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Security Council

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New York

President:	Mrs. Perceval	(Argentina)
Members:	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Jordan	Mr. Hmoud
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Nigeria	Mr. Laro
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Oh Joon
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungirehe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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

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

There being no objecton, it is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Feltman.

Mr. Feltman: We meet today in light of worrisome developments in Jerusalem, including growing violence and renewed settlement activities. On 27 October, the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations submitted two identical letters to the Secretary-General and to the Security Council

> "to demand that Israel rescind its plans and cease forthwith all of its illegal settlement activities and all other provocations and incitement throughout the Palestinian land, including in occupied East Jerusalem".

Most recently, in his 21 October briefing to the Council (see S/PV.7281), the Secretary-General stressed his deep concerns about continued Israeli settlement activity, particularly plans to construct residential housing in occupied East Jerusalem. He also urged the Israeli Government to reverse these activities. Regrettably, since then there have been troubling new reports of settlement activity taking place in East Jerusalem.

The Secretary-General is alarmed by new reports about the advancement of planning for some 1,000 Israeli settlements units in occupied East Jerusalem. These include approximately 400 units in Har Homa and 600 in Ramat Shlomo. This latest development follows on the heels of Israel's decision at the end of September to accelerate the process of constructing some 2,600 residential units in Givat Hamatos, also in East Jerusalem. If pursued, these plans would once again raise grave doubts about Israel's commitment to achieving durable peace with the Palestinians, as the new settlements threaten the very viability of the future State of Palestine.

As affirmed by the Council and determined by the International Court of Justice, Israel's policy and practices of settling parts of its population and new immigrants in the occupied Palestinian territory, including occupied East Jerusalem, are in violation of international law. As the Secretary-General has consistently reiterated, it also runs contrary to the two-State solution. Once again, the Secretary-General calls on Israel to reverse these activities, heed the calls of the international community to freeze settlement activity and abide by its commitments under international law and the Quartet Road Map.

Heightened tensions over unilateral actions, provocations and access restrictions at the holy sites in Jerusalem are continuing and the situation remains volatile. In the past week, some 13 Palestinians have reportedly been arrested at the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount compound, including one Palestinian on 22 October for allegedly throwing stones at Jewish visitors. Israeli police officers have also been injured as a result of clashes. We note that, in the aftermath of these clashes, Prime Minister Hamdallah visited Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount on 27 October.

The Secretary-General has reiterated the importance of respect for the religious freedom of all, and for worshippers of all faiths to have access to their holy sites, while noting that religious and other leaders should also refrain from making inflammatory statements. In this regard, the Government of Israel's reassurances to the Secretary-General, and reportedly to Jordan, that it has no plans to change long-standing policies governing the holy sites are noted. We also note that Israel, as per its agreement with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, has committed to working to ensure the protection of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in the Old City and the safety of worshippers. Incitement to violence from

any quarter must cease and the sanctity of the holy sites of all faiths must be respected. The Secretary-General will be closely following developments at these sacred places that have such significance to millions around the world.

The situation in the rest of East Jerusalem has grown more tense since 21 October. On 22 October, a Palestinian man drove his car into a light rail train station near Ammunition Hill and ran over passengers disembarking from the train, killing a three-month-old baby and injuring six other people, one of whom succumbed to her injuries later. The driver was shot dead by Israeli police as he tried to flee the scene. It is our understanding that Israeli authorities are investigating this incident as what they describe as a potential terrorist attack. Regrettably, some on the Palestinian side have praised this attack.

Clashes took place during the burial of the Palestinian man on 26 October. On the same day, Prime Minister Netanyahu stated at a cabinet meeting that Israel would not allow the stone- and firebomb-throwing to continue and that an additional 1,000 security forces would be deployed in East Jerusalem. The Prime Minister also reportedly requested legislation to raise the terms of punishment for stone-throwing, including criteria for the possible imposition of economic sanctions on the parents of minors who throw stones.

Tensions have also escalated in the rest of the West Bank, where Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian-American teenager on 24 October in Silwad village near Ramallah, reportedly following stone- and Molotov cocktail-throwing during a demonstration. On 27 October, Israeli forces detained 14 Palestinians for alleged stone-throwing. On 28 October, four Palestinians were reportedly shot and injured by Israeli security forces in Jenin, including one who is in critical condition.

Tensions also rose from the reported demolition in the past week of five Palestinian homes in the East Jerusalem neighbourhoods of Al-Tur and Silwan, as well as in Salah Eddine Street, and following news that a Palestinian held under administrative detention in Israel and on hunger strike for 37 days was moved to hospital on 27 October after his health had deteriorated.

I would like to underscore the criticality of immediately diffusing the escalating tensions in East Jerusalem without delay. The wounds from the devastating conflict in Gaza are only just beginning to heal, with the tripartite temporary mechanism for the delivery of reconstruction materials into Gaza brokered by the United Nations only starting to take effect. The parties can ill afford to once more take unilateral actions that serve only to inflame tensions and further entrench the suspicion and hostility that have been the tragic narrative of this conflict for decades. The reality is that continued settlement activity in occupied Palestinian territory is doing significant damage to any possibility of a lasting peace between the two sides and is moving the situation ever closer to a one-State reality.

Ongoing tensions in East Jerusalem and the West Bank cannot be separated from the larger reality that remains unresolved. As the Secretary-General has frequently conveyed, any enduring peace will require starting dialogue to address the root causes of the conflict, including an end to the occupation that has lasted close to 50 years and effectively addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns.

I wish to recall that on 26 September 2008, during the high-level meeting of the Security Council on settlements, the then Secretary-General of League of Arab States, Mr. Amre Moussa, recalled that two years earlier the Security Council had

> "recorded a clear consensus on the necessity of reviving the peace process with the express goal of establishing a viable Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza, with, of course, East Jerusalem as its capital" (*S/PV.5983, p. 3*).

Such consensus was echoed in the Arab Peace initiative and the understanding that there would be an immediate and complete halt to settlement activities, as per the Road Map. Eight years later, we must ask ourselves why there has been little progress and how to move the peace process forward.

We have heard that some members of the Council have again started discussing the possibility of adopting a new draft resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For our part, we wonder if the current paradigm, almost 50 years into the conflict, does not require revisiting our engagement thus far, consistent with the decisions of the Security Council and the relentless efforts of the international community. Palestinian and Israeli leaders and people should make no mistake — there will never be a substitute to their own responsibility in bringing the change necessary to achieving peace. The United Nations stands ready to lend its full support to such collective efforts.

In conclusion, the status quo is not a viable option. Further delay in the pursuit of peace will only exacerbate the conflict further and deepen divisions. Now is the time for bold leadership and for both sides to fully commit to meaningful negotiations that will allow the establishment of two States, living side by side in peace and security. Ignoring the calls of the international community for such negotiations, for whatever reason, will only breed more violence in the region that has already seen too much of it.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): Allow me at the outset to thank Mr. Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his very important briefing and for the principled elements that he raised, especially the position of the Secretary-General that all these illegal activities, policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power, must stop immediately, especially in occupied East Jerusalem, and be rescinded.

We also agree totally with Mr. Feltman and many other leaders, including President Barak Obama speaking before the General Assembly, that the status quo cannot be sustained and is not an option. Precisely for that reason, we have put before the Security Council a draft resolution reflecting the initiative of President Mahmoud Abbas that contains elements of a parameter, with a time frame, to end the occupation. If we cannot collectively convince the occupying Power to negotiate with us the end of occupation in order to allow for the independence of the State of Palestine, and thereby to actualize the global concensus on a two-State solution, then the option of the two-State solution may not be available to us. For that, there will be no one to blame except the occupying Power for not responding in a responsible and positive way in negotiating with us, in good faith, the end of occupation.

