss the challenges to peace and security in the Middle East. We thank you, Madam President, for inviting the countries of the region to participate in this important discussion.

The Middle East is suffering from many challenges that for decades have prevented the peoples of the region from meeting their aspirations and enjoying peace, security and stability. Those challenges include political, security and economic ones. The region has also faced many wars since the middle of last century, and that has depleted the capacity and resources of its peoples.

The Arab-Israeli conflict, and at its core the Palestinian question, is one of the oldest and most notable crises in the region during last century. It has been passed down through generations within the region while preventing our peoples from enjoying security and stability. That is happening despite the inherent right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

Double standards and the absence of justice continue to plague the Palestinian question to this day. That is one of the reasons underlying the absence of security and stability in the region, while at the same time the Palestinian people continue to suffer from the exploitation of others so that they can achieve their narrow self-interests. They also help to spread extremist thinking and terrorism. Despite numerous initiatives and rounds of negotiations to achieve comprehensive and lasting peace in the region, we believe that it is necessary to relaunch the Arab Peace Initiative and its principles to achieve peace in the region, thereby guaranteeing the rights of all parties and addressing their concerns for a better future for generations to come.

The Middle East has also suffered for years from challenges that threaten the concept of a national State and the intentions of some to promote sectarian, racial and religious divisions to destroy the principle of citizenship and national sovereignty. They have also attempted to demolish other firm principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, which has increased the suffering of the people in the region and led to the spread of armed conflicts, terrorist groups and illegal armed groups.

In that regard, I will mention several characteristics and root causes that are common to conflicts in the region despite the specific nature of every individual case. We are committed to meeting the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of those countries to achieve decent lives, peace, security and social justice. We reaffirm, however, that the only way to achieve that goal is to reform and maintain a national State, not by destroying it and creating chaos under any pretence.

Achieving security and stability in the Middle East will be achieved only by sincerely adhering to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, ensuring the security in the region, ending foreign interference, respecting the principles of good-neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of countries and halting the provocation of sectarian tensions that could lead to further tensions and unrest at a time when the region is in desperate need of security and stability.

As we address the goal of achieving security and stability in the region, I can only reiterate the need to take a serious stand against countries that provide financing to terrorism and training and safe haven to terrorists, and that use terrorists as a tool to interfere in the countries of the region in order to achieve their own ends, which only increases the suffering of, and bloodshed among, innocent victims. That threatens security and runs counter to international conventions. It is difficult to imagine success of international efforts to combat terrorism without standing firmly against those countries.

One of the pillars of achieving stability in the region is the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and resolutions 487 (1981) and 687 (1991). In that regard, we look forward to the support of all parties concerned for the holding of the conference to establish a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction, which will meet for the first session in November under the chairmanship of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. We urge the countries invited to the conference to participate in good faith so that we can begin to create a stable security system that addresses the security concerns of all the countries in the Middle East, leading to common security for all.

Egypt looks forward to making serious efforts to enable the Security Council and the United Nations

to carry out their responsibilities in order to achieve lasting security and peace in the Middle East and reach political settlements of dangerous chronic and emerging crises that plague our region, in accordance with resolutions of international legitimacy, the principles of the Charter and international law. Egypt reaffirms its full readiness to spare no effort to achieve that goal.

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

Mr. Danon (Israel): I would like to thank Poland for taking the initiative of convening this important meeting.

Before I begin, I want to take a minute to highlight the terror attacks that took place over the weekend, which symbolize the real threats to peace and security in the region. On Thursday, two young Palestinians armed with knives suddenly began attacking police officers in Jerusalem. One can look online at Youtube and see the horrible images of young boys inciting and attacking policemen. On Friday, a Palestinian drove his car into two young Israeli adults as they were waiting at a bus stop. On Saturday evening, the Israeli Defense Forces stopped three armed terrorists from breaching the Gaza security fence and attacking nearby civilian communities. All of that happened in a matter of a few days.

In addition, Hamas — an internationally recognized terrorist organization — continues to hold hostage two Israeli civilians and the abducted bodies of two fallen Israeli soldiers, and refuses to return them home. They also refuse to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit and provide information on their fate and condition. The families of Lieutenant Hadar Goldin, Sergeant Oron Shaul, Abera Mengistu and Hisham Al-Sayed deserve to be reunited with their loved ones. The international community cannot continue to stand idly by as that evil ploy persists. The State of Israel will not rest until all of its citizens are returned to our land.

We live in a historic age. Seventy years ago the world bore witness to the greatest story in generations — the re-establishment of the Jewish State in the Land of Israel. That rebirth did not begin a new story. Instead, it was the newest chapter in the continuing saga of the Jewish people in the Middle East. Forty years ago history was made yet again when a handshake between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Prime Minister Menachem Begin demonstrated to the world that Egypt recognized the legitimacy of the Jewish State in the

Middle East, proving to the entire Arab world how we can all live together in peace and security.

Today an unprecedented wave of normalization is sweeping the region as Israel continues to develop and improve relations with its Arab neighbours. In June, Bahraini Foreign Minister Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa declared,

“Israel is part of the heritage of this whole region historically. The Jewish people have a place among us”.

That is an extraordinary statement. The Foreign Minister’s words affirmed what is self-evident — that the Jews are a part of the region’s past, present and future and that we have a right to sovereignty. That is what sets the foundation for blossoming relations.

However, as I sit here today, the Palestinian leadership has yet to recognize that historic right. On the contrary, it keeps denying the Jewish historical connection to the land of Israel and our right to sovereignty. It is clear that the Palestinian leadership is trying to prevent the normalization of relations within the Middle East, which could unlock the great potential of the region. This afternoon I direct my remarks to the Palestinians and to all the Arab people throughout the region. Here is my message: Israel is not their enemy.

