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Provisional

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New York

<i>President:</i>	Mrs. Perceval/Mr. Oyarzábal	(Argentina)
<i>Members:</i>	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
	Lithuania	Mrs. Jakubonė
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Oh Joon
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Rwanda	Mr. Gasana
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . .	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Power

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Bahrain, Belize, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba, Egypt, Guatemala, Iceland, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Zimbabwe 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 His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, and His Excellency Mr. Fodé Seck, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to participate in this meeting.

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

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

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and I now give him the floor.

The Secretary-General: I thank Argentina for organizing this important meeting. As members know, I returned last week from Egypt, Israel and

Palestine, which included my first visit to Gaza since this summer's conflict. In Egypt, I attended the International Conference on Palestine, which focused on Gaza's reconstruction. I would like to thank the co-chairs, Egypt and Norway, for their leadership. The event surpassed expectations, with pledges from some 50 countries amounting to \$5.4 billion. It is important that those promises quickly materialize into concrete assistance on the ground.

The clock is ticking. Some \$414 million are immediately needed for humanitarian relief, \$1.2 billion for early recovery needs and \$2.4 billion for reconstruction efforts. More than 100,000 residents of Gaza remain homeless, with over 50,000 still sheltering in school buildings belonging to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Many still lack access to the municipal water network. Blackouts of up to 18 hours per day are common. Meanwhile, winter is approaching. I urge the international community to move quickly to deliver much-needed assistance.

Nothing could have prepared me for what I witnessed in Gaza. I saw mile after mile of wholesale destruction. I visited a United Nations school in the Jabaliya refugee camp, which was shelled during the hostilities. Civilians had sought protection under the United Nations flag. Parents and children shared heart-wrenching accounts of suffering and pain. I met a young man whose brothers and sisters perished in the blasts. He is now confined to a wheelchair, having lost his legs.

I look forward to a thorough investigation by the Israel Defense Forces of this and other incidents in which United Nations facilities sustained hits and many innocent people were killed. I am planning to move forward with an independent board of inquiry to look into the most serious of those cases, as well as instances in which weaponry was found on United Nations premises.

Israelis also suffered during the conflict. I travelled to a kibbutz where I met the grieving family of a four-year-old child named Daniel who was killed by a Hamas rocket — another innocent victim of this mindless conflict. As I said in Gaza, firing rockets is unacceptable, and the rockets have brought nothing but suffering. I also visited a tunnel built by militants to launch attacks. I fully understand the security threat to Israel from rockets above and tunnels below. At the

same time, the scale of the destruction in Gaza has left deep questions about proportionality and the need for accountability.

Despite the harsh reality on the ground, I left Gaza with a measure of hope. During my visit to Gaza, the first supplies of urgently needed construction materials entered Gaza under the temporary mechanism brokered by my Special Coordinator. If implemented in good faith, that mechanism can help bring stability to Gaza. I also welcome Turkey's offer of a ship to serve as a temporary power plant, and Israel's positive consideration of that arrangement. That is the kind of action and cooperation needed now to alleviate the situation in Gaza.

Palestinians are taking critical steps to forge a united path to the future. That includes an intra-Palestinian reconciliation agreement, followed by a historic meeting in Gaza of the Cabinet of the Government of national consensus. A united Palestinian Government is beginning to take shape. During my visit, I met with Prime Minister Hamdallah and his Cabinet in Ramallah, and Deputy Prime Minister Abu-Amr and several Ministers in Gaza to further underscore United Nations support for a unified Palestinian leadership.

The national consensus Government must be consolidated so it can assume its rightful responsibilities in Gaza, including deployment to the border crossings. That is crucial, as effective management of Gaza's borders will facilitate the flow of construction materials into Gaza and allow the restoration of trade between Gaza and the West Bank. Civil and administrative reform and other related issues must also become a priority to help unify the two separate strands of administration for the Gaza Strip. I welcome the generous contribution of the Government of Qatar and the Emir, His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, towards a one-time humanitarian payment by the end of this month in Gaza for a number of civil service employees.

Notwithstanding the immediate needs in Gaza, the situation in the West Bank demands renewed attention. In my meetings in Jerusalem, I reiterated my deep concerns about plans to construct residential housing units in occupied East Jerusalem. International law is clear — settlement activity is illegal. It runs totally counter to the pursuit of a two-State solution. I urge the Israeli Government to reverse these activities.

I also remain deeply concerned by unilateral actions, restrictions and provocations at the holy

sites in Jerusalem. I take note of Prime Minister Netanyahu's personal assurance to me in Jerusalem of his Government's commitment to refraining from altering policies with respect to the holy sites that have been in place over many decades.

I am also concerned about mounting numbers of attacks by settlers and others, as well as Israeli plans to relocate some 7,000 Palestinian Bedouins, the majority of whom are refugees, from their current locations in the central West Bank, including in the strategic El area. Such an action, if implemented in a forcible manner, would be contrary to international human rights and humanitarian law.

The cycle of build-and-destroy must end. The international community cannot be expected to continually pick up the pieces of another war and then pick up the bill. As I said in Cairo, let this be the last Gaza reconstruction conference. I welcome the planned resumption of indirect ceasefire talks between Israel and the Palestinians, under Egyptian auspices in Cairo. I also recognize the positive steps taken by Israel to ease restrictions on movement and trade in the West Bank and Gaza. These must be further expanded.

But, as I repeated throughout my visit to the region, there is no hope for long-term stability in Gaza without addressing the underlying causes of the conflict: an end to the occupation that has grinded on for nearly half a century, a full lifting of the blockade on the Gaza Strip, and effectively addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. Ultimately, long-term stability will require a comprehensive peace agreement leading to a viable and independent Palestinian State. Leaders on both sides must overcome their differences and dispense with unilateral initiatives that serve only to fuel mistrust and polarization. The two-State solution is the only viable option for a durable peace. It is time for courage and vision to make the tough compromises that are needed now. I challenge both sides to rise to the occasion.

Allow me to take this opportunity to also say a few words about Syria and Lebanon, neither of which can be considered in isolation from the broader context. On Syria, last week I called on all parties to step up to protect civilians in the town of Ayn al-Arab/Kobani. Ayn al-Arab/Kobani is just one of many places across Syria where civilians are under imminent threat.

In addition to the barbarity of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, or Daesh, the Syrian Government continues to brutally and indiscriminately attack

populated areas, including with barrel bombs. Our long-term strategic objective in Syria remains a political solution based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). A purely military response to the vicious new threat posed by Daesh could ultimately contribute to the radicalization of other Sunni armed groups and spark a cycle of renewed violence. I urge the Council to lend its full support to my Special Envoy's efforts to reduce the suffering of the Syrian people and contribute to a political solution.

In Lebanon, I am troubled by a dangerous escalation since the August attacks by Daesh and Nusra Front on Arsal, and the latest fighting earlier this month between the Nusra Front and Hizbullah outside the town of Brital. I welcome the efforts of Prime Minister Salam and Lebanese leaders to uphold national unity. The Lebanese parties should urgently demonstrate flexibility to open the way for the election of a president of the Republic without further delay. In this context, the challenge of the refugee presence in Lebanon has become ever more complex. I welcome the upcoming meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon in Berlin on 28 October.

Finally, I would like to underscore the importance of ensuring that calm continues to prevail along the Blue Line. This is vital to the stability of Lebanon and the region. I welcome the recommitment of both Lebanon and Israel to their obligations under resolution 1701 (2006), and to cooperating fully with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

I thank the members of the Council once again for their attention. Let us work together to bring long-sought peace and lasting stability to the people of the Middle East.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I congratulate the friendly country of Argentina on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month, and express our appreciation, Madam, for your able leadership of the Council's efforts to address the many critical issues on its agenda at this time.

I also express our appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his important briefing and deep gratitude for his dedicated peace efforts. We

are grateful for his leadership of the United Nations delegation to the Cairo International Conference on Palestine, "Reconstructing Gaza", and for his recent visit to the State of Palestine, including to the Gaza Strip, where he witnessed first-hand the massive destruction and devastation wrought by the Israeli military aggression in July and August and the suffering that continues in the absence of real recovery, reconstruction and sustainable solutions to core issues of this conflict.

We have long appealed for the Security Council members to visit Palestine to see, unfiltered, these realities and the grave injustice being endured by the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation. We are certain that this would better inform the Council's deliberations and compel greater resolve to contribute to a viable solution through the implementation of the Council's resolutions and in line with its Charter duty to ensure international peace and security. As noted by the Secretary-General during his visit to Gaza, "No amount of Security Council sessions, reports or briefings could have prepared me for what I witnessed today". At this critical time, we again appeal for such a visit by the Council, stressing the imperative of salvaging the prospects for Palestinian-Israeli peace.