Israel is still insisting that it is not an occupier and that there is no occupied terroritory, in complete contradiction to the many relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the United Nations, as well as the global consensus that the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, are defined as occupied territory. Israel is not listening or abiding by the Council's will. It is not listening to those resolutions, and so long as it continues not to listen, peace will not move forward. On the contrary, we will face explosive situations such as that we are facing today in occupied East Jerusalem.

I thank you, Madam, for your swift response to our urgent appeal and to the formal request of Jordan, the Arab representative on the Security Council, to convene this emergency meeting to address the critical situation in occupied East Jerusalem, which clearly has a bearing on the crisis situation in the rest of Palestine, as well as in the region and far beyond. Jerusalem, the Holy City of the three monotheistic religions, was and remains the key to peace. The City is the heart of Palestine and has historically been the religious, political, social, economic and cultural centre for the Palestinian people for centuries. And Jerusalem, a theatre for both conflict and peace, has always maintained an Arab and Islamic identity, and will continue to do so.

Yet, Jerusalem is under siege as Israel, the occupying Power, continues its reckless attempts to change its character, falsify its history, alter its demography and negate Palestinian rights and connections to Jerusalem. Israeli provocations and incitement, particularly at Al-Haram Al-Sharif, home to the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque and Qubbat Al-Sakhra — the Dome of the Rock — are further inflaming this volatile situation, aggravating religious sentiments, deepening mistrust and threatening to ignite yet another cycle of violence, including instigation of religious conflict. Such illegal Israeli actions are severely exacerbating the conflict and obstructing a peaceful solution, with grave implications. We have therefore been instructed by President Mahmoud Abbas to bring this crisis situation to the urgent attention of the Security Council, in full recognition of its Charter duty with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security.

In countless official letters conveyed to the Security Council and in repeated statements in this Chamber, we have urged that serious international attention be given to the crisis in occupied East Jerusalem caused by Israel's illegal policies, practices and provocations. We have repeatedly appealed to the Security Council to uphold its resolutions on Jerusalem — including resolutions 446 (1979), 452 (1979), 465 (1980), 478 (1980) and 672 (1990) — as an urgent contribution to reducing tensions and stabilizing the situation on the ground and as a long-term contribution to the efforts to achieve a peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

We recall in particular the Council's determination that all measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power,

> "to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and in particular the recent 'basic law' on Jerusalem, are null and void and must be rescinded forthwith" (*resolution 478 (1980), para. 4*).

Moreover, we recall the Council's determination that

> "the policy and practices of Israel in establishing settlements in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 have no legal validity and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East" (*resolution 446 (1979), para.1*).

The Council further calls on Israel

> "to cease, on an urgent basis, the establishment, construction and planning of settlements in the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem" (*resolution 465 (1980), para. 6*).

Have the resolutions been implemented? The answer is obviously "no". Israel continues to do exactly the opposite.

While the rest of us seek peace and try any and every initiative aimed at ending this nearly 50-year military occupation and salvaging the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, Israel is instead expanding and entrenching its illegitimate control over occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of occupied Palestine through countless unlawful policies and measures.

Moreover, Israel not only denies that East Jerusalem is occupied and refuses to recognize Palestinian rights or presence or history with respect to the city, but actively seeks to negate those rights and to characterize Jerusalem as a solely Jewish and Israeli city, ignoring its centrality to the Arab countries and the Muslim Ummah — for whom Al-Quds Al-Sharif is the first Qibla and third holiest site — as well as its centrality to Christianity.

Since the occupation began in 1967, Israel, the occupying Power, has never ceased its unlawful attempts to create facts on the ground to alter Palestine's demography, character, legal status and geography. It has targeted occupied East Jerusalem in particular with such illegal measures and has openly permitted and supported the illegal and violent actions of its settlers and extremists in the city.

Israeli settlement activities have persisted unabated, with the construction and expansion of settlements, the building of the wall and recurrent announcements about plans for the construction of thousands more settlement units. The latest declaration, this week, concerns the construction of another 1,000 units. It was preceded by an announcement regarding the construction of more than 2,600 units in the city earlier this month, which was preceded by the issuance of military orders to confiscate 1,000 acres of Palestinian land in the Bethlehem area, and so forth.

Every day the territorial contiguity and integrity of our State is being fragmented and undermined by those illegal actions, which seriously diminish the viability of the two-State solution.

The occupying Power has also continued to confiscate property, including the seizure last week of 35 Palestinian homes by extremist settlers in the Silwan neighbourhood of occupied East Jerusalem. Such actions have forcibly displaced hundreds of Palestinian families from the city, in addition to their displacement by other illegal measures, including the demolition of Palestinian homes, the revocation of Palestinian residency and threats to forcibly transfer thousands of Palestine refugee Bedouins, which would be a violation of their human rights.

Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem also suffer from acts of raging violence, discrimination and racism directed against them by Israeli extremists, who persist in their attacks against Palestinian civilians, including killings, assaults and kidnapping attempts on children, as well as attacks against Muslim and Christian holy sites, including the vandalizing and desecration of several mosques and churches in the city.

Israeli occupying forces and Jewish extremists also continue carrying out incursions into the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and attacking Palestinian worshippers. Israeli officials, including the Prime Minister and members of his Cabinet, persist in their grotesque competition to see who can most effectively provoke Palestinian and Muslim sensitivities by spewing dangerous rhetoric and uttering incitements and hate speech at an alarming rate.

Provocation continues via attempts to pass legislation to change the status quo of the holy city. At the same time, Israel continues its excavations and tunnelling in the city, including near and under the holy sites, threatening their integrity, foundations and

sanctity. Stringent restrictions on access to the city, affecting both Palestinian Muslims and Christians, severely impede freedom of worship and of movement, while closures of Palestinian institutions in the city continue.

We strongly and unequivocally condemn all those illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of occupied Palestine. Such illegal policies and measures, along with the deplorable, illegal blockade of our people in the Gaza Strip, who are suffering grievously as a result of the disastrous impact of the recent criminal Israeli war waged against them, in addition to all the other measures of collective punishment imposed by Israel on our people, have created an explosive situation, which, if left unattended, will deteriorate further, with grave consequences.

That the situation is illegal and unsustainable and destroys the prospects for peace is not merely a Palestinian narrative or perspective. It has been deemed as such by the Council, based on the United Nations Charter principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and the relevant provisions of international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, which strictly prohibits colonization activities, among other prohibitions. The positions of the International Court of Justice and the General Assembly are also very clear in that regard.

Moreover, the international consensus is firm regarding the illegality of the Israeli settlement enterprise and the status of Jerusalem, including non-recognition of Israeli claims to sovereignty over East Jerusalem and agreement that East Jerusalem is occupied territory and remains an integral part of the Palestinian territory that has been belligerently occupied by Israel since 1967.

The international community, especially the Security Council, must send a clear message and reaffirm its established positions and the international consensus. The Council must fulfil its responsibility to bring an end to this illegal situation, which has broad and dangerous political, religious and security dimensions.

Israel, the occupying Power, must be compelled to immediately and completely cease its illegal settlement activities throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and to cease all provocations and incitements at the holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem and against the Palestinian people and their leadership. Israel must be compelled to comply with international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, and to commit to the path of peace. If that course fails, Israel must be held fully accountable for its crimes and obstruction of peace.

Jerusalem is a painful reflection of Israel's entrenched occupation and its total rejection of peace. Yet, deeply committed to peace, we remain insistent that Jerusalem become a reflection of our collective determination to achieve a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, with an independent, sovereign, contiguous and democratic State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

We therefore reiterate our appeal to the members of the Security Council and the international community to support our initiative and adopt a resolution reaffirming the fundamental parameters of the two-State solution and delineating a time frame to bring an end to the Israeli occupation and achieve the independence and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Such a resolution would constitute a major contribution to the efforts to salvage the prospects for peace and accelerate its realization, with a view to ultimately ushering in a new reality in which Jerusalem is a shared capital of peace and a new era opens up for our peoples and the region as a whole.