We saw growing prospects for regional peace and stability in the 1990s. In a climate of renewed negotiations, Israel and Jordan reached another historic peace agreement. Now, nearly three decades later, Israel and our Arab neighbours find ourselves in a similar environment. We have very good relations with many countries in our region. More than that, Israel and our Arab neighbours share a mutual understanding of the region’s threats and opportunities. We are deeply involved in confronting extremism and terrorism across the Middle East.

Yet the climate of today’s relationship-building is different in one large respect. Looming over us is a dark cloud of the threat posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Islamic Republic of Iran’s blatant pursuit of nuclear weapons for militant purposes, in violation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), should indicate to everyone in the Chamber that the regime does not want nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Iran’s ballistic missile arsenal, the largest in the Middle East, violates numerous Security Council resolutions. Just last month, the Islamic Republic of

Iran test-fired a medium-range missile over 1,000 kilometres. Members should look at a map and think about where such missiles could reach. Previously fired missiles were adorned with the phrase “Israel must be wiped out” in bold letters in Hebrew on their sides.

The regime’s support for terrorism has a global reach and is widely documented. Iran contributes more than \$7 billion annually to terrorist groups. Just two weeks ago, the Islamic Republic of Iran announced that it would increase its financial backing of Hamas from \$6 million to \$30 million a month. Its support of Hizbullah has contributed to the destabilization of Lebanon. Its involvement in Syria has continued to fuel the horrific civil war there, which has resulted in hundreds of thousands of casualties. Such malicious behaviour serves only one purpose — to export the Iranian revolution.

Yet Tehran is succeeding only in one key respect — bringing Israel closer to its Arab neighbours. The Warsaw summit in February proved that Israel and Arab countries can come together for regional collaboration. In their statements, Arab Foreign Ministers stood alongside Israel against the regime that hijacked Iran and asserted our right to defend ourselves. Behind closed doors, even here in this building, many of the region’s leaders freely admit that the main threat to the Middle East is Iran. Most of the violence, terrorism and chaos engulfing the region leads back to one place — Tehran. Our Arab neighbours understand that Israel is the leading force in the fight against radicalism and terrorism. And an increasing number of Arab countries are forging new ties with Israel. The common challenges require Arab leaders to tell their public what they already know to be true: Israel can be a partner.

We also see extremism within the Palestinian leadership. As Tehran openly calls for Israel’s destruction, Ramallah uses other means to undermine the Jewish State’s right to exist. That was best demonstrated just last week when, in response to a report on racism and discrimination within the Palestinian Authority (PA), instead of acknowledging the facts — it was not us, it was the United Nations Special Envoy — what did the representative of the PA do? He quoted from an anti-Semitic and revoked United Nations resolution that stated that Zionism was racism.

Such despicable language exposes the Palestinian Authority’s anti-Semitism as it continues to incite

hatred among its people against Jews and the Jewish State. The extremism of both Tehran and Ramallah is increasingly at odds with the growing sentiment among Arabs that Israel is and will continue to be a part of the region. Despite the situation, Israel remains interested in a dialogue through bilateral direct negotiations. So far, the Palestinian leadership refuses that path. Some of the challenges between Israelis and Palestinians are not only bilateral; they are regional. Regional problems require regional solutions. Therefore, I call on regional actors that no longer see Israel as the enemy to be involved in finding a solution, just as they pledged at the Bahrain summit. The Arab people must understand that Israel is not the problem. In fact, Israel is part of the solution. We can be partners in creating a better future for the region. To that end, I want to address my next statement to the Arab people. I shall speak to them now directly.

(spoke in Arabic)

I say to Arab people throughout the region what is already known in Egypt and Jordan. Israel is not the enemy.

(spoke in English)

Normalization is in our mutual interests. I would like to emphasize that it does not come at the expense of promoting dialogue with the Palestinian people. We are ready to engage in direct negotiations. However, I must ask, will the Palestinians even come to the table? In his ground-breaking speech in the Israeli Knesset, our Parliament, President Sadat said,

“There are moments in the life of nations and peoples when it is incumbent on those known for the wisdom and clarity of vision to overlook the past, with all its complexities and weighing memories, in a bold drive towards new horizons”.

President Sadat’s words were as true then as they are today. Israel eagerly awaits the time when a Palestinian Sadat will emerge to join us in a bold drive toward the future.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Alshamsi (United Arab Emirates) *(spoke in Arabic)*: At the outset, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, I would like to sincerely thank you, Madam President, for convening today’s important debate and to congratulate you on your country’s presidency of the

Security Council this month. It gives me great honour to deliver the following statement on behalf of the Arab Group, with Iraq's reservations on the language of some of its paragraphs, followed by a statement in my national capacity.

The Arab Group decided to participate in this important debate because the issues deliberated today strongly concern the Arab region. We wanted to ensure that our positions on those issues, which threaten security and stability in the region, are heard. Today our region suffers from serious challenges posed by several existing crises and conflicts, the spread of extremism and terrorism and interference in the internal affairs of Arab States. The current situation, which has transformed the Arab region into an arena for regional and international clashes, religious and sectarian conflicts and a safe haven for terrorist groups, cannot continue. All those issues led Arab leaders to hold an emergency meeting in Mecca at the end of May.