The centrality of the United Nations in pursuit of a peaceful solution is indisputable. The Secretary-General's expressions of solidarity and support resonated deeply with our people, who recognize the historic role of the United Nations in advocating for justice and for the rights of the Palestinian people, including the Palestine refugees, and who continue to look to the United Nations to ease their hardships and lead the way to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. We join the Secretary-General today in commending the extraordinary work of the United Nations agencies on the ground, which exerted valiant efforts during the recent crisis in Gaza, including, inter alia, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Mine Action Service, as well as the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator, led by Special Coordinator Robert Serry, to whom we express appreciation for his role in facilitating the recent agreement regarding access to and reconstruction in the Gaza Strip.

Today, we also pay tribute to the eleven Palestinian national staff of UNRWA who lost their lives during the Israeli onslaught on Gaza. We honour their selfless humanitarian service to their people and convey our sincerest condolences to their families and colleagues. We also memorialize the many others of our humanitarian and medical personnel, as well as journalists, who were killed while aiding others or trying to give voice to the anguish of our people during this criminal war.

Nearly two months ago, since the Israeli aggression against Gaza ended, following the ceasefire reached on 26 August under the auspices of Egypt, the magnitude of the carnage, terror and destruction inflicted continue to weigh heavily, impacting every aspect of life and fuelling despair and hopelessness. The Secretary-General has described the toll as “beyond words”, a sentiment repeatedly conveyed in the universal expressions of disbelief and shame that such devastation and trauma could again be inflicted on the Palestinian people, and so cruelly, deliberately and systematically. While all may know by now the figures, they merit repeating in the Council, to be put in the official record but also to impel a greater sense of urgency for expediting recovery, including by the complete lifting of the illegal Israeli blockade, which continues to suffocate Gaza and impede efforts to alleviate the humanitarian disaster and to expedite the long-overdue solution to the conflict.

As of 26 August 2014, among the breaches of international law amounting to war crimes committed by Israel, the occupying Power, in its 50-day aggression against Gaza are the following.

There were 2,180 Palestinians killed, the majority civilians, among them 516 children and 283 women. Among families, 142 lost three or more members in the same incident, with a total of 739 people from those families perishing, including in Israeli bombings that flattened homes atop entire families. That fact confirms in stark terms the excessive, indiscriminate nature of Israel’s offensive and the abject failure to protect civilians. The numbers also belie Israel’s claims to the contrary, including false claims about human shields. In that regard, I recall a statement by Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Kyung-Wha Kang at the height of the conflict, addressed to the Human Rights Council special session on Gaza in July:

“Families are taking the heart-wrenching decision to split to different locations — mother and son

to one, father and daughter to another — hoping to maximize the chance one part of the family survives”.

Our people were trying desperately to save themselves from the Israeli war machine.

So far, 1,500 girls and boys have been orphaned. More than 373,000 traumatized children require psych-social support. More than 11,000 Palestinians were injured, including 3,000 children, of them 1,000 disabled for life. Even now, victims of Israeli assaults are dying due to the severity of their wounds or the lack of life-saving medical treatment in Gaza. More than half a million people were displaced at the height of the aggression, the largest displacement of Palestinian civilians since 1967. More than 80,000 homes were damaged by the occupying forces, with 20,000 homes either entirely destroyed or damaged beyond habitation. To date, 108,000 people have been rendered homeless, with more than 40,000 people continuing to shelter at 18 UNRWA schools.

More than 100 United Nations facilities were damaged, including UNRWA schools, where civilians believed they were safe under the United Nations flag, yet where many lost their lives in abhorrent Israeli attacks. In addition, 75 hospitals and clinics were damaged and 23 health personnel were killed and 83 injured. More than 33,000 metres of water and waste networks were damaged. The attack on the Gaza power plant caused up to 22 hours a day of power outages, with 18-hour outages continuing due to lack of fuel, with the many consequences for civilian life. At least 500 economic and industrial facilities, constituting 60 per cent of Gaza’s production capacity, were destroyed, directly and indirectly impacting more than 35,000 jobs. Approximately 8,000 unexploded ordnance, 10 per cent of the munitions launched by Israel at Gaza, remains scattered in civilian areas, obstructing rubble removal and reconstruction and endangering lives.

The same period witnessed the killing of at least 32 Palestinian civilians in violent and destructive raids throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the arrest and detention of more than 800 civilians, including children.

This list is not exhaustive and these facts alone cannot convey the depth of our people’s misery following this horrific war and our collective grief at the immense loss of life and tragedy endured. As we seek to move forward, we cannot ignore the pain of the families

who have lost and buried their loved ones and must do all we can to heal the injured bodies, wounded souls and broken spirits of those who remain. Serious efforts are required to allay their suffering, but also to ensure accountability for these crimes and give them hope for the future. In that regard, I must clarify — tending to the wounds of our people and seeking justice is neither incitement nor provocation; rather, it is responsible, moral behaviour and an absolute imperative to promote genuine healing, without which peace and reconciliation between the two peoples can ever be realized.

Therefore, while we are grateful for the outpouring of support and the generosity and the principled commitments by donor countries in Cairo, and while we reaffirm our gratitude to the Governments of Egypt and Norway for their sponsorship of the Conference, we reiterate what was stressed by the UNRWA Commissioner-General: “Nowhere in the world does humanitarian assistance alone make up for the denial of dignity and rights”. Palestine is not the exception. Hence, while we seek to immediately address, in coordination with the United Nations, urgent humanitarian and reconstruction needs to restore dignity to the lives of our people in Gaza, including by lifting the blockade and consolidating the ceasefire, we will also act resolutely, with the support of all concerned and friendly countries, to ensure a broader political horizon and mobilize the global will for political action to justly, finally and peacefully resolve the conflict’s core issues and to realize the legitimate national aspirations and rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and freedom.

The time is past due to acknowledge that Israel, the occupying Power, rejects peace and is deliberately destroying the two-State solution and undermining every effort to realize it. That is not the Palestinian narrative; it is the reality confirmed over and over by the actions of the Israeli Government and the words of its representatives at the highest levels. On the ground, Israel’s illegitimate and destructive colonial project continues apace. As it did throughout the nine months of United States Secretary of State John Kerry’s sponsored negotiations, Israel persists with its settlement construction, the construction of its apartheid annexation wall, land confiscation, home demolitions and forced displacement of civilians, including threats to displace more than 12,000 Bedouins.

Occupied East Jerusalem and its Palestinian inhabitants remain a primary target of those illegal

practices as the occupying Power continues its attempts to illegally alter the demography, character, identity and spirit of the Holy City with repeated provocations at Al-Aqsa Mosque, threatening to deepen polarizations and instigate a religious conflict, with grave consequences, and paying no heed to the clear sensitivities and volatility of the region. Armed settlers persist with their terror rampages against Palestinian civilians, just days ago killing a 5-year old Palestinian girl, Inas Khalil, in addition to incessant attacks on our land, mosques and churches.

While the international community appeals for calm and restraint, Israeli officials are outbidding each other with provocative declarations and incitement against the Palestinian people and their Government. I am sure we will hear such crude incitement in this Chamber again today by the Israeli representative.

Just weeks ago, Prime Minister Netanyahu stood before the General Assembly (see A/69/PV.17) extolling the status quo and denying that there is an occupation; and Israeli war minister Ya’alon has declared openly that they will never allow the two-State solution and blatantly exposed their intentions to force the Palestinian people into isolated, disconnected Bantustans without sovereignty and under Israel’s perpetual subjugation. Those declarations and actions are predicated on the erroneous notion that such an immoral, unjust outcome would ever be accepted. We reiterate in response that the Palestinian people will never forgo their inalienable human rights, including to freedom, independence and sovereignty, and they will never forgo justice and the goal of peace.

We believe that the international community, too, will never accept such an injustice. Our conviction is firm that the international community will more precisely continue to demand respect for international law and for the consensus solution rooted in United Nations resolutions, and will continue to advocate for the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people to defend the vulnerable and to seek peace and justice.

Here, we also reaffirm before the Council that the Palestinian people and the Palestinian national consensus Government, under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas, remain fully committed to peace and will continue to exert every effort, in partnership and with the support of all concerned countries, to achieve as soon as possible a just, comprehensive and viable solution that will bring a complete end to the Israeli occupation begun in 1967,

and achieve the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security within recognized borders, and a just solution for the Palestine refugee question, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). In that regard we reiterate the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative and recognize the role of our Arab brethren in supporting peace efforts.

If we are ever to attain those urgent objectives, we cannot return to the same cycle of failed negotiations, which are used by Israel only as a means to alleviate international pressure and as a cover for its illegal schemes to entrench, rather than end, its occupation. How many times have our protestations against Israel's settlement activities and collective punishment of our people, including the cruel blockade of Gaza, been met with demands that we restrain ourselves to avoid undermining the peace process?

The credibility of that process has been nullified by Israel and it is high time to move beyond speaking of the two-State solution in theory and time to act forthwith to actualize it, before the small opportunity that remains vanishes — an impending reality that is widely acknowledged. We have therefore approached the Security Council with the initiative of a draft resolution reaffirming the parameters of the two-State solution and delineating a time frame for an end to the 47-year Israeli military occupation of Palestinian land, including East Jerusalem, and for the attainment of the independence and rights of the Palestinian people. As affirmed by President Abbas before the General Assembly, we are committed to that peaceful, political, non-violent, legal path to achieve our rights and establish peace and security.