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

Mr. Prosor (Israel): Barely a week has gone by since the Security Council met to discuss the situation in the Middle East (see S/PV.7281). One would think that we have reconvened today to address the rampant violence and bloodshed that plagues the region between the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabian Sea. After all, the past few days have seen untold suffering. In Iraq, a suicide bomber drove into a security checkpoint and killed 38 people. In Lebanon, militants linked to Al-Qaida launched an attack on the central market, leaving 42 people dead and 150 wounded. In Syria, 500 people were killed and injured in seven days of the regime's aerial bombardments. In Iran, a 26-year-old woman named Reyhaneh Jabbari was executed for killing a man who tried to rape her. In Saudi Arabia, three lawyers were sentenced to eight years behind bars for tweeting messages that "undermined the judiciary". That is a relatively light sentence in Saudi Arabia, which has beheaded 59 people so far this year.

Most of the millions of men and women being oppressed in our region are completely ignored by the Security Council. They are cast aside to make way for a litany of half-truths, myths and outright lies about Israel. I am here to convey one simple truth: the people of Israel are not occupiers, and we are not settlers. Israel is our home and Jerusalem is the eternal capital of our sovereign State. There are many threats in the Middle East, but the presence of Jewish homes in the Jewish homeland has never been one of them. And yet that is the issue that we have convened to discuss today. It says a great deal that the international community is outraged when Jews build homes in Jerusalem, but does not say a word when Jews are murdered for living in Jerusalem. The hypocrisy is appalling.

I have said it before and will say it again: the primary obstacle to peace is not settlements. That is a just a pretext for the Palestinians to avoid making painful compromises. The primary obstacle to peace is the Arab world's refusal to acknowledge that Israel is the nation State of the Jewish people — and its refusal to acknowledge Jerusalem as the eternal capital of the Jewish people.

Throughout history, Jerusalem has been the capital for one people and only one people — the Jewish people. I am holding a Bible which details almost 4,000 years of Jewish history in the land of Israel. In it we read about our forefathers — Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — who wandered Jerusalem's rolling hills. We read about King David, who laid the cornerstone for his palace over 3,000 years ago. That is King David from Bethlehem, not King David from the West Bank, and certainly not King David from the occupied territories. And in the Bible we read about King Solomon, who constructed the First Temple.

Jerusalem is a divine promise to the Jewish people. Following the destruction of our Temple and the Babylonian exile, the great Jewish leader Nehemiah led the Jewish people back to Israel saying:

> "Then I prayed to the God of heaven ... let him send me to the city in Judah, Jerusalem, where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it."

Jerusalem is central to our identity and our tradition. The holy city is named more than 900 times in the Bible. On holidays we sing "l'shana haba'ah b'Yerushalayim" — "Next year in Jerusalem". For thousands of years, through persecution and massacres, expulsions and crusades, blood libels and pogroms, Jews turned their hearts in prayer towards Jerusalem. The connection between the Jewish people and our capital cannot be denied. And nothing you can say here, Madam President, could change that.

Jerusalem is Mount Zion and Mount Moriah and the Temple Mount. To walk in that place is to follow in the footsteps of our forefathers and to feel the hopes and dreams of the Jewish people. The Palestinians and others have had the audacity to accuse us of trying to alter the historic Jewish character of our ancient city. Really?

The truth of the matter is that Jerusalem had a Jewish character long before most cities in the world had any character. It was the capital of the Jewish people long before Homer composed the Iliad, before Romulus and Remus founded Rome, and before the armies of Alexander the Great swept across the Middle East.

Jerusalem is steeped in Jewish history. In an effort to erase all traces of the religious and historical ties between Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, the Waqf is deliberately destroying archaeological evidence. Each and every one of us knows that. The United Nations knows it. Is it out there? Is it saying anything? They even brought in a fleet of bulldozers and removed 6,000 tons — not, you know, a little bit — 6,000 tons! — of earth from the south-east corner of the Temple Mount, also known as Solomon's Stables. With every shovelful of soil, they are trying to shovel away Jewish history. But one does not need a research institute at the United Nations to figure that out.

If the Palestinians wish to secure a brighter future, they must stop rewriting history and start making history by making peace. They must abandon the destructive rhetoric. A people can only build a brighter future if it makes peace with the past. If not, it will be held captive by the chains of resentment and hatred and pass on a legacy of violence and intolerance to the next generation.

Former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin said that if an enemy of the Jewish people says he seeks to destroy us, believe him. Do not doubt him for a moment. If history has taught the Jewish people anything, it is that we must take all calls for our destruction seriously. Hamas's genocidal charter calls for the destruction of Israel and the murder of Jews worldwide. Some in this Organization do not have the courage to mention Hamas by name, never mind to condemn the terrorist group for its crimes. Hamas deliberately targets our civilians

by blowing up buses and restaurants, kidnapping and murdering teenagers, shooting rockets into our cities and building terror tunnels into our towns.

That is Hamas. What about the leader of the Palestinian Authority, President Abbas? Well, he is the reason that we are sitting here today. You see, he is orchestrating a campaign to vilify Israel, and the Security Council seems willing to play second fiddle. Let me remind the Council about the conductor behind the accusations that it heard today.

Palestinian President Abbas wrote a dissertation denying the Holocaust, and he educates Palestinian children to hate Jews. In schools, mosques and the media, generations of Palestinian children are being taught to hate, vilify and dehumanize Israelis and Jews. In his remarks in the General Assembly last month (see A/69/PV.12) — and everyone here heard them — President Abbas delivered a hate-fuelled attack and accused Israel of the worst crimes, including genocide.

Earlier this month, he called on Palestinians to prevent Jews from visiting the Temple Mount by using "all means necessary". Are those the words of a leader committed to making peace? I did not hear that in the briefing by Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman. It is not just in general, from both sides. The video of his hateful remarks was broadcast on official Palestinian Authority television 19 times in 3 days. That is not someone who is not relevant, or second-tier. The results of those inflammatory remarks were almost immediate. Hundreds of Arabs rioted in Jerusalem, damaging the light rail system, and a Hamas terrorist deliberately drove full-speed onto a Jerusalem train platform, killing two people.

Did President Abbas express outrage or remorse over the senseless killings? Of course not. He could not even muster the courage to denounce an attack that left a three-month-old baby dead. Rather than trying to extinguish the flames of conflict, the Palestinian leadership is adding fuel to the fire. First they incite violence on the Temple Mount, and then they run to the Security Council to complain about the consequences. If that is not manufacturing a crisis, I do not know what is.

Let us try to follow the logic here. Palestinian extremists have turned the Temple Mount into a battleground by throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at visitors and police. That is phrased as "allegedly" throwing stones. Allegedly throwing stones? Why, we could build a whole quarry from the stones that allegedly were thrown. In doing so, they are preventing Muslims from praying at their holy site. Israeli police are forced into harm's way to restore quiet, and then the Palestinians come to the Security Council complaining about Israel's activities on the Temple Mount. Do you have trouble following this logic? I certainly do, but I can tell you this: it both starts and ends with the irresponsible actions of the Palestinian leadership.

The Palestinians had the audacity to come to the Council and speak about religious freedoms. Let me tell you, Madam, just how much the Palestinian Authority cares about holy sites. Take Shechem, which has been under the control of the Palestinian Authority since 1995. Shechem was home to the grave of the Biblical patriarch Joseph. Palestinian vandals broke into the sacred site, burned Jewish prayer books and reduced the building to rubble.

In Bethlehem, which is also under Palestinian Authority control, violent extremists have looted and desecrated the Church of the Nativity, one of Christianity's holiest sites. As a result of the persecution that they face, the city's Christian population has decreased by nearly 70 per cent.