The declaration of the thirtieth annual Arab Summit, which was held in Tunisia on 31 March, underscored the Arab efforts to addressing the region's security, economic and development issues in our mutual pursuit of protecting our communities and shared interests. In that context, allow me to underscore five measures that Arab leaders determined must be implemented in order to achieve regional security and stability.

First, they called for stepping up efforts to end all forms of tension and conflict. We will continue our mutual efforts in accordance with a unified vision to strengthen Arab solidarity in securing security and stability for Arab countries and peoples, as well as improving their capacity to address political, security, economic and cultural challenges. That requires taking the lead in accelerating efforts aimed at reaching comprehensive political settlements for the current crisis. In that regard, we stress that establishing security, peace and stability in the Middle East region depends essentially on achieving a just and comprehensive settlement to the Palestinian question and the entire Arab-Israeli conflict. That requires Israel's withdrawal from all the territories it has occupied on June 1967. It also requires the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the 4 June 1967 borders, as well as putting an end to all forms of religious extremism exercised by Israel, the occupying Power, in the holy sites of Al-Quds, including Al-Haram Al-Sharif, and stopping

its attempts to alter the existing historical and legal status, which would increase tension in the region.

In that connection, the Arab Group affirms that the Palestinian question remains central to collective Arab action. The Arab Group is determined to continue efforts to relaunch serious and effective negotiations within a specific timeline, so as to address final-status issues, including Palestinian refugees, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Arab Group will also continue to work on ending the crises and challenges facing Libya, Syria, Yemen, the Sudan and Somalia, as well as supporting reconstruction efforts in Iraq. In that context, we stress the importance of compliance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant Security Council resolutions, as they are fundamental to achieving peace in the region.

In that context, the Arab Group stresses the importance of upholding international resolutions relating to the occupied Syrian Golan. The Group rejects any action aimed at changing the legal and demographic status of the Golan.

Secondly, Arab leaders called for protecting the region from foreign interference and ensuring that all States in the region respect the principles of good neighbourliness and refrain from the use or threat of force and from violating the sovereignty of States.

The Arab Group reaffirms its rejection and condemnation of targeting cities and territories of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with ballistic missiles. We also stress that the cooperation between Arab States and the Islamic Republic of Iran must be based on the principles of good neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and the non-use or threat to use force under international law, as well as refraining from any practices or actions that undermine confidence-building and threaten regional security and stability.

The Arab Group therefore condemns the Iranian Government's policy and ongoing interference in Arab affairs, which is fuelling religious and sectarian conflicts. In that regard, I would like to stress the need for Iran to refrain from supporting the groups that fuel such conflicts, especially in Arab Gulf States. We demand that Iran stop supporting and financing militias and armed parties in Arab States, particularly

with regard to its interference in Yemen. We also demand that Iran stop supporting the anti-Government militias in Yemen and supplying them with weapons, and refrain from turning Yemen into a platform for launching missiles against Yemen's neighbouring States or threatening maritime navigation in the Bab Al-Mandab Strait and the Red Sea. Those acts have had a negative impact on the security and stability of Yemen and of the region as a whole. They are also considered a clear violation of resolution 2216 (2015).

Thirdly, Arab leaders have stressed strengthening security coordination among Arab States and intensifying international efforts aimed at combating all forms of extremism and terrorism, including the eradication of their sources of financing. The Arab Group will continue to promote the values of tolerance, moderation and human rights and will counter all forms of sectarianism, exclusion and marginalization, which are exploited by terrorist groups and their supporters to disseminate their ideologies. Furthermore, we renew our support for the promotion of interfaith dialogue as a critical factor for spreading the values of tolerance, human solidarity and the acceptance of the other.

Fourthly, Arab leaders have highlighted the importance of taking concrete measures to implement international resolutions relating to the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We also support the major conference that the United Nations will hold on that issue, the first session of which will be held in November and chaired by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. We urge all the parties concerned to participate in the conference in good faith so as to establish a stable security system that achieves the collective security of the States of the region, without discrimination.

Fifthly, Arab leaders have signalled the need to focus on achieving inclusive development to improve the situation of the region through intensified collective efforts aimed at enhancing and stimulating economic cooperation and by investing in the natural, financial and human resources of Arab countries. We also reaffirm the need to intensify efforts aimed at increasing the volume of trade exchange and launching investment projects, which could contribute to forming an Arab economic bloc.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Arab Group, we stress that the League of Arab States, as an incubator of joint Arab action, is best positioned to contribute

to achieving the desired settlement and reconciliation for the crisis in the region. We therefore call on the Security Council and on the Organization as a whole to strengthen their consultations and meetings with the Arab Group, especially when discussing Arab issues, in order to reach the appropriate solutions and settlements for the region's crises and conflicts. The Group expresses its deep appreciation for the diligent efforts made by the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy to resolve these crises and promote stability in the region.

Allow me now to speak in my national capacity to mention some points that require a response in order to clarify the facts pertaining to them, as we believe that it is important to do so in order to achieve the objectives of this meeting.

We regret what we heard today, with regard to claims and allegations against my country, on the developments that took place in Aden. We categorically reject those claims in their entirety. It is worth noting that, in an official statement, my country has expressed its deep concern about the armed clashes in Aden between the legitimate Yemeni Government and the Southern Transitional Council. My country has called for calm and non-escalation and for safeguarding the safety and security of Yemeni citizens. That is the same position we adopted as a main partner in the coalition led by the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, the United Arab Emirates, as a partner in the coalition, will make every effort to de-escalate matters in southern Yemen. My country was part of the joint team, in cooperation with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, that sought to safeguard the national institutions in Aden when the Southern Transitional Council was formed. The team sought to coordinate and achieve calm among the various parties. That is the expected role from States that place the safety and security of the region as their primary objective.