The elements of the draft resolution are based fully on the provisions of relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions comprising the foundation of a lasting peace settlement. Moreover, the draft calls for a cessation of Israel's illegal policies and practices; its compliance with international law, including humanitarian and human rights law; and the protection of the Palestinian people, which are imperative for reducing tensions, promoting calm and creating the appropriate environment and level of trust required for the conduct of genuine, accelerated negotiations to end the occupation and resolve the core issues.

We reiterate our call on the members of the Security Council and the international community

to support the initiative and the approach to reaffirm the fundamental parameters for a just solution, and to inject new momentum into the efforts to achieve lasting peace and security between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. We urge all States to uphold their responsibilities — collectively here at the United Nations and as high contracting parties to the Geneva Conventions, as well as individually — to back the efforts towards making peace a reality.

In that regard, we express gratitude to Sweden for its principled announcement regarding recognition of the State of Palestine as well as the motions on recognition put forward by the Parliaments of the United Kingdom and Spain, and we encourage those who have not yet recognized the existence of our State to do so as a legitimate and necessary contribution to peace.

In closing, to our people in occupied Palestine, in the refugee camps of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, and the Diaspora, we reiterate our resolve to end their plight and to ensure their rights, national aspirations and well-being. We recall the question posed by President Abbas at the Cairo Conference:

“Has the time not come for righteousness and justice to prevail in Palestine? Has the time not come for the historic injustice against our people to end?”

We believe that the time has come, and we appeal to the international community for all possible support to our efforts to realize those noble, long-overdue objectives.

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

Mr. Roet (Israel): I congratulate you, Madam President, on the Argentine presidency of the Security Council this month and thank you for presiding over today's important debate and for your country's almost two years of service to the Security Council. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing, which we highly appreciate.

Albert Einstein once said that the world was a dangerous place to live not because of people who were evil, but because of people who did nothing about it. There is no question that the world is a dangerous place to live. What many fail to realize is that it will remain dangerous — and become even more dangerous — unless we address the real root causes of this violence and instability, namely, the poisonous ideology of extremism.

As we speak, violent radical groups are waging a brutal and aggressive war in order to challenge the existing world order. It is no accident that the most dangerous extremist groups operate in the Middle East, a region plagued by intolerance and tyranny. They are taking advantage of the area's instability to advance their narrow interests and return the region to the Dark Ages.

While many nations struggle to combat terrorist groups that are thousands of kilometres and oceans away, Israel finds those threats on its doorstep. The State of Israel is the only democracy between the Red Sea and the Caspian Sea. We have built a society based on democracy, freedom of speech, freedom of worship, the rule of law and the equal rights of all people. Those are the values that the United Nations was built upon and they are the values that the Organization should be upholding. And yet, as I listen to members of the international community speak about the root causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is clear that those values are not always the ones being championed.

Madam President, how many times have you heard it said that the root cause of the conflict is the "occupation"? And how many times have you heard that Hamas fires rockets into Israel to oppose the occupation? It simply is not true — because Israel does not occupy Gaza. In 2005, Israel turned every inch of Gaza over to the Palestinians. We uprooted thousands of families from their homes and dismantled their businesses. We opened border crossings and encouraged commerce because we wanted Gaza to succeed — for our sake and for the sake of the Palestinians. We hoped that it would serve as a model for two societies living side by side in peace. But it has not done that. Instead, Hamas has sought to fulfil the mission stated in its Charter, namely, that of destroying the State of Israel.

Some have also suggested that settlements are the root cause of the conflict. There are many threats in our region, but the presence of Jewish homes in the Jewish homeland has never been one of them. From 1948 until 1967, the West Bank was part of Jordan and Gaza was part of Egypt — and throughout that time, our neighbours still sought our destruction. Nonetheless, some in the international community continue to cling to old myths. How many times have you heard, Madam President, that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the central conflict in the Middle East, that if you solve that conflict, you solve all the other conflicts in the region?

Make no mistake, it is important for Israel and the Palestinians to resolve our long-standing dispute.

It is important on its own merits so that Israelis and Palestinians alike can lead peaceful, secure and prosperous lives. But that can only be done through direct negotiation. As much as I look forward to the day when we will make peace, I can assure you, Madam President, that when that day comes, the Middle East will not magically transform into a stable and peaceful place. Hizbullah will not surrender its tens of thousands of rockets, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant will not join the Peace Corps and stop recruiting new jihadists, and Hamas will not amend its charter to recognize the existence of the State of Israel.

President John F. Kennedy said that the great enemy of the truth was very often not the lie, but the myth — persistent, persuasive and unrealistic. Therefore, what are the real underlying causes of the instability in our region?

The first root cause is Hamas, an organization committed to the destruction of the State of Israel. Hamas — an extremist terrorist organization — rejects our very existence. It believes that Israel has no right to exist within any borders. Some in the international community are willing to admit this fundamental fact behind closed doors, but rarely will they acknowledge it in public meetings.

Millions of Israeli families spent the summer months this year running for shelter from the thousands of rockets fired intentionally and indiscriminately by Hamas towards our cities and towns. Communities near Gaza were horrified to learn that their homes and schools were steps from Hamas' vast network of terror tunnels. No nation, no Government could be expected to stand by as its people are the target of rocket attacks, kidnappings or terrorist plots. In the face of those unrelenting threats, we were left with no choice but to defend our citizens.

Israel did everything it could to safeguard innocent lives, taking steps beyond those required under international law. We accepted ceasefire after ceasefire, we aborted missions to save lives and, before launching attacks, we dropped leaflets, sent text messages and made phone calls. What other country goes to those lengths to protect civilians?

Hamas' modus operandi is to exploit its innocent civilians and endanger its own people. There is no site in Gaza that Hamas deemed off limits — not ambulances which were used to transport terrorists, not private homes where Israeli forces discovered

explosives beside a baby crib, not hospitals that were used as terrorist command centres, and certainly not schools administered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which were turned into rocket storehouses and where, from just steps away, terrorists fired rockets.

Despite all of that, Israel — and Israel alone — is singled out, scrutinized and criticized. At the Cairo Conference many nations had a great deal to say about Israel's policies and actions, but they could not even bring themselves to mention Hamas by name.

A second real root cause of the conflict is the unilateral steps that distance us from peace. There are no shortcuts when it comes to making peace. Making peace requires courageous leaders — leaders who speak about partnership and denounce prejudice; leaders who embrace tolerance and reject terrorism; leaders who believe in cooperation instead of conflict. When Israel faced a leader willing to make peace, we made peace. That was the case with President Sadat of Egypt and it was the case with King Hussein of Jordan.

In his remarks to the General Assembly last month, President Abbas delivered a hate-fuelled attack that accused Israel of the worst crimes, including racism and genocide (see A/69/PV.12). Just a few days ago, he called on the Palestinians to prevent Jews from visiting the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, through the use of “all means necessary”. Are those the words of a man committed to making peace? Does that sound like a leader willing to make painful compromises? Or is that more incitement and intolerance?

Making peace requires compromise and hard choices. The remarks made earlier by the Palestinian observer offer another example of the tendency of the Palestinians to point fingers instead of taking responsibility. His remarks touched on many things, but failed to address the important issues. And so I ask him, “why do you not condemn Hamas for using your own people as human shields? Why do you not denounce Hamas for stealing from the Palestinian people to buy rockets and build terror tunnels? Why do you pursue destructive unilateral actions rather than constructive bilateral efforts?”

The same message should be conveyed to the international community. Supporting Palestinian unilateral steps does not advance the cause of peace. By prematurely recognizing a State of Palestine, European Governments are sending a message that Palestinians do not need to make hard choices and may thereby be

undermining efforts to bring about a real and lasting change in our region.

The United Nations must also play its part. The selection of William Schabas to chair the Gaza commission of inquiry is just one more example of the anti-Israel bias that pervades the Organization. Mr. Schabas's agenda is clear. He has repeatedly called for the prosecution of Israeli leaders, saying, “My favourite would be Netanyahu within the dock of the International Criminal Court”. It is obvious that Mr. Schabas is not impartial, and yet he refuses to recuse himself. If Mr. Schabas does not have the integrity to do what is right, then it is up to the international community to step in.

Israel does not shy away from accepting responsibility, but cannot be expected to abide by a commission that has predetermined the outcome of its inquiry. Israel understands that the examination of its policies is a fundamental part of the democratic process. For that reason, in the early days of Operation Protective Edge, Israel established a fact-finding mechanism in accordance with international law to investigate exceptional incidents. Those incidents include, among others, cases which resulted in harm to civilians or damage to civil or United Nations facilities.

As a democracy, Israel upholds and abides by the rule of law. We would hope that the international community would support us in this effort. Premature and unfounded accusations serve no purpose other than to inflame tensions in the region.