It is not just the Palestinians that have impinged on religious freedoms. I would like to remind the Council that from 1948 to 1967 Jerusalem was under Jordanian rule. Jerusalem was divided, and everyone could come in and visit Judaism's holiest sites, except the Jews. They were denied access. Following Israel's victory in the 1967 war, Israel reunited Jerusalem. Since then, all people — and I mean all people — regardless of religion and nationality have been able to visit the city's holy sites. While we were victorious and assumed control over all of Jerusalem, Israel extended a hand in peace to the Muslim world. According to the status quo brokered between Israel and the Waqf, Muslims would enjoy access to pray at their holy sites, while all other religions would be allowed access to the Temple Mount. That was the case until a couple of years ago.

Israel went one step further than that with respect to religious freedoms, and decided that Jews would not be allowed to pray on the site. I want to make sure the Council understand this. The Temple Mount is Judaism's holiest place, but we were willing to restrict our own freedoms for the sake of peace. Can you think of another nation that would make such a compromise?

Can you think of another religion that would make such a sacrifice?

Today Jerusalem under Israeli authority is united — united for Muslims, united for Christians and united for Jews. As Prime Minister Netanyahu reiterated this week,

> "We are maintaining the status quo and allowing everyone access to the holy places, and we will continue to do so."

Israel is doing everything in its power to minimize tensions. Even when riots break out, Israeli security forces, acting in coordination with the Jordanian Government, refrain from entering the mosque and its courtyard unless there is an imminent threat to the site and its visitors.

The Palestinians, on the other hand, are doing everything in their power to inflame tensions. The Waqf has violated the status quo agreement by restricting access to Judaism's holiest place, the place where we believe that God began the act of creation, where Abraham brought his son Isaac and where Jacob fell asleep and dreamed of angels.

Today a Jew who wishes to visit the sacred site is threatened with violence. But the Council does not have to take my word for it. Earlier this month — and this is also not hard to find out — Hanan Ashrawi, a prominent member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, said that allowing Jews to visit the Temple Mount was a "declaration of war against Islam."

Those are the irresponsible words of a person trying to ignite a religious war. You do not have to be a Catholic to visit the Vatican. You do not have to be a Jew to visit the Western Wall. But the Palestinians would like to see the day when the Temple Mount is open only to Muslims, and that will not take place.

I speak before the Council today as a proud representative of the Jewish State and the Jewish people, a people whose bond to the land of Israel and its eternal capital of Jerusalem extends back almost 4,000 years. I am proud to represent an ancient people who have outlived history's most daunting empires. Where is the ambassador of Babylon? Where is the ambassador of Caesar's Rome? Where is the ambassador of Mesopotamia? They have been relegated to history, while we, the Jewish people, continue to stand tall against the trials and tests of time. We are a nation with deep roots in the past and bright hopes for the future.

It is time for the Palestinians to realize that the children of Abraham — all the children of Abraham, Jews, Christians and Muslims alike — are not doomed to live together in war, but rather destined to live together in peace.

Israel will continue to strive for peace while fulfilling the prophesy of Isaiah:

> "On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; all day and all night, they shall never be silent." (*The Holy Bible, Isaiah 62:6*)

Israel will never be silent. We will stand guard, and we will safeguard Jerusalem, not just for the Jewish people, but for people of all faiths. So today I issue this promise from the people of the promised land: under our watch, Jerusalem, the eternal capital of the Jewish people, will remain a free and open city for all people and for all time.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Madam President, allow me to thank you for quickly responding to the call from Jordan, in coordination with our Palestinian brothers, to hold this urgent meeting to discuss the grave developments in the occupied Palestinian territories, in particular East Jerusalem.

Jerusalem today faces the dangers posed by escalation and the intransigence of the Israeli Government. It is confronted by the intolerance and the provocations of its legislators, the extremism and barbarity of its settlers and a well-designed Israeli policy that is illegal and aimed at fundamentally changing the status quo, erasing the religious culture of the Holy City and changing its demographic composition. Such Israeli policies, which threaten occupied Jerusalem, are a reflection of narrow internal tactical objectives that move Israel much further away from the peace camp and that promise new, violent cycles of hatred and violence, with repercussions for the region and the entire world.

The international community must focus on the gravity of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly East Jerusalem. In East Jerusalem, Israel relentlessly continues its settler

expansion. It continues to violate the sanctity of religious sites. We have shown many times that such acts are illegitimate and clearly run counter to the norms of international humanitarian law, particularly The Hague Convention of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Jordan will continue to do its utmost to defend Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Holy Mosque, and the Dome of the Rock, and to ensure that they are not desecrated.

At a time when the world is unanimous on the need to end unilateral Israeli practices as well as on the gravity of the increasing tensions in East Jerusalem, Israeli officials are taking premeditated steps to provoke millions in the Arab and Islamic world, the latest being that the head of the West Jerusalem Council, Nir Barakat, stormed the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque on Tuesday morning through the Al-Magharba gate, surrounded by Israeli security forces. Indeed, he went to the very top of Bab Al-Rahman, in the very first visit by the head of the West Jerusalem Council to Haram Al-Sharif.

Jordan would warn of the gravity of the debate in the Israeli Knesset of laws aimed at dividing the Al-Aqsa Mosque and attempting to impose Israeli sovereignty on Jerusalem. Such measures not only contravene international humanitarian law; they also contravene resolutions 465 (1980) and 478 (1980). And that is not to mention the continuous incursions by hordes of settlers and extremists as well as armed soldiers into the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The faithful are prevented from reaching the mosque. There are direct attacks against Muslim officials, detentions, and injuries resulting from the raids. Excavations are continuing in the Old City of Jerusalem and its surroundings, and the implementation of repairs inside the Holy Mosque is being prevented.

The representative of Israel is now telling us of the freedoms granted by Israel at the holy sites. That only shows what Israel is currently doing. Israel must immediately cease all unilateral measures in East Jerusalem. It has the responsibility not to change the facts on the ground.

Jordan will continue to confront Israeli violations in the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque by all means — political, diplomatic and legal — because the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has the historic mandate to defend Islamic and religious holy sites in Al-Quds, Jerusalem. That is a duty that is being fulfilled by King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, in the light of the special role of Jordan vis-à-vis Islamic holy sites recognized by Israel under article 9 of the peace treaty.

It is clear that Israel does not heed its commitments under international law, including the norms of international humanitarian law. Israel defies all calls by the international community to cease settler activities. As the Council is aware, the Israeli Government agreed to the building of thousands of new settler units in East Jerusalem, including through the confiscation of Palestinian homes and lands and the forcing out of said Palestinians.

Jordan strongly condemns all such activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. We would recall once again that this is a clear breach of international law as reflected in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the occupied Palestinian territory (see A/ES-10/273). These are grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention and of the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

I should like here to stress here the content of the aforementioned advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, namely that Israel violates the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination through settler activities, the confiscation of land, the expulsion of Palestinians and the removal of people to occupied Palestinian land. The Court considered Israel's violation of the right to self-determination as being an obligation erga omnes. It is a wide-ranging, comprehensive violation. It is therefore the duty of the international community, including the Security Council, to act to put an end to such violations. It must not recognize the illegitimate status proceeding from such violations.

Jordan calls on the Security Council to shoulder its legal responsibilities in putting an end to such violations of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. The Security Council must act to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land, including East Jerusalem.

The Israeli practices that we have mentioned today do not reflect Israel's wish to obtain peace. On the contrary, they threaten the two-State solution, which is the only solution to the Palestinian-Israel conflict. It is a solution that has unanimous support throughout the world. It is the doorway to a comprehensive peace in the region based on international terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative in all its elements. The

two-State solution must immediately be brought to life through serious negotiations, to be resumed, governed by indicators of achievement and a time table, and accompanied by a full end to all illegal measures that could hamper such negotiations or that try to pre-empt them by attempting to change the facts on the ground or the legal status of occupied Arab land, including East Jerusalem.

In conclusion, those who have lost both political and legal arguments are now invoking history and religion. We all know full well that all nations have a history and a religion. They can be used as a pretext whenever it is convenient. The claims of the representative of Israel can be countered by many other arguments. Nevertheless, peace, security and justice cannot be achieved through historic or religious arguments. If that were so, States' boundaries would change, not dozens but hundreds of times. He who wants peace and security for his country must respect the law and the fundamental principles and tenets agreed upon by the entire international community, and is Israel is no exception.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): Thank you, Madam President, and I thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his briefing.