We flatly reject the allegations that were made today. We would like to remind the Council that the United Arab Emirates, based on an official request from the legitimate Government of Yemen and as a member of the coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen, led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, has taken decisive measures against Houthi hostilities and in support of the legitimate Government. The United Arab Emirates has made great sacrifices in that regard, which serves to refute all the claims that, regretfully, were voiced today

in the context of disagreement and division that the United Arab Emirates does not consider itself party to.

We must not forget the important role that my country has played in the liberation of Aden and most of the territories that were occupied following the Houthi coup d'état. The United Arab Emirates has thereby prevented terrorist groups from taking advantage of the security vacuum during these critical and difficult stages. My country has managed to play a great role in rebuilding liberated areas, thereby compensating, in many instances, for the weak performance, management and governance that the Government has suffered from, as attested by observers.

My country has also offered generous financial and technical support and has managed to neutralize the threat posed by Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. We have also supported efforts made by the coalition to protect the freedom of navigation in the Bab Al-Mandab Strait and the Red Sea. We did all that despite the fact that the legitimate Government in Yemen was unable to manage its own affairs and to perform properly, as well as despite the atmosphere of rampant political and regional internal division that the Government was unable to resolve through constructive dialogue and reaching out to all Yemeni stakeholders.

We would like to reiterate our call to all the parties involved to conduct a responsible and serious dialogue in order to resolve all internal differences and to work on preserving unity at this decisive stage, so as to maintain security and stability. All those attending the meeting today agree with that approach towards achieving peace and security in Yemen and the region. We therefore do not think it is appropriate for the Yemeni Government to lay blame for its political and administrative failures on the United Arab Emirates, as that is based on the concept that offence is the best defence, which was exemplified in its negative statement today.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates would like once again to urge all the parties to focus on the joint objectives in Yemen, as well as and to underscore our support for the efforts of Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the League of Arab States.

Mrs. Elarja Flitti (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, in my personal capacity and on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-

General of the League of Arab States, and Ambassador Maged Abdelfattah Abdelaziz, Permanent Observer of the Arab League to the United Nations, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your wise presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to extend our highest appreciation and thanks to you and your delegation for holding this important debate, which comprehensively addresses issues in the Arab region and the Middle East.

I want to underscore the importance of continued coordination and cooperation between the Arab League secretariat, with all its different departments, and the United Nations and all of its relevant organs, including the Security Council, in a way that serves and bolsters the security, stability and safety of our region.

The Arab region is facing crises and challenges that have dangerous security, economic and humanitarian repercussions for its residents. Such repercussions have spilled outside the region in some cases. There is no doubt that Arab States are aware that they must work towards addressing those crises in a spirit of collective solidarity and responsibility and by reaching long-term solutions that deal with the causes that led to them in the first place. Arab States understand the need to propose solutions that alleviate the suffering of the people, especially women and children, which results from civil upheavals, fabricated conflicts and organized terrorist attacks.

Those crises and challenges have persisted in our region for many years. We see some parties offering help and assistance in different ways. At the same time, we see that some parties in the region have taken the crises as an opportunity to expand, by fanning sectarian flames, financing armed militias and escalating violence and extremism. That interference has destabilized the region and led to menacing consequences, most recently to the safety of waterways and international navigation routes.

It is clear that Iranian interference in the affairs of the Arab region has served to increase and prolong crises in the area and created even more obstinacy and extremism in the positions of some. Unfortunately, such interference is not benign. And it must stop, as it is a direct violation of a basic principle enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, namely, the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of its States Members. That has been confirmed by statements and resolutions emanating from the Arab summits, the

most recent of which being the statement issued at the emergency summit convened in Mecca in May.

Through their regional organization — the Arab League — Arab States continue to work diligently to resolve the raging conflicts by offering more opportunities for dialogue and allaying their dangerous humanitarian repercussions, based on the principle that the peoples of our region are historically well-known as peace-loving and peaceful. Undoubtedly, as the international community, including the Security Council, we must spare no constructive effort to help surmount this difficult phase in our contemporary history.

The Palestinian question is a central concern for all Arabs. We are all aware that the situation in the Palestinian territories is increasingly deteriorating. The Israeli Government recently announced the construction of 3,000 settlement units in the occupied West Bank. Before that, however, it demolished 100 residential units belonging to Palestinian civilians in Sur Baher, in East Jerusalem. Those Israeli settlements are illegal and violate resolution 2334 (2016), which condemns settlement activity and the confiscation of Palestinian land. Without a doubt, the continued construction of those settlements in that illegitimate and cancerous manner erodes the ability to establish the two-State solution and limits attempts to establish peace in the region.

The Council is therefore fully responsible for upholding its credibility and role in safeguarding its international legitimacy and the international rule of law by holding Israel, as the occupying Power, responsible and to account for its continuous violation of Security Council resolutions, not to mention its violation of international humanitarian law, which prohibits the transfer of residents to occupied territories.

The unanimous international consensus on the Palestinian question is very clear, especially in terms of the two-State solution, which is the only possible means to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It entails putting an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories since 1967 and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Any attempt to seek solutions to the conflict in a way that moves away from international legitimacy, violates legal principles or marginalizes the United Nations consensus will not succeed, as it would be based

on a wrongful foundation that believes that military force is the only means to secure rights. The Security Council recognizes only the primacy of rights and law as the foundation for any lasting and just settlement of the Palestinian question.