Israel is committed to partnership with the international community to advance peace and develop the Palestinian economy. We have already approved a three-phase plan to address the Palestinians' economic and construction needs and improve the access and movement of people and goods. Last week, 600 tons of cement and 60 trucks of construction aggregates and iron were transferred into Gaza to begin reconstruction efforts. Furthermore, all projects submitted by the international community and the Palestinian Authority have already been approved.

Now that a ceasefire is holding, we must consider how to bring about a lasting and sustained period of quiet for the people of both Gaza and Israel. Only the demilitarization of Gaza can guarantee a durable and sustained ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinians.

Many in the international community are quick to denounce Israel's actions but are blind to one simple

fact: if Hamas is allowed to acquire more weapons, it will use them. We have been at this crossroads before. Over the years, Hamas has stolen hundreds of millions of aid dollars intended for development to build its military capabilities and terror infrastructure.

This time must be different. This time there must be proper oversight to ensure that all funds and materials reach their intended destination. This time we must ensure that Hamas does not stockpile more rockets and build more terror tunnels. To that end, Israel welcomes the tripartite mechanism for rehabilitating the Gaza Strip. Working together, we can build a strong Palestinian economy while building bridges towards peace. That will be possible only through partnership, cooperation and direct negotiation. Unilateral actions are not a step forward; they are a step in the wrong direction.

The third root cause is States sponsors of terrorism. As the international community comes together to fight the threat posed by radical extremist groups, it should not lose sight of the even greater threat looming on the horizon: a nuclear Iran. The horrific death and destruction we are seeing today in our area pales in comparison to the devastation that would unfold if the world's most dangerous regime were to get its hands on the world's most dangerous weapons. The international community has realized the need for a robust strategy that will contain the threat posed by terrorist groups such as Daesh. The same thinking is needed with State sponsors of terror such as Iran.

The nuclear deal that is currently on the table allows Iran's nuclear infrastructure, knowledge and ambitions to remain intact. That is a dangerous mistake. The international community must see Iran for what it is: a ruthless and repressive regime that is determined to acquire nuclear weapons.

It has been over a year since Hassan Rouhani became President of Iran. He came to power promising to tackle corruption, grant freedoms and defend minorities. Now, one year later, what exactly has changed? According to a United Nations report issued in March, religious minorities in Iran still face rampant discrimination. In particular, "Iranian authorities at the highest levels have designated house churches and evangelical Christians as threats to national security" (*A/HRC/25/61, para. 40*).

What does it say when a nation is desperate to acquire weapons of mass destruction, but regards churchgoers as weapons of "Sunday Mass" destruction?

In the year since Rouhani was elected President, has Iran reformed its justice system? Not in the least. Every month, dozens of Iranians are hanged from cranes in public squares, and hundreds of political prisoners are beaten and tortured. Are the Iranian people in any way freer or happier? It turns out that even being happy is a crime in Iran. Just days after Rouhani denounced Internet censorship as "cowardly", six young Iranians were arrested for creating a YouTube video in which they sang and danced about being happy. Rouhani may smile happily for the cameras, but Iran's own citizens are denied that privilege.

For decades, Iran has funded hundreds of terror campaigns that have taken thousands of innocent lives in Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. In Syria, Iran has sent its Revolutionary Guards to fight alongside Al-Assad's forces and spent billions sustaining the bloody civil war that has taken almost 200,000 lives. In Lebanon, the Iranian-backed Hizbullah terrorist group has built a militia larger and stronger than many armies.

For years, we alerted the international community to the fact that illegal arms continued to flow into southern Lebanon. We warned that Hizbullah was amassing tens of thousands of rockets and missiles. We were met with silence. That is the same response we received when we reported that Syria was arming itself with chemical weapons and Hamas was smuggling thousands of rockets into Gaza.

Will the Council continue to remain silent as Hizbullah escalates its attacks on Israel? Two weeks ago, three improvised explosive devices were detonated on the Israeli side of the Blue Line. Shortly after the attack, Hizbullah claimed responsibility for planting the devices. This is not the first incident of this nature. Earlier this year, Hizbullah leader Nasrallah admitted his organization's responsibility for planting a roadside bomb in the vicinity of Mount Dov.

Before the situation deteriorates any further, the Security Council must demand that the Lebanese Government fully abide by Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and deploy its armed forces to prevent any further attacks before it is too late. Israel will not tolerate any attack on its sovereignty and will act to protect its territory and its citizens. The citizens of Israel want to live in peace. There is nothing we want more. Israelis envision the day when we can live free from divisions, hatred and violence. But making peace requires courageous action.

The international community must lead by example and confront the real root causes of the instability plaguing the Middle East. It must stand firm against the jihadist groups that are spreading the poison of radical extremism throughout our region. In the coming months, our values and our resolve will be tested time and again. We must stand firm, because the safety of our citizens and global security are at stake.

The global community has been clear about its opposition to Daesh, Al-Qaida and Boko Haram, but that same determination must be shown with respect to Hamas and Hizbullah, which share the same dangerous and radical views. It is time to speak out clearly and unequivocally, to call on President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority to denounce Hamas, stop the anti-Israel incitement and take constructive steps towards peace. That is the only way to ensure that all of our children can inherit a more open, more tolerant and more peaceful planet.

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

Ms. Power (United States of America): I, too, would like to thank the Secretary-General for joining us today and for briefing us on his recent trip to the region.

We are living in a time of tremendous turmoil in the Middle East, a time that demands brave and decisive leadership by both regional leaders and the international community. Across the region we see the need for hard choices. In Syria, the international community must summon the collective resolve to stop the Al-Assad regime's monstrous atrocities as well as the horrors of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and find a political solution to the conflict. In Lebanon and Iraq, political leaders must strengthen the institutions necessary to honour the aspirations of their people and to defeat violent extremist threats. And Israeli and Palestinian leaders must recognize that there is no alternative to a negotiated peace and invest the political will to build it. I will discuss each of those critical issues today in turn.

We have seen how failures in leadership can help foster the conditions in which extremist groups thrive. By failing to make the hard choices necessary to address the grievances of its Sunni population, Iraq's former leaders helped to create conditions that ISIL exploited. The consequences have been horrifying. To cite just one example, earlier this month ISIL announced strict

rules on what can be taught in universities in Mosul, one of the cities it now controls. When Iraqi university professors rejected those restrictions and boycotted, ISIL declared that any professor who did not return to work would be executed.

More than three years ago, Bashar Al-Assad lost the legitimacy to lead when he responded to peaceful protests with brutal violence. Atrocities committed by his regime — atrocities of the kind and scale the world has rarely seen — played a key role in spurring the emergence of ISIL and other terrorist groups, and Al-Assad's indiscriminate attacks on his own people continue to this day.

In September, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) released its second report, which found "compelling confirmation that a toxic chemical was used as a weapon systematically and repeatedly" in three opposition-held villages in northern Syria. The OPCW concluded with confidence that chlorine was used. Witnesses described the attacks as being carried out by helicopters, which only the Al-Assad regime possesses.

The consequences of Al-Assad's actions have been staggering — more than 200,000 Syrians killed and nearly 11 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance. Yet despite the valiant efforts of international humanitarian groups, United Nations agencies and others, the Al-Assad regime is deliberately obstructing the delivery of crucial assistance to millions of people in dire need. The regime declares itself the antidote to the horrors of ISIL, but its chemical and barrel bomb attacks and its use of starvation as a tool of war are every bit as indifferent to the fate of innocents and every bit as grotesque.

One community subjected to the Al-Assad regime's merciless attacks has been that of the Palestinians in the refugee camp of Yarmouk, which the regime has sealed since July 2013. The 18,000 residents who remain there have been relying on untreated ground water and a single well for drinking water for nearly a month. Just yesterday a spokesman for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA) issued a statement that began "UNWRA was not cleared to distribute humanitarian assistance in Yarmouk today, 20 October". The day before, UNWRA's statement began "UNWRA was not cleared to distribute humanitarian assistance in Yarmouk today, 19 October." UNWRA notes that, since July this year, there has been a steady and significant decline in

the quantity of food and other essential items, such as medicine, that the Agency has been able to offer to the Palestinians in Yarmouk. That on any day — let alone so many days — the Al-Assad regime is not allowing aid to flow to the Palestinians suffering in Yarmouk shows extreme cruelty. The international community must be more vocal in its condemnation of those unspeakable tactics. And when the Syrian Government hails its leadership, on behalf of the Palestinian people, they should be reminded by all of us of the people living in Yarmouk.

There are 3 million Syrians who have fled to neighbouring countries to escape the regime's and extremist groups' violence, up to 80 per cent of them women and children. The threat posed by ISIL is felt across the region, but especially in Iraq and Syria. Foreign fighters and Syrian nationals, who have been recruited and trained to fight in ISIL and other terrorist groups, pose a threat to countries far from the battlefield. Among the countries most severely impacted are Iraq and Lebanon. For example, 180,000 Iraqis fled the city of Heet, in Anbar province, as it fell to ISIL in recent weeks. They are among an estimated 1.8 million Iraqis displaced just this year. Lebanon has taken in 1.2 million Syrian refugees, over a quarter of the country's population, placing immense pressure on its already strained resources.