We are deeply concerned by the deteriorating situation in Jerusalem, especially over the past two weeks. We are living in a time of tremendous turmoil in the Middle East. It is a time that requires brave leadership; a time that requires hard choices — choices that advance peace, choices that advance stability, choices that advance security. This is a time that calls for responsible decisions by leaders and people of both sides, as well as the international community, to advance the goals of security and peace.

The current situation is only made more difficult by actions that pollute the atmosphere for peace and further undermine trust on both sides. We continue to urge all to refrain from actions, including settlement activity and unhelpful rhetoric by either side, that will only further escalate tensions.

The deterioration of the situation in Jerusalem, at a time when so many are eager for signs of progress towards peace, is deeply troubling. It is hard to imagine sites more sensitive than those in Jerusalem, and today we are very concerned by recent tensions surrounding the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif. It is absolutely critical that all sides exercise restraint, refrain from provocative actions and rhetoric, and preserve the historical status quo on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif in word and in practice. That is why Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's recent statements expressing his commitment to maintain the status quo there and not to make any changes at the site are so important. We welcome the Prime Minister's comments.

The continued commitment of Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians to preserving the historic status quo at the holy site is critical. Any decisions or actions to change it would be both provocative and dangerous. We urge the leaders of all three parties to exercise decisive leadership and work cooperatively together to lower tensions and discourage violence, alleviate restrictions on Muslim worshipers and reinvigorate long-standing coordination mechanisms and relationships that have served over the decades to preserve the historic status quo as it pertains to religious observance and access to the site. Those arrangements are essential for maintaining calm at this important and holy site.

Israel's recently announced plans to advance a project to construct more than 1,000 housing units in East Jerusalem are deeply concerning. Beyond those recent developments, we have also seen reports that Israeli authorities met today and discussed the approval of dozens of projects aimed to expand settlement infrastructure in the West Bank, including water projects, electricity grid expansion and road construction, along with the so-called legalization of outposts the Israeli Government itself considers illegal.

The United States is deeply concerned by those developments. We urge all parties to refrain from provocative actions, including settlement activity by Israeli authorities. Settlement activity will only further escalate tensions at a time that is already tense enough. The United States views settlement activity as illegitimate. And we have made unambiguously clear our opposition to unilateral steps that may prejudge the future of Jerusalem, just as we have made clear our opposition to any unilateral attempts to make end runs around the hard work of negotiations.

Against that backdrop, the cycle of violence continues. The attack at the Jerusalem tram stop last week that killed a young baby who was a United States citizen was unconscionable. We condemn it in the strongest possible terms. We express our deepest condolences to the family of the child who was killed and the second victim, who succumbed to her wounds.

We also express our sympathies to those injured in the attack and hope for their full recovery.

The United States also expresses its deepest condolences to the family of the 14-year-old American citizen who was killed by Israeli Defense Forces during the clashes in Silwad on 24 October. We have called on the Israeli authorities to conduct an expeditious and transparent investigation into that incident and we expect them to do so. In that especially fraught environment, it is critical that all parties restore calm and that hard choices are made to de-escalate tensions and re-engage in the hard work of negotiations. Unilateral actions and short cuts are no substitute for the difficult work that peace will require.

Our goal must be to lay the groundwork for a negotiated agreement that will lead to two States living side by side in peace and security. As we have said before, the two-State solution is the only viable way forward and negotiations are the means by which the conflict will ultimately be resolved. If the parties are willing and committed to go down that path — in both words and in deeds — then we stand ready to support them every step of the way.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman for his briefing.

A week ago, we convened in the Chamber (see S/PV.7281) to note just how threatened the two-State solution was as a result of the war of July and August, which led to a critical humanitarian situation in Gaza, which was largely destroyed, and an exacerbation of tensions on the ground in Jerusalem and the West Bank. However, it is also threatened by the lack of political prospects for meeting the aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians.

For several months, France has repeated that the current situation is untenable. For the past week, we have again seen evidence that it is dangerous, especially in East Jerusalem. We condemn the criminal action of 22 October, which killed two individuals and injured seven other civilians. We also condemn the violence committed by settler groups against Palestinians and, finally, we condemn the planning of more than 1,000 new housing units in East Jerusalem, compounding the decision to build more than 2,600 housing units in Givat Hamatos, which we all know is an especially sensitive area, where, for the first time in 15 years, a new settlement would be created.

The relentless pace of settlement construction, which is illegal under international law, confirms that the status quo is non-existent. Every day the situation deteriorates and moves us further away from the possibility of two States living side by side in peace and security. We must draw the necessary conclusions. Those actions are all contrary to peace and only fuel tensions, yet what we need is a climate of dialogue. More specifically, we are very concerned by the recent flare-ups of tension, the increase of provocations by religious nationalists and the restrictions of access to the Haram al-Sharif, which echo throughout the entire region. France reaffirms its belief in the importance of Jerusalem's multicultural character and of free access to its holy sites for all believers, regardless of their religious affiliation, and would like to emphasize that any questioning of the status quo carries a risk of significant destabilization.

Today we cannot dismiss the possibility of an uncontrolled explosion of violence in Jerusalem and the West Bank. It is in nobody's interest that this should lead to a new intifada. It would mean permanent insecurity for Israel and would only ensure that Palestinians' living conditions deteriorate even further. In that context, France calls on the leaders of both sides to show a spirit of responsibility. It is their duty to take all the necessary measures to calm rather than stoke the tensions in Israeli and Palestinian public opinion. To that end, we welcome the efforts of the Palestinian Government of national unity aimed at reconciliation, an essential step towards peace. We urge the parties to refrain from any speech that could be seen as inciting violence. We call on the Israeli authorities in particular to abandon their plans to build new housing units in Jerusalem, which, we should emphasize again, are illegal under international law and liable to worsen the tensions between the parties. We urge them to take the steps necessary for a resumption of the peace negotiations as soon as possible, since they are the only way to reach a political solution to the conflict.

The crisis in Gaza this summer and the violence in Jerusalem and throughout the Palestinian territories are only symptoms of a deeper sickness, which is the deadlocked peace process. The lack of political prospects for Palestinians and the numerous threats to a two-State solution that arise on a daily basis all help to maintain a breeding ground for violent flare-ups that victimize both sides.

If we are to make peace rather than just discuss it, we must therefore change our method. New negotiations will come to nothing if they are not based on clear parameters and a clear timeline, as the successive failures of negotiations for the past 20 years have shown. What could that new method be? First, we can no longer accept the Security Council's remaining a mere spectator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While nothing, obviously, can replace negotiations between the parties, the Security Council should seriously consider taking action by establishing a balanced framework for those negotiations. France is ready to commit to that path.

Next, clear-headed consideration should tell us that mistrust between the parties has never been stronger, to a degree that we can no longer settle for calling for resumed direct negotiations as a panacea. An agreement is more impossible than ever without a renewed and stronger international effort. For that, the commitment of the United States will of course be decisive. But Europe should also shoulder its responsibility and use any leverage available to it, as must the Arab States, Russia and all the members of the Council. It is essential and urgent that all parties mobilize in order to ensure that the hope of peace and the prospects for the two parties do not simply vanish irretrievably.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his briefing. I have also listened attentively to the statements made by the representatives of Palestine and Israel.

The Palestinian-Israeli situation is currently very fragile, and China is deeply concerned about the continuing conflict between the two sides in East Jerusalem and other territories. We urge the parties to maintain restraint and to avoid any expansion of the conflict or further escalation of tensions. The issue of settlements is one of the major obstacles to the Middle East peace process, and China's position on the issue is consistent and clear. We are opposed to the Israeli settlement activities in East Jerusalem and other occupied Palestinian territories. We urge Israel to work seriously and responsibly to halt all its settlement activities immediately, avoid taking any action that could further aggravate the conflict, and create the conditions necessary for building confidence between Palestine and Israel and for resuming peace talks.