The Arab Summit held in Tunisia in March reaffirmed the importance of a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East as a strategic Arab option, embodied by the Arab Peace Initiative, which was adopted by all Arab States at the Beirut Summit in 2002. It is the most comprehensive plan to address all final-status issues, including the issue of refugees.

Moreover, at the Summit and in its outcome document, Arab leaders reaffirmed their categorical rejection of the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and stated that East Jerusalem is the capital of the Arab Palestinian State. They furthermore warned against any measures that could change the current legal and political status of Jerusalem, which would have dangerous repercussions for the peace, security and stability of the entire Middle East.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our profound gratitude for the holding this important meeting. On behalf of the Arab League and its Secretary-General, I would like to express our deepest appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and his team, as well as his envoys in the Arab region, for their sincere and continuous efforts towards arriving at a final settlement of all the crises there.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): We congratulate Poland on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs for convening this important debate.

I am honoured to represent the State of Palestine and to join the other countries of the Middle East to address the Security Council on the challenges to peace and security in the Middle East. This matter is urgent, as the peoples of the Middle East are enduring recurrent crises and violent conflicts that are causing immense human suffering and threatening international peace and security. At the crux of this situation is the Palestine question, the longest-standing issue on the United Nations agenda and the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

It is impossible to truly examine, understand and remedy the root causes of the situation in the Middle East without addressing the Palestine question. Attempts to side-step or downplay the ruinous impact on the region of the uprooting of the Palestinian people from their homeland, more than 70 years ago, of more than a half-century of Israel's military occupation and of the ongoing denial and violation of Palestinian rights are misleading and do a disservice to the aim of achieving peace and security in the region. Absent Palestinian-Israeli peace, that goal will remain elusive.

Moreover, such attempts ignore the depths of distrust, anger and despair that that injustice has sown across the region, have shaken belief in international law and the fairness of the international system and continue fuelling toxic narratives of double standards, including among young people, who make up the majority of populations across the Arab and Muslim world.

Despite persisting hopes and expectations, confidence in the Security Council is in free fall, as its efforts to halt violence, uphold international humanitarian law, including to protect civilians, and peacefully resolve conflicts are repeatedly obstructed, with Israel's blatant, long-running defiance of the Council being the most glaring example.

No one can deny that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict's protraction — chiefly due to a systemic failure to hold Israel accountable and halt its gross violations in occupied Palestine — has cultivated a destructive culture of impunity. That, in turn, has fostered a climate ripe for the proliferation of conflict in the region with, a vast political, social, economic and security impact, in many cases creating fertile conditions for the spread of extremism and terror, as well as religious strife, thereby undermining the potential of religion as a force for social good, tolerance and coexistence.

In that regard, we must once again caution against provoking religious conflict in Palestine. Reckless Israeli provocations in occupied East Jerusalem, including daily violations and incitement at Al-Haram Al-Sharif by Israeli occupying forces, officials and religious extremists, in disrespect of the historic legal status quo and religious sensitivities at that holy site, risk sparking a dangerous religious conflict, which must be averted.

In that connection, we recall with horror and pain the incidents of 50 years ago today involving attempts by Israeli extremist settlers to burn down the Al-Aqsa

Mosque and Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which, among other things, led to the creation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. So we do not forget such horrific terrorist incidents by the Israeli occupying authority.

Tragically, the human cost of such impunity has also been profound, with humanitarian disasters widespread throughout the region, including as a result of the forced displacement of millions of civilians, including 5.5 million Palestine refugees. I believe that the Ambassador of Kuwait mentioned that one third of today's 70 million refugees are in the Arab region and that, among the 24 million from the Arab region, the 5.5 million Palestinians among them have been refugees for more than 70 years. Unchecked, such human insecurity, poverty and misery can only continue to destabilize the region and cause an outflow of desperate people seeking survival and a better life for their families, as witnessed in the turmoil of the past decade.

While the conflicts in our region are many, and collective political efforts are urgently needed to solve them, we are certain that forging a secure, peaceful future in the Middle East requires at its core a just solution to the question of Palestine in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, as many speakers before me indicated.

The path is well known, as long ago determined by the Council in its resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), which clearly called for the intensification of international and regional efforts to end the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map.

Those are not tired formulas or slogans. They constitute the internationally endorsed basis for reaching a peaceful solution. The problem is not that the Council's resolutions are unrealistic, vague or unimplementable, as claimed by some. They are wholly realistic and clearly and carefully articulated, with due regard for the international consensus on the two-State solution, which is based on compromise, not extreme absolutes, and due respect for international law and the Charter of the United Nations, including the prohibition on the acquisition of territory by force. Some who come often to the Council are deaf and do

not want to hear what everyone here articulates all the time — that we all know what the solution is, namely, the end of the occupation, the two-State solution within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of our country, and a just solution to the refugee problem. That is often repeated by all Council members, the Europeans and by ministers. But some Ambassadors who are sitting here are living in a fantasy land and refuse to listen. Either they are deaf and should go see a doctor to fix their ears, or they are unable to accept what everyone else is articulating as to what the solution is. And there is consensus based on that.

The problem is that those solutions have never been given a fair chance to be implemented. The Council's authority has instead been met with flagrant contempt by Israel, the occupying Power, which continues entrenching the illegal occupation with its settlement colonization campaign, oppressing the Palestinian people in the most inhumane, cruel ways, and obstructing every credible peace initiative. A Permanent member's use of the veto has further undermined the Council and exacerbated the situation, blocking any attempt to compel a halt to the occupation's crimes and peacefully resolve the conflict.