We know what we must do. We must defeat ISIL and other terrorist groups; we must hold accountable all those in the Al-Assad regime responsible for its widespread atrocities and we must mitigate the suffering of the Syrian people. But we wholeheartedly agree with the Secretary-General that a political solution is absolutely essential to address the root causes of extremism in Syria and to address the legitimate aspirations and grievances of its people. A political solution is not an enshrinement of the status quo. The majority of Syrians will not accept being ruled by a regime that has used sarin and chlorine to suppress its own people. We commend the efforts of United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura, who is working urgently to build support for a political solution by engaging multiple stakeholders. The Special Envoy met with a representative of Iran over the weekend and is meeting with a representative of Russia today — countries whose influence will be critical to reaching a long-sought solution.

Given the massive suffering that Syria's crisis is causing the threat it poses to our collective security,

leaders in the region must be part of the efforts to forge a political solution. But regional leaders also must address problems closer to home, which impact the rights of their people and are a source of the suffering, disenfranchisement and intolerance that feed groups like ISIL. Yet some leaders still choose to put short-term interests ahead of the tough decisions needed to best serve their people. Others take devisive steps when they could instead build consensus. The international community stands ready to help address the regions challenges, but we need partners to exert the political will and courage to seek real solutions.

In Iraq, newly elected leaders must break from the sectarian style of leadership that defined the tenure of the Al-Maliki Government and build institutions that represent the whole nation, rather than advancing one groups interest at the expense of another's. In Lebanon, the position of president has been vacant for nearly five months during a time when the country faces considerable security, economic and humanitarian challenges. Lebanon's political leaders must come together urgently to select a president.

We have seen leaders within those countries willing to choose unity over division and to make great sacrifices for their people. In August, the Lebanese Armed Forces and internal security forces fought bravely to defend the city of Aarsal from extremists. They served and died for their country, not for any one religious sect. In Iraq, Prime Minister Al Abadi is taking steps to form a more inclusive Government, establishing the country's first complete cabinet since 2010. He is also moving towards decentralizing power and granting greater authority to provinces.

Real leadership is also required to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace. The most recent wave of violence, was devastating — both in terms of its enormous human toll and because it was avoidable. Preventing another round of violence requires leaders who are willing to make difficult choices and commit to the hard work of negotiations. We commend Egypt for helping broker a ceasefire agreement. The Gaza reconstruction conference raised \$5.4 billion and reaffirmed the international community's commitment to rebuilding the lives of Palestinians in Gaza, who have suffered so much during and since the recent crisis. The United States is providing \$212 million in assistance to the Palestinian people for relief and reconstruction, atop of the \$118 million announced in September. Of course, as has been said, aid and assistance cannot produce peace

in the Middle East. Leadership and compromise are needed. For reconstruction not to be required again in the future there must be a real change on the ground. Even the most durable of ceasefires is not a substitute for real security for Israel or for an independent State for the Palestinians.

That is only more difficult to achieve when both sides continue to take actions that may be politically popular with domestic constituencies, but that come at the expense of advancing the cause of peace. We continue to urge all parties to refrain from such actions, including unilateral steps at the United Nations, Israeli settlement activity and provocations at the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif, where we urge all sides to respect the status quo of the holy site.

The United States remains fully committed to achieving a negotiated final status agreement allowing two States to live side by side in peace and security. That is the only viable way forward and, if the parties are willing to go down that path and are genuinely dedicated to the hard work of peace, we stand ready to support them. Together we can and must support those taking the courageous steps to strengthen the Middle East in these immensely troubling times. The cause of peace in the region and the dignity of its people depend on it.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and the representatives of Israel and Palestine for their statements.

One of the consistent themes of the speeches heard in the high-level debate in the General Assembly last month was grave concern about the situation in the Middle East. Violence and conflict in the region continue to present the international community with many challenges — challenges that this Council has a responsibility to address.

The conflict in Gaza this summer was a grim reminder of the devastating toll of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the lives of ordinary civilians. The international community must act with urgency to help the people of Gaza get back on their feet and begin the hard work of reconstruction. We welcome the \$5.4 billion pledged towards the reconstruction of Gaza and commend the efforts of Egypt and Norway to rally international support for reconstruction efforts.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza must be the immediate priority. The parties must move quickly

to accelerate reconstruction efforts, including by implementing the United Nations mechanisms agreed with the Palestinian Authority and Israel to allow the import of construction materials. Urgent progress is also needed to improve access to electricity, clean water and sanitation.

This conflict in Gaza, the third in six years, underlines that a return to the status quo is unacceptable. Why should the international community spend billions of dollars rebuilding Gaza when there is no guarantee that it will not be destroyed again within a few years? There must be rapid progress towards a durable ceasefire that ends the cycle of violence and addresses Israel's legitimate security concerns. The ceasefire should be underpinned by a comprehensive monitoring and verification mechanism that provides guarantees to both sides. It is crucial that the Palestinian Authority return to Gaza and restore effective and accountable governance, capable of providing people with services and security.

We continue to have serious concerns about deteriorating conditions on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territories. We deplore Israel's recent decisions to advance settlement plans in Givat Hamatos and plans to expropriate land near Bethlehem. We are deeply concerned about an impending decision by Israeli to proceed with proposals to relocate the Bedouin population from around the sensitive E1 area. We urge the Government of Israel to change course now and to reverse those plans.

We are also concerned about tensions at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount compound in Jerusalem in recent weeks and urge the Israeli and Jordanian authorities to work together in order to stabilize the situation.

We are clear that the best way for both Israeli and Palestinian families to live without fear of further violence is agreement on a comprehensive negotiated solution without delay. The United Kingdom will continue to work closely with international partners to support efforts towards a negotiated solution that will deliver an independent Palestinian State alongside a safe and secure Israel. We urge all parties to make the difficult choices required for meaningful progress.

We continue to witness appalling violence in Syria. While an international coalition has been trying to save Kobani from falling into the hands of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Al-Assad regime has

continued its murderous policy of indiscriminate attacks and aerial bombardments on Syria's civilian population, including around Aleppo and Damascus.

There should be no doubt that Al-Assad cannot be part of the solution to the crisis in Syria. There needs to be a Government in Damascus that enjoys legitimacy in the eyes of the Syrian people and credibility with the international community and that can take effective action against extremism. For as long as Al-Assad remains in power, there will be no peace in Syria. We strongly support the efforts of the United Nations Special Representative and urge all parties to work towards a Syrian-led political transition.

In Iraq, the security situation remains very serious, with ISIL maintaining control of significant swathes of territory. It has made advances in Anbar province in recent days, including taking control of the city of Hit and attacking the provincial capital, Ramadi. Liberating that territory from ISIL will take months and years, not days and weeks, and the horrific effects of ISIL on governance, security and Iraqi society will be felt for even longer. We welcome Prime Minister Al Abadi's steps towards the formation of a Government of national reconciliation. To preserve the integrity of the Iraqi State, its Government must commit to a more inclusive approach to the decentralization of power to Iraq's communities and to a more equitable sharing of Iraq's natural-resource wealth.

It is vital now that all parties in Iraq have the courage to build bridges to each other, in particular to appeal to the Sunni populations who are living under, and in some cases acquiescing in, ISIL's brutal regime and who must be brought back into the political fold if ISIL is to be comprehensively defeated.

Mrs. Kawar (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Jordan has repeatedly warned about the repercussions of the stalemate in the Palestinian territory and the dire consequences of the deadlock in the efforts to realize peace on the basis of the two-State solution. The world has seen how that has led to bloody conflict, taking a high toll among Palestinian civilians. Due to the illegal, unilateral practices of Israel, today we find ourselves once again on the threshold of yet another bloody confrontation threatening innocent civilians, jeopardizing peace and stability in the region and exacerbating the feelings of frustration and despair.

Israel's desecration of the sanctity of the Haram al-Sharif, the Noble Sanctuary, has escalated recently,

following the ceasefire in Gaza. That points to one thing: that Israel is determined to incite and provoke Arabs and Muslims by any means possible. Israel knows all too well that the Noble Sanctuary, Al-Quds al-Sharif, is a red line for more than 1.5 billion people in the world. They will not remain silent with regard to such violations. Israel's actions are incompatible with the pursuit of peace and security for its citizens, because such acts put Israel in direct confrontation with the Arab and Islamic world.

Last March we warned the Council against such acts. We clarified how they are illegitimate and explicitly contravene the provisions of international humanitarian law. East Jerusalem is an occupied territory, as recognized by the international community. Israel is the occupying Power, as per resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the occupied Palestinian territory*.

The unilateral actions of Israel, including those undertaken in the Noble Sanctuary, will not change the status quo. Israel must therefore cease forthwith all of its acts of provocation and deliberate policies that seek to create a new *fait accompli*. The detention of Muslims at prayer and preventing them from entering the Sanctuary, committing acts of aggression against them and against officers of the Endowment authorities, humiliating them and allowing Israeli political and religious extremists to attack them under the protection of Israeli police, allowing them to desecrate the Sanctuary - all those acts are violations of the rules of international law, and the Hague Regulations of 1907.