Dialogue and negotiation are the only route to a Palestinian-Israeli peace. Both parties should adhere to the strategic option for peace talks, resume them as soon as possible and work towards a rapprochement. The international community should strengthen its mutual support and create synergy aimed at providing a serious guarantee for advancing the peace process. The relevant parties should enhance their sense of responsibility and urgency, maintain an objective and impartial approach and vigorously promote peace and negotiation.

The Council should shoulder its essential responsibility and play a mediating role in resolving the Palestinian question. We would support the Council in taking action to respond to the legitimate demands of Palestine and other Arab States as soon as possible. China has always supported the Palestinian people in their just demand for and legitimate right to independent Statehood, and will continue to work with the international community in order to play a positive and constructive role in advancing the Middle East peace process.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman for his briefing, and the representatives of Israel and Palestine for their statements.

The United Kingdom deplores the recent escalation in violence and Israel's recent settlement announcements. We remain concerned about tensions and continued restrictions on Palestinian worshippers at the Haram Al-Sharif Temple Mount compound in recent months. Attempts to alter the long-standing status quo have serious political and security implications. We strongly urge the Israeli authorities to live up to their commitment to upholding the status quo by complying with their obligations under international law as an occupying Power in East Jerusalem, including with regard to the protection of holy sites. We value Jordan's important role as custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem, and urge the Israelis to work with the Jordanian Waqf in order to reduce tensions and avoid potential flashpoints, including by using a heavy police presence to prevent a worsening of the situation following the high-profile visits by extremists.

The United Kingdom has long made it clear that we condemn any actions that make it more difficult to reach a peace agreement. In that regard, we strongly condemn the recent increase in violence in Jerusalem this year, which has resulted in the deaths of five Palestinians and a terrorist incident in the Ammunition Hill area that led to the deaths of two Israelis. The

United Kingdom is also profoundly concerned about recent settlement announcements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Our long-standing national position on Israeli settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace and take us further away from a two-State solution. We therefore deplore Israel's recent decisions to advance plans for settlement units in Givat Hamatos, expropriate land near Bethlehem and make a further announcement this week to advance plans for 1,060 new housing units in East Jerusalem. We are also deeply concerned about plans to relocate the Bedouin population from around the sensitive E-1 area, and by recent demolitions of Palestinian structures in East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank. The movement by Israeli settlers into the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem in the last two months has further fuelled tensions in Jerusalem.

All of those developments undermine prospects for a two-State solution and make it much more difficult for Israel's friends to defend it against accusations that it is not serious about peace. We strongly urge the Government of Israel to reverse its policy on illegal settlements.

We urge all parties to urgently take steps to reduce tensions and to create a climate conducive to peace. We urge the parties to focus efforts on resuming serious and comprehensive negotiations towards resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as making swift progress in the Cairo talks on Gaza. Bold political steps and leadership are necessary to end the conflict, and they are needed now.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are extremely concerned about Israel's declared plan to build thousands of new settlement units in East Jerusalem and the general exacerbation of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, where renewed flare ups of violence have been noted. We regret that there have civilians casualties on both sides.

We have repeatedly stressed that unilateral actions damage the prospects for a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and undermine the universally recognized international legal foundations. The Israeli construction of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem is illegal and cannot be considered by anyone as prejudging the outcome of negotiations. It must be frozen without any exceptions. It must be noted that such a requirement is also set out in the road map of the Middle East Quartet. All Security Council members agree with that — even, as we understand it, the delegation that three years ago vetoed the anti-settlement resolution (see S/PV.6484), which, however did not really contribute to restraining Israel's settlement activities.

A dangerous turn of events has arisen as a result of recent developments around the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Old City of Jerusalem. We urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint and to refrain from any unilateral actions aimed altering the status of holy sites. This problem is one that impacts and touches the feelings of millions of believers throughout the world, and it must be resolved within the framework of the cluster of issues related to the definitive status of the Palestinian territories. It is one thing to remember that resolution 478 (1980) states that measures aimed at altering the make-up of Jerusalem are null and void and must be rescinded. Attempts to impose a fait accompli through facts on the ground, along with the imposition of unilateral decisions, undermine the prospects for a settlement on the basis of the two-State concept.

The occupation of Palestinian territories must cease. The Quartet road map set out a time frame of two years to achieve that, providing for a definitive settlement of the conflict by 2005. We stand now on the threshold of the year 2015. The situation on the ground continues to deteriorate, and obstacles on that path remain just as numerous. Attempts at discrete negotiations on the sidelines with American mediations repeatedly fail. Against that backdrop, the Security Council could play a much more substantive role in terms of assisting the sides and implementing its previous decisions. There are a great many options in this situation. We have the Security Council mission to the Middle East, something that the Palestinian and other Arab delegations asked us to do three years ago. The same applies to the adoption of a draft resolution that would spell out the parametres for a cessation of the occupation and a timeline, proposed by Palestine. We also hope that the Council will be able to break out of the impasse. Its attempts to more actively involve itself in resolving the Palestinian problem to a large extent are very important for the region, but are blocked as a result of the actions of a single delegation.

It behooves us to recognize that the pooling of efforts goes beyond even the Middle East Quartet itself. Therefore, we have long urged involvement in this work by the League of Arab States. At the current stage, we

champion the continuation in Cairo of indirect contacts between Israeli and Palestinian representatives, with an active role being played by Egypt, to achieve agreements on the long-term settlement of the situation concerning Gaza. A necessary precondition for success in achieving that is strengthening the authority of a unified Palestinian leadership structure, one which controls the whole territory of a Palestinian State, including the Gaza Strip. We also hold out the hope for a rapid resumption of full-fledged Palestinian-Israeli negotiations on a final status for the Palestinian territories.

We stand ready to work actively with the protagonists, both in bilateral and multilateral formats, to advance the cause of achieving a fair and long-term peace in the region.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I welcome this important meeting at the request of Jordan, following an urgent request by the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine. I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, for his briefing.

The situation is serious. The Israeli project to expand settlement units in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, makes a contiguous Palestinian State each day more difficult. If nothing is done, the two-State solution risks becoming an abstract concept, inapplicable on the ground. If nothing is done, very soon nobody will be able to believe in such a solution.

The international community, in particular the Security Council, should not resign itself to doing nothing. We must act, calling for an end to the provocations and inflammatory statements on both sides and the acts that spread hatred and further poison a delicate situation. The Security Council must condemn calls to violence and extremist acts committed by both sides, either by Palestinian militants or by Israeli settlers. Those extremist acts have recently cost the lives of victims, even of children, including young Israeli Chaya, age three, and a young Palestinian, age five. The Security Council should also condemn the ongoing unrestrained demolition of Palestinian structures and the decisions to build additional settlements in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. I think particularly of the decision recently taken on Givata Hamatos, Har Homa and Ramat Schlomo.

Why should we condemn those settlement decisions? We should do so because they pose an obstacle to peace, because they are illegal under international community, because they directly threaten the two-State solution and because they are not at all compatible with the aspirations of the Israeli and Palestinian people to live in peace and security. Nobody will believe in the success of peace efforts, as fragile as they are, if active settlement continues. If they are left in place, those decisions will serve to confirm the doubts about the commitment of Israel to a negotiated settlement with the Palestinians. How can we reconcile the construction of thousands of settlement units and the confiscation of Palestinian land, when all efforts should rather be targeted to settling the conflict by making the two-State solution a reality.

Israel wants to live in peace and security. Israel has the right to live in peace and security. Why then should it take measures that undermine the viability of prospects for peace? We call on Israel to revoke its decision and to put an end to its settlement activities in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. We specifically call for a halt to all measures affecting the demographic balance of Jerusalem, the destiny of which is to become the capital of two States, the capital of the sovereign democratic, sustainable, viable Palestine living in peace and security side by side with Israel.