This is the dilemma that the international community continues to face in the region. Overcoming the many serious challenges that we face requires addressing this central issue. There is no military solution to this conflict or any other conflict in our region. Likewise, the imposition of unjust solutions — such as the “deal of deals” or the “deal of the century” — is not peacemaking and will fail, with increased massive political, security, economic, social and human costs. What is needed is the immediate mobilization of the political will to implement the Security Council's resolutions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We remain committed to the path of peace and negotiations, based on the relevant resolutions aimed at achieving a peace agreement that resolves all final-status issues and realizes the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and a life of freedom and dignity in an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace with the State of Israel within secure, internationally recognized borders, based on the 1967 lines, and a just solution for the Palestine refugees, based on resolution 194 (III) and the Arab Peace Initiative.

We reiterate our call for a multilateral political process based on the long-standing parameters and within a set time frame and reaffirm our readiness to engage, including in an international peace conference. We urge the Security Council to act and also call on the members of the Quartet, in line with their Council mandate, to exert serious efforts to that end, in cooperation with all regional partners concerned, the League of Arab States and all peace-loving nations. Only through such a collective drive for peace can we justly resolve the Palestine question, establish Israeli-Palestinian peace and truly contribute to peace and security in the Middle East, which is so essential for a more just, stable and peaceful world.

With your indulgence, Madam President, I would like to take a minute to respond to the false assertions from a speaker who took the floor not too long ago. According to Israeli media, before he came to the United Nations, that speaker had a reputation for being a big liar in Israel. Today, and on many previous occasions, he proved that he truly lives up to that reputation and the characterization by the Israeli media. Although he is not succeeding, he is trying to tell the Council that we did not make the historical compromise to agree to have the Palestinian State on 22 per cent of historic Palestine, which is less than what is available to us according to resolution 181 (II). It is a lie that we do not want to have peace and the two-State solution. On the other hand, the Government that he represents, which is the most extreme in the history of Governments in Israel, is creating a one-State apartheid reality in historic Palestine. Who, then, is destroying the global consensus of a two-State solution? Is it the Palestinian leadership that he falsely attacks by spreading lies against it? Or is it the extreme Israeli Government of occupation that destroys any hope of peace based on the global consensus that is reflected in many Security Council resolutions and to which all members agreed?

I also challenge the liar to say whether or not he accepts the implementation of Security Council resolutions on the conflict. We do, as do members. As the German Ambassador said not too long ago, Security Council resolutions are part of international law and they need to be implemented. The Council has a responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations to ensure that they are implemented. This deaf man is not listening to the message that members keep repeating, repeating and repeating, and yet he chooses not to listen to it. He lives in a fantasy land, believing that he is opening the

doors for normalization with Arab countries — another lie. All of the representatives of the Arab countries who spoke, including the representative of the League of Arab States, reiterated their commitment. That also includes the representative of Bahrain, as he referred to the statement made by the Foreign Minister of Bahrain. They all said that they remain committed to the just cause of Palestine and to the Arab Peace Initiative and its implementation. He can listen to whatever noise is in his head, but he is refusing to listen to the members of the Security Council. Yet he comes here to abuse the privilege the Council provides him to listen to his statements. When we come here to speak, we are all required to respect the Security Council and to work to implement its resolutions.

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

Mr. Al-Maawda (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening today's meeting to address the challenges facing the Middle East region and the means to ensure its stability for the sake of international peace and security.

Today's meeting sheds light on the mounting challenges in the Middle East, as well as on the vital importance of achieving stability in that critical part of the world. That requires the convergence of efforts to allow for cooperation, wisdom and the language of dialogue to prevail so as to prevent more deterioration, which could jeopardize international peace and security.

A just and comprehensive settlement to the Palestinian question is of critical importance to achieving peace in the Middle East. All parties must therefore respect their obligations under resolutions of the international legitimacy and the benchmarks set out by the international community, including acceptance of the two-State solution and acknowledging the rights of Palestine as an independent State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Furthermore, Israel must cease its occupation of all occupied Arab territories and end all settlement activities immediately. International protection must also be provided to the Palestinian people, refugees must be able to return to their homes and Palestinians must enjoy their inalienable rights.

The link between the conflicts and crises plaguing the Middle East and their direct implications on stability in the region require urgent action and effective initiatives in order to achieve peace in Syria, Libya and Yemen. Despite the considerable resources of the Middle East region and the need to invest them in achieving development and prosperity for all its peoples, in addition to cooperating to settle current crises and conflicts and root out terrorism and extremism, other very serious challenges exist that lead to instability in the regional security system that is the Gulf Cooperation Council, which has positively and effectively contributed to the maintenance of regional and international peace and security.

Achieving lasting peace in the Middle East calls for abandoning threats and violations of State sovereignty and the stoking of artificial crises to achieve illegitimate objectives. At a time when our region is experiencing tensions that constitute a threat to international peace and security, the imposition of an unjust embargo on the State of Qatar, now in its third year, contributes to regional instability and undermines the efforts undertaken by the Security Council to establish international security.

That illegal embargo causes damages that are not limited to the State of Qatar and other States in the region. It sets a serious precedent in international relations and constitutes a grave breach of international law and the principle of friendly relations among States. It is also a breach of the Charter of the United Nations, which compels States to refrain from escalating conflicts and requires them to settle disputes through dialogue and peaceful means.

We welcome this opportunity to reaffirm the position of the State of Qatar. We support dialogue to resolve disputes and conflicts, and reiterate our support and gratitude for the sincere efforts that have been undertaken by His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the sisterly State of Kuwait.