The international community in general, and the Security Council in particular, should therefore shoulder their responsibilities to put an end to Israeli acts of aggression against the Noble Sanctuary. Should such acts continue, they would result in unqualified disaster, threatening international peace and security. On the basis of the historic Hashemite guardianship of the holy sites in Jerusalem held in trust by His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein, and Jordan's special historic role in relation to the holy Islamic shrines, recognized by Israel in article 9 of the peace agreement, Jordan will continue to address and respond to Israeli violations in the Noble Sanctuary through all available diplomatic and political means. We will continue to work to preserve, protect and prevent the undermining of the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Dome of the Rock and

other such sanctuaries. We hope that the message is clear to anyone who may cast doubt on the status of the noble sanctuary Al-Haram Al-Sharif and on the status of Arabs and Muslims in general and Palestinians and Jordanians in particular.

Geographically, the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are a single, integral unit and the territory on which an independent, fully sovereign Palestinian State would be built, in accordance with the terms of the peace process and the Arab Peace Initiative, including all its elements. We therefore welcome the significant talks on Palestine and rebuilding Gaza hosted by the Arab Republic of Egypt. We emphasize that Jordan, at the direction of His Majesty King Abdullah, continues to provide political and humanitarian support and assistance for our brothers in Palestine, including the steadfast men and women of the Gaza Strip, who have been so hard hit by events. The Jordanian field hospital has worked non-stop to treat the injured, and our hospitals have also received many citizens of the Gaza Strip critically injured during the act of aggression. Our Hashemite charity organization has deployed humanitarian and relief convoys to the Strip, and we will be sending more than 2,000 mobile-home units for families that have been displaced.

We stress how important it is that the Security Council recognize the Palestinians' legitimate right to live in dignity and ensure that a framework is put in place so that the occupation can be ended and a Palestinian State established. In that regard, we should emphasize that the main guarantee that the recent bloody events are not repeated would be by making the two-State solution a reality through a resumption of negotiations designed to make that happen. The negotiations should be serious, robust and held to standards for producing results within a limited time frame. They should be accompanied by a complete halt to unilateral or illegal measures, which could obstruct, undermine and even preempt the negotiations through attempts to change the status quo or the legal status of the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, or through efforts to target holy Islamic or Christian shrines in Jerusalem, particularly the noble sanctuary and the Al-Aqsa Mosque at its heart.

Jordan would like to emphasize the importance of arriving at a political solution to the crisis in Syria, ending the bloodshed and providing a political transition compatible with the Syrian people's legitimate

aspirations. It should restore peace and stability in Syria and establish a welcoming environment for refugees returning home. Jordan also stands with Iraq in its pursuit of stability and security and its efforts to maintain its territorial integrity. We encourage all the Iraqi political forces to be involved in a comprehensive political process that allows them to share in decision-making and improves unity and the potential for national reconciliation among the Iraqi people.

In Jordan we fight terrorism and terrorists, and those who advocate for or support them. We strive to block their sources of financing and work to address the risks of terrorism and extremism, particularly through initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue among religions, cultures and civilizations. We try to explain the true tenets of the noble religion of Islam, and in that context I would like to recall the message of Amman and many of the other conferences that have been held on this subject. Our fundamental focus is on fighting extremist thought in all its forms and manifestations. We stand at the forefront of international and regional efforts to fight terrorism and extremism. Doing so, in our view, constitutes protecting Jordan's national interests, because we are against terrorism that targets us or perpetrates crimes on our territory or against our citizens.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the Secretary-General's participation in today's open debate and his report on his visit to the region. Perhaps the time has come to implement Russia's proposal of four years ago to establish a Security Council mission to Palestine and Israel. If that initiative had not been blocked at the time by a particular member of the Council, who knows if perhaps the current surge in violence might not have been avoided?

We listened attentively to the statements by the representatives of Palestine and Israel, which did not, unfortunately but not surprisingly, give indications for hope. The current situation in the Middle East is hardly very propitious to a relaunch of the peace process. As has happened more than once in the past decade, the Israeli-Palestinian talks begun last year under American auspices have reached a dead end. Israel continues to expropriate Palestinian lands, thus reducing the chances of arriving at a just two-State solution. The situation is aggravated by the expansion of settlements in the West Bank and particularly in East Jerusalem. The recent events surrounding the Al-Aqsa Mosque

are seriously worrying. We urge both sides to exercise maximum restraint and to refrain from unilateral action on a problem that touches the feelings of millions of the faithful around the world.

At the same time, we must all recognize that there is no alternative to negotiations. The Russian Federation supports continuing the indirect contacts between Palestinian and Israeli representatives in Cairo, with Egypt playing an active role with the goal of reaching an agreement on regulating the situation around Gaza for the long term. We believe that within the framework of the Cairo contacts it is essential that an understanding be reached that excludes any relapse into escalation in the future. That task would be assisted by a resumption of full-on Palestinian-Israeli talks on final status issues for the Palestinian territories.

Today we are focusing on the serious humanitarian effects of the tragedy that has been playing out in Gaza. We welcome the decision to allocate \$5.4 billion to the reconstruction sector's needs, made during the course of the international donor conference held in Egypt on 12 October and in which Russia also participated. If Gaza's ruined infrastructure is to be rebuilt, it is essential that the ceasefire regime be strictly observed and that all agreements on goods access to the area under United Nations auspices be fulfilled.

It is vital in that regard that the authority of the Palestinian Government of national unity extend over the whole of Palestinian territory, including the Gaza Strip. That is because, in our view, no alternative to Palestinian unity exists. In order to continue the negotiations and, especially, to implement an eventual peace agreement, it is essential that there be a partner on the Palestinian side representing the interests of all Palestinian society, not its various parts. In that regard, we support overcoming the internal Palestinian split on the basis of the political platform of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Despite all the difficulties, we must never throw up our hands. Russia is ready to work to reach a peace settlement both through bilateral channels and in multilateral formats. We think that not using the Middle East Quartet more fully during the past few years has been a mistake. We have always been in favour of activating the Quartet and of involving it further in dealing with the peace settlement process. We are ready for substantive discussions during the Quartet special representatives' meeting to be held in Brussels on 24 October.

With regard to the draft resolution prepared by Palestine and submitted to the Security Council by Jordan, we would like to note that the text refers to the well-known international legal basis for a Middle East peace settlement and affirms the route of negotiations for reaching a settlement with Israel. That kind of approach merits our support.

The turbulent processes under way in the Middle East that are often referred to as the Arab Spring are far from complete, but attempts to draw lessons from what has happened lead us to only one conclusion: there is no alternative to a peaceful, non-violent resolution to any crisis situation. The concrete facts show us that clearly that the more brazen the intervention was in a given Arab country, the more the process became unpredictable. In Libya, after three years of illegal NATO bombing and the ousting of Al-Qadhafi, the situation has only deteriorated. The legitimate Libyan authorities are not even capable of controlling the situation in their capital, not to mention the rest of the Libyan territory.

Another example is Syria. Although there was no direct military involvement, there was a very aggressive attack by radicals on the legitimate Government authorities. That is no secret. It occurred with the full support from the West for the Syrian opposition. In fact, for a long time, the West approved the actions of terrorists because they formed the backbone of the opposition to President Al-Assad. But do all ends justify the means? The latest events in Iraq involving the atrocities of the so-called Islamic State force us to recall the terrible American invasion of 2003. At the time, the United States destroyed that State's structures and provoked a sectarian conflict from which the country has still not recovered.

The Security Council should consider holding a brainstorming session to consider the lessons of the Arab Spring and make an in-depth analysis of the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East. Perhaps that could prevent us from making the same mistakes in the future.

Today, it would seem that our Western partners have once again made mistakes, and it is the countries of the region that will have to pay for those mistakes. Anti-terrorism efforts should be undertaken in compliance with international law and be conducted under the auspices of the Security Council, as the main body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. Instead of that, we see air strikes on Islamic State positions in Syrian territory without

the consent of the Government of Syria. The so-called coalition has refused to cooperate with Damascus and Tehran, which are logical allies in the fight against terrorism in the region. Perhaps the campaign against the Islamic State would have been more successful with such support.

Against that backdrop, it is contradictory and paradoxical that the United States and its allies are providing arms support to the so-called moderate opposition to help them overthrow President Al-Assad. We have seen more than once how so-called moderate oppositions become radicalized, and it then becomes difficult to distinguish them from more extremist organizations.

Russia continues to support constructive intergovernmental relations with Syria, Iraq and other States of the region, and we will continue to fulfil our international obligations and to make efforts to strengthen the capability of those States in their courageous attempts to combat international terrorists and extremists.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing earlier this morning and the Palestinian observer and the Israeli representative for their statements.