I should now like to turn to the violent incidents in the Holy City, especially the will displayed by some to change the status of the Temple Mount. That will trigger a major crisis, one that will constitute a direct challenge to the Muslim and Christian worlds. Luxembourg recalls its commitment to free access to the holy sites by the faithful of all religions. Any change of the status of the holy sites would pose a major risk of destabilization.

I wish to conclude by stressing how urgent it is to provide a new impetus to creating a credible political horizon for peace efforts between Israelis and Palestinians. Poverty, violence and despair serve only to swell the ranks of extremists on both sides who are driven by their incendiary acts and words. The time to implement the two-State solution cannot be extended indefinitely. The situation is critical. The time has come to put an end to the measures that undermine confidence and exacerbate tensions and suffering. The time has come to take daring, specific measures in order to arrive at a fair, lasting peace.

In our view, the Security Council has a role to play in that regard by assuming its institutional

responsibilities and by playing a more active role to support and preserve the two-State solution. It is our hope that we will all be able to play a constructive role to build peace, to encourage and facilitate efforts to save the two-State solution and to put an end to the occupation. Luxembourg is prepared to support those efforts.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): I wouldl like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman for his briefing.

The Republic of Korea is deeply concerned by the worsening security environment in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. With tensions already high following the conflict in Gaza last summer, both Israel and Palestine must do everything in their power to de-escalate the situation in order to avoid another confrontation, which will only lead to further destruction on both sides. In that regard, we strongly oppose the recent announcements of settlement expansion plans, including one on Monday to construct an additional 1,000 apartments in East Jerusalem. Such actions are not only dangerous at this volatile time, but also undermine the long-term prospects for building peace in the region through the two-State solution. We are also concerned that settlement expansion will further deepen Israel's international isolation, inflame radicalism and ultimately be counterproductive to Israel's legitimate long-term security concerns.

We appeal to both sides to refrain from all unilateral measures, especially those that could prejudge the final status of Jerusalem. We condemn recent attacks on civilians in Jerusalem and the West Bank, including the reprehensible targeting of Israelis on 22 October, which resulted in the tragic death of an infant and injured eight others, as well as the hit-and-run car attack on two Palestinian children on 19 October, whicht killed a five-year-old and severely injured an eight-year-old.

We are also deeply troubled by the increased incursions at key holy sites in East Jerusalem. We appeal for calm and reiterate that maintaining the status quo at Al-Haram Al-Sharif and ensuring access to all places of worships for all faiths are of paramount importance. We commend Jordan's administerial role in that regard, and appeal to the Israeli authorities to do their utmost to prevent provocations by extremist groups and ease limitations on the entrance of worshippers moving forward.

Finally, we call on both sides to return to the negotiating table and redouble their efforts towards establishing the necessary conditions for a future accord. To break the vicious cycle of violence, we hope that negotiations will resume soon and that they will eventually lead to the realization of the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace, with secure and recognized borders, as called for by the Security Council.

Mr. Nduhungirehe (Rwanda): I also thank Mr. Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing on the current tensions in the region following the announcement of the construction of new housing units in East Jerusalem.

Last week the Security Council held an open debate on the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (see S/PV.7281). The Council noted that the situation remained fragile, not only in Gaza but also in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The recent announcement by the Israeli Government to advance construction plans in East Jerusalem in the Ramat Shlomo and Har Homa districts has predictably heightened tensions. The situation, however, should be addressed peacefully and responsibly with the aim of preserving the chances for the resumption of talks and ensuring the viability of the two-State solution.

We should not lose sight of the fact that the effects of the 50-day war in Gaza are still fresh and that any unilateral action from any side could cause the region to erupt into violence. Despite the Egyptian-brokered ceasefire in August, as stated by Under-Secretary-General Feltman, the current status quo is not sustainable. But we also know that any failure to move forward will incite the parties to resort to unilateral decisions. Therefore, the parties should make additional efforts to end the vicious cycle by resuming negotiations.

In this context of heightened tension, my delegation reiterates the importance of respect for religious freedoms, including unhindered access for worshippers of all faiths to their holy sites, and a commitment by both Israelis and Palestinians to ensure that members of their respective communities refrain from any provocation.

The status of the Old City and its religious sites are extremely sensitive to the final status issues, which can be resolved only through direct negotiations between parties. Therefore, we call upon parties to continue

to uphold the 20-year-old peace treaty regarding the religious status of the area of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in East Jerusalem. In that regard, we commend the Israeli Government for announcing that it will maintain the status quo agreement on the whole sites and will not restrict access to anyone.

In order for the world to ever witness the realization of our common goal of two States for two peoples living side by side in peace and security, both parties, supported by their peace partners, should commit themselves to a comprehensive and negotiated settlement to end the conflict and save succeeding generations in the region from the scourge of war.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Today we are urgently meeting at the request of the Permanent Mission of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to address the dangerous escalation of tensions in East Jerusalem. We regret that the Security Council has to deal once again with the situation of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory and the Temple Mount, for, as we all know, that already has been decided on. Among the measures taken with respect this issue by the Council, we highlight resolutions 446 (1979), 452 (1979), 465 (1980) and 478 (1980). We attach particular importance to resolution 478 (1980), which decides not to recognize the basic law enacted by the Knesset or the measures that, as a result of that law, "seek to alter the character and status of Jerusalem" (*resolution 478 (1980), para. 5*). However, 35 years on, we must stilll continue to deal with what our predecessors in the Chamber had already decided.

In that regard, Chile emphatically condemns Israel's latest announcement that it will continue construction of more than a 1,000 new settlement units in Ramat Shlomo and Har Homa. Israel's flouting of Security Council resolutions voids the viability and geographic contiguity of the future Palestinian State, which must have East Jerusalem as its capital.

Like other members of the international community, we believe that such unilateral actions, as well as those initiatives seeking to alter the character of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, perpetuate discord and mistrust between peoples. We are very concerned about the tension we have seen in East Jerusalem since July, including the action on Wednesday, 22 October, which led to the death of an Israeli child and an Ecuadorian migrant woman. All that makes us fear for a new intifada.

We again urge and deem it necessary for the Security Council to speak out and to continue making every effort to facilitate the two-State solution and to effectively exercise its responsibilities to preserve international peace and security.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would also like to convey my gratitude to you, Madam President, for having convened this public meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I also thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing.

Chad wishes to express its deep concern regarding the most recent developments in the occupied Palestinian territories, where the brutal actions by Israel against Palestinian civilians continues. Incursions into holy sites continue, threatening to further deteriorate an already extremely tense situation, especially in East Jerusalem. It is in this tense climate that Israel has announced its plan for the construction of 1,000 additional housing units in East Jerusalem, thus fanning the flames of discord. Quite clearly, settlement and the illegal appropriation of land are very serious acts that risk completely undermining any chance for a peace process as well as undermining all mediation efforts.

A legitimate question in this case is how can the Palestinian people build its future independent State, one which would be viable and sovereign, if its territory is reduced on a daily basis? In that regard, we condemn as firmly as possible the construction of any new settlements, attacks against civilians, the destruction of houses and the forced displacement of Palestinians, and we urge Israel to bring all this to an immediate end.

Turning to the political process, as other delegations have underscored, the current status quo is no longer acceptable, and it is regrettable that of late the Security Council's public and closed meetings on the issue of Palestine are leading to no concrete initiatives likely to unblock the situation and to improve the living conditions of Palestinians under occupation. It is high time for the international community to assume its responsibilities to lend real momentum to the peace process and to bring Israelis and Palestinians back together around the negotiating table. That requires Israel to respect its international legal commitments and to put an end to all actions that are fraught with the risk of reducing the peace process to nothing.