Cybersecurity is a tremendous challenge. When it is used with ill will, it destabilizes international relations and security. The world has already borne witness to serious cyberattacks, and the State of Qatar has been among the victims thereof. The absence of international institutions and legislation for governing this extremely serious and vital realm requires strict measures against the perpetrators as well as those who commit cybercrimes and piracy, including subjecting

them to accountability and sanctions in addition to making them fully responsible legally for such crimes.

The State of Qatar has closely followed recent developments in the Strait of Hormuz, particularly with regard to regional and international navigation. Incidents of this type need to be addressed expeditiously. We call upon all parties to exercise restraint. We call for efforts to be undertaken to achieve a peaceful solution for such incidents.

The State of Qatar has undertaken numerous initiatives that reflect our commitment shared with the international community to strengthen understanding and dialogue so as to advance the premises of tolerance, cooperation and the fight against extremism and terrorism. The State of Qatar is one of the largest donors to the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. Furthermore, our institutions have supported efforts to provide education for 10 million children in more than 50 States. Many of those children are in areas plagued by armed conflict and dire poverty, as well as by natural disasters. Those efforts have been undertaken through Qatari educational institutions and in cooperation with UNICEF and other United Nations agencies.

In conclusion, The State of Qatar reaffirms our commitment to working hand in hand with our partners through the international system in order to tackle shared challenges and to support the Security Council mandate in maintaining international peace and security.

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

Ms. Mudallali (Lebanon): Before I start, I would like to thank you, Madam President, and everybody around the table, for your patience in waiting for us to deliver our statement. I know that we are delaying your dinner, I will do my best to be quick. I would also like to thank the high-level visitors, Secretary of State Pompeo, for his briefing and his presence at the Security Council, as well as the State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, Mr. Michaelis, and the Chef de Cabinet of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, Ms. Viotti.

It is 20 August, late in the supposedly calmest month of the year in the Security Council, and the Council has held no fewer than 11 meetings on Middle East issues so far. This reflects the increasing number of challenges as well as the alarming deterioration of

the security and humanitarian situation in many parts of our region.

The situation in the Palestinian occupied territories involves multiple challenges or, rather, deficits: a political deficit, in the form of an absence of a credible peace effort and the challenge of bringing about a just solution; an economic deficit, where the financial and economic situation of the Palestinian people is desperate; a humanitarian deficit, where the needs of the Palestinians under occupation and the refugees outside are so enormous that the alarming deficit in security for Palestinians everywhere is a natural consequence; and a deficit in respect for international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law. But the worst deficit that the Palestinians are suffering from now is the deficit of hope.

The Israeli policy of continuing to create facts on the ground is depriving the Palestinians of an independent and sovereign future and a life of peace and dignity. The most glaring examples of the challenges are the continuing Israeli expansion of the settlements and the continued unlawful confiscation and demolition of Palestinian homes, and the Israeli violations of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam. These actions are heightening the tension in the occupied territories, the region and the Muslim world. Holy sites should be respected and their sanctity preserved. It is the responsibility of the Organization and the Security Council to make sure that United Nations resolutions, the Geneva Conventions and international law are respected in that regard.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is experiencing an existential crisis. As a major host country, Lebanon is very concerned about the implications of this crisis on Palestinian refugees and host communities. While commending the countries that provide much-needed financial contributions, Lebanon calls on the international community to find a sustainable solution to UNRWA's financial ordeal.

Lebanon reiterates the Secretary-General's strong conviction that there is no plan B for the Palestinian-Israeli issue. There is one way out of this intractable conflict, namely, a just and comprehensive peace based on United Nations resolutions, the right to self-determination, a return to the pre-1967 borders, the Arab Peace Initiative and a two-State solution that gives rise to a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as

its capital. The absence of such a settlement condemns the whole region to continued conflict and bloodshed.

Despite these difficult times, Lebanon has succeeded in shoring up its internal stability and is putting itself on the path of an economic recovery. A few days ago, Prime Minister Saad Hariri reiterated Lebanon's dedication to advancing key initiatives in the Government's reform agenda, such as the CEDRE conference on economic development and reform and the capital investment plan, which are essential to the revival of the Lebanese economy and to bolstering security and stability for Lebanon and the region.

On the peace and security issue, the Government is doing its best to maintain Lebanon's stability and security, especially on its southern border, with the help of the international community and the United Nations. The Lebanese Government expressed its commitment to promptly developing a plan to enhance the naval capabilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces, in accordance with resolution 2433 (2018). But this situation will remain fragile as long as Israel continues its occupation of Lebanese territories in south Lebanon and its territorial waters.

Lebanon is committed to conflict resolution and has sought the good offices of the United States in a process aimed at finding such a solution. Last week, Prime Minister Hariri confirmed to Secretary of State Pompeo Lebanon's commitment to continuing the negotiations process on the land and maritime borders. He called the process vital for Lebanon and viable. The Prime Minister vowed to continue to support the constitutional next step leading to a final decision in the coming months, hopefully in September.

The Prime Minister reaffirmed Lebanon's commitment to resolution 1701 (2006) and its readiness to move from cessation of hostilities to a ceasefire under a United Nations mechanism. But for that to happen, the Prime Minister emphasized, Israel has to implement its part of the resolution.

In contrast to the Lebanese commitment to resolution 1701 (2006), Israel continues its daily violations of Lebanese sovereignty with impunity. Those violations have taken a dangerous turn, because Israel is continuing to use Lebanese air space to conduct military operations against Syria. The latest such operation from Lebanese air space happened on 1 July, when nine Israeli military jets breached Lebanese sovereignty to launch a rocket attack on Syria.