Like all of us, Australia welcomed the ceasefire agreement that brought the destructive conflict in Gaza to an end, but all parties to the agreement must scrupulously honour its terms. The ceasefire must put an end to rocket and mortar attacks on Israel and enable the opening of border crossings for humanitarian aid and reconstruction materials into Gaza, which should include an effective United Nations supervision mechanism. We thank Egypt and Norway for organizing the Cairo Conference on reconstructing Gaza, and we are committed to supporting those efforts through our development programme.

The Gaza conflict was a very stark reminder that Israel and the Palestinians must renew their efforts towards finding a two-State solution. Encouraging and supporting such efforts must be the focus of the international community and the Council. Both sides should avoid any unilateral actions that could undermine the prospects for a return to negotiations, whether it be expropriating land in the West Bank or pursuing international initiatives that set conditions and fail to recognize Israel's right to security.

In Iraq, the atrocities of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have descended to new depths

of depravity. The organization is neither Islamic nor a State — a view shared by Muslim religious leaders around the world. Its barbaric attacks make it impossible to deny the extreme threat that ISIL represents to the region and the world at large. It stands in opposition to the basic values of the international community and our shared sense of humanity, and my own country, along with everyone else, condemns its terrorist actions absolutely.

Australia has committed to playing its part in helping Iraq and the international coalition in combating ISIL. With the consent of the Iraqi Government, we have deployed Australian aircraft and personnel, who are undertaking missions over Iraq. That is in addition to our air assets already providing humanitarian and logistical support to Iraq. Australia will also deploy a special operations task group on the ground to advise and assist the Iraqi security forces. Those measures represent a prudent and proportionate response to the threat posed by that murderous organization. We urge other Member States to show their support for the Al Abadi Government as it rebuilds a stable and cohesive Iraq, and to join the efforts to combat a common enemy.

There is still more we can do to win this fight. ISIL is seeking to bolster its ranks by appealing to people at risk of radicalization in other countries, including Australia. In that context, the full implementation by all Member States of resolution 2178 (2014), on foreign terrorist fighters, which we adopted in September, is crucial. My own Government is introducing legislative measures to make it easier to prosecute foreign fighters and to prevent people from leaving Australia to fight in foreign conflicts. We are strengthening counter-terrorism engagement with our partners, including efforts to address the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters, and we encourage other Member States to consider similar cooperation.

The Al-Assad regime is, in large part, responsible for the disorder and violence in which ISIL has thrived and for the conflict that is destabilizing the region. The Syrian people must have a better choice than that between the Al-Assad regime and ISIL. More than ever, a political process is needed that can bring the conflict to an end and give all Syrians a say in their future. We welcome the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, and look forward to discussions with him in the Council shortly. A renewed focus by the Council on a political solution in Syria is long overdue.

We commend the excellent work being done inside Syria by United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations in the most challenging, difficult and dangerous circumstances. Resolution 2165 (2014) has brought about a modest but notable increase in the numbers being reached by United Nations agencies, but the humanitarian crisis continues to worsen. Close attention to coordination with existing cross-border aid delivery mechanisms will be essential to getting the most out of improvements in access.

Despite small improvements in access, the parties to the conflict continue to flout the provisions of resolution 2139 (2014), which we adopted unanimously in February, particularly the Al-Assad regime and extremist groups in Syria. We are appalled at the grave violations of human rights that continue to take place, including the targeting of children on a scale never before seen. The Al-Assad regime continues to use barrel bombs and to illegally use chlorine as a weapon in attacks on civilian neighbourhoods, which are targeted as a deliberate military strategy. The Secretary-General remarked on that this morning. In resolution 2139 (2014), the Council unanimously demanded that such attacks and all indiscriminate shelling stop. There must be accountability for the terrible international crimes being committed in Syria.

Finally, Australia acknowledges the heightened security threats faced by Lebanon and commends the efforts of the Lebanese armed forces to prevent terrorist attacks, to counter militant groups, including ISIL and Jabhat Al-Nusra, and to provide security in an increasingly difficult environment. The Lebanese armed forces should not be without a commander-in-chief at such a critical time, and Lebanon's politicians should elect a President without further delay. Events near Aarsal, including the ongoing detention of Lebanese personnel, show that the threats to Lebanon's security are very real. We urge the international community, and this Council specifically, to continue to support Lebanon as it faces complex and growing challenges, including the burden of hosting more than 1.2 million Syrian refugees.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and for his tireless efforts to bring a peaceful and secure future to the Middle East. In particular, the Secretary-General's recent trip to the region was both timely and relevant, as it renewed the international community's attention to the urgent situation in Gaza and its commitment to

seeking a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

In that vein, the Republic of Korea welcomes the United Nations-brokered reconstruction mechanism for Gaza. We believe that the trilateral agreement offers a robust plan to facilitate the Palestinian Government in leading the reconstruction efforts, while also addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. As the much-needed construction material is brought into Gaza, the parties must seek ways to prevent another cycle of destruction from occurring in the future.

We are also encouraged by the results of the Gaza donors conference, held in Cairo on 12 October. The Republic of Korea pledged to provide \$12 million in assistance to the Palestinian people, of which \$2 million will go to supporting Gaza's economic recovery. We hope that all the pledges made are promptly fulfilled to help lessen the suffering of the Palestinian people.

However, despite the reconstruction efforts, the Republic of Korea remains concerned about the underlying instability and the repeated cycle of suffering in that region. We agree with the Secretary-General that time is not on the side of peace. The longer that the present state of insecurity continues, the longer the path to genuine peace will be. The prolonged isolation of Gaza not only is having devastating effects on the economic and social situation; it also may lead to more lasting effects in terms of the radicalization of youth. Scant access to food, medicines and electricity, coupled with the pronounced rate of unemployment, will only continue to give rise to more extremism and violent tendencies. That is certainly not in the interest of Israel's long-term security or of regional peace.

More efforts are needed to build a foundation for lasting and durable peace. Although the August ceasefire is being maintained in Gaza, it cannot be the final solution. We support a continuation of the Egyptian-brokered talks with a view to addressing both outstanding issues and the root of the conflict. We call on all parties to respect the previous agreements and to return to the negotiating table so as to work out a viable framework to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with the two-State solution at its core.

In that regard, we look forward to the Quartet meeting in Brussels later this week. We hope that it can galvanize mediation efforts at this critical time. As any unilateral action will only hinder progress, we oppose Israel's newly announced settlement expansion.

We are also concerned about the growing insecurity in the West Bank and the clashes that have taken place at Jerusalem's Holy Sites. We call on all parties to cease the further fuelling of tensions on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem.

Turning to Syria, the Republic of Korea is concerned about the fate of Kurdish civilians under siege from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Kobani. Mass displacement is occurring at an unprecedented pace and, as Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura recently stated, the threat of massacres, war crimes and possible crimes against humanity are very real. We urge all actors to take the necessary steps to ensure civilian protection, including the possible easing of cross-border restrictions.

We remain very concerned about the continued abuse by the Syrian Government of its own people. The use of barrel bombs continues despite the Council's explicit ban of such weapons in resolution 2139 (2014). Furthermore, the conclusion of the fact-finding mission of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons that chlorine was used systematically and repeatedly as a weapon is a cause for serious concern. The only way to end the ongoing conflict in Syria is through the resumption of negotiations and a political solution. We support the ongoing efforts of Special Envoy De Mistura in that regard.

Regarding Lebanon, we remain deeply troubled over the simmering tensions inherently related to both the Syrian conflict and the ISIL threats, which have deep implications for Lebanese society. The Lebanese armed forces hostages, held by the Nusra Front and ISIL, are a source of serious concern, as is the growing resentment and backlash against the Syrian refugees in the country. We hope that Lebanon will elect its next President as early as possible to ensure much-needed political stability.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, for his statement. I associate myself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union. I will talk briefly about the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the situation in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, and the crisis in Libya.

The two-State solution must be revived. This summer, war again devastated Gaza. That crisis was the third in six years. Even more violent than those of 2008-2009 and 2012, it has had tragic consequences, of which we are aware — more than 2,100 people dead,

including hundreds of children, 11,000 people wounded and unprecedented destruction. The Cairo Conference made it possible for the international community to express its solidarity towards Palestine and its support for the reconstruction of Gaza, with the announcement of the mobilization of \$5.4 billion. We hope that those pledges will be promptly translated into action.

However, we cannot continue to agree to endlessly participate in the cycle of reconstruction and destruction while the perpetrators of the destruction are not requested to contribute financially to the reconstruction. It is our responsibility to put an end to that spiral of violence. That requires going well beyond the ceasefire agreed on 26 August, which does not provide a lasting solution for Gaza. Today, as in 2009 and in 2012, nothing has truly been settled. The parties are expected to resume their talks in Cairo soon. We encourage them to do so without delay. A lasting agreement must be concluded so as to achieve both a complete lifting of the blockade and a response to Israel's legitimate security concerns.

However, Gaza is only the symptom of a deeper problem: the impasse in the peace process. We must be clear: the lack of a political horizon for the Palestinians and the threat weighing heavily over the two-State solution led to the initiative of President Abbas, announced in the General Assembly (see A/69/PV.12). Speeding up colonization in particularly sensitive areas such as Givat Hamatos - which created a new settlement in East Jerusalem for the first time in over fifteen years - makes the emergence of a Palestinian State on the ground more difficult with each passing day. We will have to bear the repercussions.