The solution of two States living side by side in peace remains the only possibility that would guarantee

security for Israel and a better, safer future for the Palestinian people. We are convinced that to achieve a just and lasting peace in the region, Israel has to respect the relevant United Nations resolutions. Israel will have to recognize that peace is simply incompatible with the occupation policy, the construction of new settlements in Palestinian territories, the massacre of innocent people or the desecration of holy sites.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I thank Under-Secretary-General Jeff Feltman for his briefing, and I note the statements from our Palestinian and Israeli colleagues.

Australia remains very disappointed at the failure of final-status negotiations earlier this year. Efforts to achieve a durable peace based on a two-State solution must resume in earnest immediately. Australia unreservedly condemns sectarian acts of violence against innocent civilians, which breed mutual distrust at a time when trust is urgently needed. Such cowardly acts do nothing to advance the interests of the Palestinian people and serve only to strengthen the narrative of those extremists wedded to a cycle of killing and recrimination. Both sides have an obligation to do everything within their power to reduce current tensions. It is not in the interests of any party to return to the mass violence that characterized the conflict in Gaza. Instead, Israeli and Palestinian politicians must show real leadership in seeking the difficult path of peace and reconciliation.

In respect of the holy sites in Jerusalem, we welcome Prime Minister Netanyahu's public commitment this week, repeated by Israel's Permanent Representative in the Council today, that access by all to the holy sites will continue to be maintained. We are troubled by Israel's reported decision to construct more than 1,000 new apartments in East Jerusalem. The decision follows Israel's declaration in August of an intention to expropriate 1,000 acres of West Bank land south of Bethelehem as State land. Following that declaration, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Bishop, called on Israeli Minister for Foreign Affairs Liberman to reconsider that declaration to expropriate land.

The building of new Israeli settlements on territories subject to final-status negotiations and Palestinian efforts to pursue unilaterally a Palestinian State undermine efforts to return to peace negotiations. Israelis and Palestinians deserve to live with dignity side by side in peace and security. To that end, we continue to encourage both sides to resume direct negotiations towards a just and lasting two State solution. We believe the Council can play a constructive role in supporting that process, but can only do so with the full commitment of both sides.

Mr. Laro (Nigeria): I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his briefing.

The recent announcement by the Government of Israel of plans to build new settlements in occupied East Jerusalem has grave implications for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The immediate cessation of illegal Israeli settlement activity is crucial to resolving the question of Palestine, based on the two-State solution, which the international community broadly supports and for which there is no viable alternative. We therefore join other members of the Council in ordering the Israeli Government to abandon its plans to construct new settlements in East Jerusalem, which under international law is a part of occupied Palestinian territory.

During the Security Council debate of 21 October (see S/PV.7281), we called on both parties to seize the opportunity provided by the current ceasefire to restart the stalled negotiations. We restate our position that dialogue remains the only means of resolving the question of Palestine. The parties should avoid hostile rhetoric and unilateral actions and take steps to de-escalate tensions. They should, without delay, resume direct negotiations on the final status issues, including on borders, security, the status of Jerusalem and the return of Palestinian refugees.

Our unambiguous message today, as always, is that we would like to see Israel and Palestine live side by side in peace and security, within internationally recognized borders and consistent with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): I thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his briefing.

Latest tragic incidents such as the deadly attack by a Palestinian of 22 October, the shooting of Palestinian teenagers and settler violence are developments of extreme concern. We deplore the loss of lives and call for thorough investigation into those tragic events. We fear that, if left unaddressed, this tension may spiral into yet another escalation of violence. We urge all sides to refrain from any actions that could heighten tensions and lead to further incitement and hate crimes. It is the responsibility of all sides to restore calm and avoid further tensions.

The European Union and its States members, including Lithuania, condemned the Israeli Government's decision to approve plans for new settlements. Settlements are illegal under international law. If these plans advance, it will severely threaten the final status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two States. We join international community in calling on the Government of Israel to reverse the plans and put an end to its settlement policy in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

We urge Israel to desist from any measures aimed at altering the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and the legal status of the City of Jerusalem. Those actions threaten the prospects for peace and run counter to the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Lithuania strongly commends Jordan, the Custodian of the Holy Sites in Jerusalem, and supports its actions to preserve the status quo of holy sites in East Jerusalem. We have consistently repeated our call to all sides to cease all provocative actions in and around the Holy Site of the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif complex that could prejudice the outcome of negotiations over East Jerusalem. Our Foreign Minister has just completed a visit to Jordan that coincided with the twentieth anniversary of the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan. The Lithuanian and Jordanian Foreign Ministers agreed that it was important to resume peace negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians as soon as possible.

Lithuania reiterates its call for both sides to resume peace negotiations and to demonstrate strong commitment and leadership to reach a two-State solution. A way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of both Israel and Palestine. A two-State solution achieved on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference, including land for peace, the road map, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative is the only viable solution to bring peace and security to both people and to reduce tensions in the region.

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

I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing, and I reiterate my gratitude to the representatives of Israel and Palestine for their statements.

Jerusalem is of enormous importance for Christians, Muslims and Jews. I do not think I err in saying that Jerusalem has genuine meaning for all men and women of good faith. It is thus that the emergency holding of this meeting of the Security Council is amply justified, at a time when tensions in Jerusalem — which, again, is of great importance for everyone alike —are escalating in a dangerous and destabilizing manner, with violence having already cost civilian lives.

How unfortunate that, while we are still in the midst of discussions about yet another reconstruction of Gaza, we again face an urgent need to draw attention to actions that take place in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Particularly worthy of our resolute condemnation are the announcements that Israel plans to move forward with the construction of more settlement units in East Jerusalem, including in Ramat Shlomo and Har Homa. Unfortunately, those announcements are neither surprising nor isolated events. Most lamentable of all is the fact that they do not surprise us because they are part of the continuing campaign of settlement in East Jerusalem, accompanied by seizures, attacks against civilians, demolitions and the forced displacement of Palestinian residents.

Moreover, settlement expansion coincides with a series of violent events, access restrictions, acts of incitement and attempts to alter the status quo of the holy places in Jerusalem — for men and women of faith and for men and women of goodwill. In the current climate of frustration and a stagnation in the dialogue, we are dealing with irresponsible actions with potential destabilizing effects for the engire region.

We know that all these practices as a whole violate international law, are contrary to peace, continue to change the situation on the ground and jeopardize the viability of the two-State solution. How can we tolerate practices that cannot be tolerated? Why not require once again that they be reversed immediately? Why not warn that they could lead to a new tragic escalation of violence?

The Security Council, joining the majority position of the international community, has on many occasions said that all legislative and administrative measures taken by Israel and the actions taken that tend to change the legal status of Jerusalem are null and void, cannot in

fact change that status and constitute a serious obstacle to peace. The Council has also deplored Israel's persistent attempts to change the physical nature, demographic composition, institutional structure and very status of the Holy City of Jerusalem.

But it is clear that simple words of condemnation are not enough and that the history between the Security Council and Jerusalem is a series of unobserved resolutions. Things are that way because we are losing sight of the fact that Jerusalem is just one facet of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and that the acts that have brought us together today are expressions of a broader reality, of an illegal occupation that has lasted for almost half a century.

Argentina believes that the Security Council must stop condoning, through its inaction, acts of provocation and actions that are incompatible with peace. We believe that we should do our utmost to salvage the two-State solution while it is still possible to do so. If we drop our masks and double standards, there are things that the Council can and must do to meet that objective, thereby fully living up to its responsibilities.

The Council can accept Palestine as a State Member of the United Nations. The Council can conduct a long-postponed visit to the region. And it should take up — in a high-minded, serious fashion and with a spirit of commitment — the Arab draft resolution, which would put an end to the occupation within a specific time frame, as part of the Council's efforts to achieve the full independence of the Palestinian people and guarantee the right of the State of Israel to live in peace with its neighbours within secure and internationally recognized borders. To that end, Argentina continues to be ready to work on the draft resolution.

We are convinced that, with the necessary political will and political ethics, the Security Council will be able to help create conditions that will lead, once and for all, to a peaceful, fair, tolerant and lasting coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.