In a few days, the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) will be upon us. In a letter to Council members, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lebanon, Mr. Gebran Bassil, expressed Lebanon's

“strong support to the existing UNIFIL mandate and its full commitment to the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) in its entirety, including the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Lebanese occupied territories Kfar Shuba Hills, Shab'a farms and the northern part of Ghajar village, without further delay”.

Lebanon applauds the dedication and professionalism of UNIFIL's peacekeepers, staff and leadership, and its continued cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces. Lebanon is grateful for the support of the troop-contributing countries and highly values their efforts and sacrifices. UNIFIL is doing a formidable job in maintaining stability in the south. We hope that its make-up, mandate and role are renewed in a spirit of understanding of the important role of this peacekeeping mission and of the challenges in the area.

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

Mr. Al Omoush (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate Poland on its presidency of the Security Council this month. I would also like to thank you, Madam President, for holding this important meeting relating to the challenges facing peace and security in the Middle East. I would like as well to thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General for her briefing.

The many challenges facing the world today call for the international community to mobilize its efforts to address them collectively and in a complete and sustained manner. That would ensure dealing radically with the circumstances and factors causing these challenges, the most serious of threats to international peace and security. There is broad agreement that the Middle East is being hostage by these political, economic, social and security challenges. The crises are fuelled by political and social injustice and sectarian clashes, which have unleashed the forces of evil, bringing about death, destruction and terrorism.

As we gather here today, events in the Middle East reflect a situation of increasing tension that is far from stable. While the Palestinian question remains at the

centre of instability and the core issue in the Middle East, no progress is being made in that regard. The greatest challenge facing our region in particular that concerns international peace and stability in general is the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has met its responsibilities towards the Palestinian question, which is central to us. This is in keeping with the vision of our Palestinian and Arab brothers. We have supported and will continue to support a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question based on the two-State solution, establishing an independent and viable Palestinian State, with the borders of 4 June 1967 and East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative, which reflects a unified Arab and Islamic position for bringing about just, comprehensive and lasting peace. That is the only way to ensure security and stability in the Middle East region.

In that regard, we must recall that His Majesty King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein has repeatedly cautioned that delaying efforts to bring about peace risks imperilling the entire region. It is imperative that all of us assume our responsibilities to ensure that we bring about just and comprehensive solution as well as lasting peace.

Jordan has always called for peace and brotherliness among peoples despite their linguistic, religious and cultural differences. The city of peace, Jerusalem, is the top priority of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, given our religious responsibility as the historic guarantors of the Holy Muslim and Christian sites in Jerusalem. That responsibility is also part of our duty to the Arab and Muslim nations. Jordan therefore has no other choice but to oppose all practices that will have a negative effect on the future of the city, its existence and identity, as well as peace and future stability.

On top of those practices is the continued Israeli violation against the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The most recent violation was perpetrated by Israeli forces against worshipers and administrators of the Waqf Al-Quds. We categorically reject those senseless actions and all unilateral attempts to change the historic and legal status of the city. We call on the international community to take effective measures and apply pressure to Israel to ensure that it stops the violations and assumes responsibility in line with international law and international humanitarian law.

The schools providing education to Palestinians and centres providing them with health and social services must remain open. The families of Palestinian refugees and Palestinian communities need full and continuous support until such a time as their status as refugees is justly resolved. Funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) must therefore be continuous so as to ensure the Agency's ability to implement the mandate accorded to it by the General Assembly. Moreover, we reaffirm the need to pursue international, political and financial support for UNRWA so that the Agency does not find itself on the long list of victims of a lack of collective action to bring peace to the Middle East.

Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has worked with the international community to bring about a peaceful solution to the crisis so as to spare the country and its people suffering further death, destruction, displacement and other humanitarian consequences, in accordance with resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014). The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has consistently called for a peaceful solution to the crisis through the Geneva process and on the basis of resolution 2254 (2015), which is acceptable to the Syrian people and preserves the unity and sovereignty of Syria.

Jordan was one of the leading States in the Middle East welcoming refugees on behalf of the international community. Jordan has had to deal with the effects of those waves of refugees, which has meant that we in turn have required assistance to alleviate the consequent burden, particularly given our social and economic situation as a receiving State alongside our hosting local communities. In that regard, I would like to thank our regional, international and United Nations partners that have alleviated the burden of refugees on Jordan.

UNICEF recently reported that 15 million children do not go to schools in the Middle East and North Africa, which will lead them to illiteracy, ignorance, hopelessness and a lack of opportunities for development, which in turn could lead to despair and provide fertile ground for recruitment to extremism. This reality alone should make us think together in order to address these challenges and ensure that we can provide everyone with a bright future

The most important pillar of coexistence is achieving stability for the peoples of the world. We need to open up new horizons, provide opportunities and offer hope

for achieving sustainable global development. We need plans to improve infrastructure, provide education, enable women and young people to develop, ensure security, provide employment and energy supplies, address the challenges posed by climate change and support industrial and agricultural sectors. That would necessarily lead to stability and social and economic prosperity for the people.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that Jordan will continue to play its political and diplomatic role, regionally and internationally, based on moderation and mutual respect. Achieving peace in the Middle East will remain the main focus of Jordanian diplomatic

efforts until all rights and Palestinian and Arab territories have been restored and an independent Palestinian State has been created, with east Jerusalem as its capital. It is high time to establish comprehensive, lasting and just peace that opens up future horizons for the coming generations.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I would like to thank all participants for having stayed until almost 8 p.m. and for their valuable contributions to our discussion today.

The meeting rose at 7.40 p.m.