Heightened tensions in the Haram al-Sharif are also very worrying. France reaffirms its commitment to free access to the holy sites for all religions and emphasizes that any challenge to the status quo of those sites could carry risks of major destabilization.

Nevertheless, the parameters for a solution to the conflict are known: an independent State of Palestine - democratic, contiguous and sovereign, living in peace and security side by side with Israel, based on the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

France believes in the possibility of a definitive settlement, but we do not have unlimited time to find a lasting solution. The time has come to implement the two-State solution, before it is too late. To do so, we must provide ourselves collectively with the means to reach that end. We need to start thinking about

developing a method to reach a conclusion, not just to negotiate. Fresh negotiations will come to nothing unless they start with clear parameters and a programme of work. The successive failure of negotiations for the past twenty years reminds us of that. Security Council action making it possible to establish a framework for negotiation would be timely. International partners must commit themselves further to support the parties in the negotiation of a comprehensive and permanent settlement.

The role of the United States is decisive and remains central. The role of Europe and the Arab League is equally important. Both have made proposals to encourage the conclusion of a permanent agreement and open the prospects for regional peace. Europe and its international partners must be prepared to use the leverage they have on all parties so that the negotiations can succeed.

In fact, we can no longer settle for simply trying. We must succeed. France is prepared now to contribute to that collective effort. Without rapid progress and without success, we will have to recognize a Palestinian State at some point.

The region is facing the emergence of a regional terrorist scourge that extends from Iraq to Lebanon, via Syria. In Iraq, the fight against Daesh calls for an unprecedented mobilization of the international community, alongside the Iraqi Government. That response rests on three pillars.

First is a lasting political strategy to support the Iraqi authorities with regard to reconciliation and national unity. Daesh has thrived on the weaknesses of Iraq, a country torn by divisions and sectarian conflicts. The resolution of the crisis must above all be political, taking the path of redress and reconciliation. The recent appointment of the Ministers of the Interior and Defence, as well as the swearing-in of the Kurdish Ministers, have completed the formation of an inclusive Government. We must encourage that approach.

Secondly, humanitarian assistance and reconstruction efforts must be enlarged.

Thirdly, the fight against Daesh must be coordinated with regard to military support, drying up financial resources and extinguishing terrorist networks. In terms of military support, France is engaged in air support operations for the Iraqi armed forces and the Pesh Merga. We encourage all our partners to join our efforts.

In Syria, it is the regime of Bashar Al-Assad that has deliberately fostered the development of Daesh to block the moderates, who are now fighting two barbaric elements - the regime and Daesh. Syria does not have to choose between these two barbarities. Daesh's heinous crimes should not cause one to forget that the Syrian regime, which continues to bomb civilian populations on a daily basis, is primarily responsible for the current tragedy, which has left 200,000 dead. It thus feeds extremism and the rejection of its own people and can in no way represent the Syria of tomorrow.

The Syrian crisis calls for two responses. In the medium term, a political response to the crisis needs to be worked out. France will give its full support to the initiatives of Staffan de Mistura to relaunch negotiations and give durable responses to the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. On an immediate basis, the capabilities of Daesh, which has eastern Syrian as its rear base, must be reduced. France supports the coalition strikes against Daesh. France actively contributes to the fight against terrorism in the framework of task-sharing. We also continue our support for the democratic opposition of the Syrian National Coalition, led by Hadi Al-Bahra. That support is, and will be, political, financial and logistical.

In Lebanon, the situation has clearly deteriorated. The fighting by various terrorist groups, including Daesh and Jabhat Al-Nusra, against the Lebanese army last August in Ersal demonstrates how Lebanon is suffering the repercussions of the crisis in Syria. We must do our utmost to end the attacks against the army and the attempts to destabilize the country. The dissociation policy and principles of the Baabda Declaration of 2012 (S/2012/477, annex) provide the framework to which all Lebanese forces must subscribe.

The mobilization of the Security Council is needed to support Lebanon in three concerns. First, it is urgent that a President be elected. Countries that can influence the Lebanese actors and their regional allies should advocate the election of a President. Secondly, support for the Lebanese Armed Forces should be strengthened and accelerated in the short and medium term. France is working closely with Saudi Arabia to finalize the initiative to strengthen the Lebanese Army. Thirdly, our economic and financial support must be reinforced in order to strengthen the institutions and infrastructure in Lebanon. With the highest ratio of refugees to population in the world, Lebanon ought to benefit from a sharing of the burden.

Finally, allow me to briefly mention the situation in Libya, which is of increasing concern to us. This Council must remain united and mobilized in order to respond to the two major challenges in Libya.

First is the political transition. The legitimacy of the authorities elected on 25 June must be recognized by all. At the same time, that does not exempt the authorities from having an inclusive approach. The conclusion of the ceasefire in Libya and the launching of an open and sincere political dialogue, focused on the search for a lasting agreement, are the first steps towards the restoration of peace. That is the challenge facing the mediation efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Bernardino León. All international actors must encourage the parties to take part in that dialogue in a spirit of compromise. As for ourselves, we must be prepared to use individual sanctions under resolution 2174 (2014) against those who endanger peace, stability or security in Libya, or those who hinder the success of its political transition.

The second challenge facing Libya is that of terrorism. The presence in Libya of various terrorist groups is a significant risk for the region, but for Europe as well. It allows terrorist groups in the Sahel to rebuild their forces, especially in Mali. In neighbouring countries, a strategy to contain the terrorist threat, as well as illicit arms trafficking, must be encouraged.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his presentation, as well as the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine and the Deputy Permanent Representative of Israel for their briefings.

Luxembourg fully associates itself with the statement to be made by the representative of the European Union.

The Secretary-General has just presented a damning assessment of 50 days of war in the Gaza Strip, the third war in six years that has caused so many deaths and wounded, destroyed so many lives and neighbourhoods.

We would like to thank Egypt, whose efforts led to a ceasefire agreement concluded on 26 August. It was the first step necessary to end the hostilities, the sufferings and humiliations. We also welcome the holding of the conference in Cairo on Palestine, “Reconstructing Gaza”, on 12 October, organized by Egypt and Norway in support of the Palestinian Authority. Our Minister of

Foreign and European Affairs was able to reaffirm the strong solidarity of Luxembourg with the Palestinians, which translates into an ongoing financial commitment of approximately €7 million euros a year.

We also welcome implementation of the mechanism established by the United Nations, the Palestinian Authority and Israel, which is another necessary step in the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip. But we all know that we need to go further. No people can live under the conditions imposed on the inhabitants of Gaza, besieged between three walls and the sea, surviving only thanks to UNRWA and international aid. We must lift the blockade that strangles Gaza and its economy.

The war in Gaza confirms that fighting is inevitable in the context of political deadlock, hatred and discord. For 20 years, the peace process has seen the repetition of three successive stages: stimulus, stagnation and failure. Each new cycle has brought its share of suffering. It is now high time to think outside the box. It is no longer time to repeat the same sterile processes of perpetual negotiations that go nowhere. It is our responsibility to learn the lessons from the past.

The elements of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East have often been stated. We all know the terms of the equation; there is no need to repeat them. The goal is clear — an independent, democratic, contiguous and sovereign State of Palestine, living in peace and security alongside Israel, based on the pre-1967 borders with Jerusalem as the capital of two States. It is time to take bold and concrete measures to implement the two-State solution before others take new measures that make that solution impossible.

In that context, Luxembourg condemns the recent decision by the Israeli authorities to approve construction plans for 2,610 dwellings in Givat HaMatos. That decision directly threatens the two-State solution and the need for Jerusalem to be the capital of two States, Israel and Palestine. If upheld, the decision would confirm our doubts about Israel’s commitment in favour of a negotiated solution with the Palestinians. Luxembourg recalls that the settlements are illegal under international law. We call on Israel to reverse that decision and, more generally, to immediately end settlement activities in East Jerusalem and the whole of the West Bank. Like the European Union, Luxembourg will not recognize any changes to the 1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties. We hope the Security Council will play a constructive role in achieving peace

to encourage and facilitate efforts aimed at safeguarding the two-State solution and ending the occupation. My country is ready to support those efforts.

I must mention another tragedy, the conflict that has been ravaging Syria and decimating its civilian population for more than three and a half years. The numbers speak for themselves — over 191,000 Syrians have been killed in three years, including more than 10,000 children; 10.8 million Syrians, more than half of them children, are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance; 4.7 million Syrians are trapped by combat in areas difficult to access; more than 3 million Syrians have been forced to leave their country; and over 1 million of them are refugees in Lebanon, representing nearly one-third of the total population of Lebanon. Within just a few weeks, 200,000 civilians have fled the city of Kobani and taken refuge in Turkey to seek protection from the murderous rampage of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Those numbers of deaths and displaced persons are staggering, but they do not capture all the suffering inflicted on the Syrian people, suffering that must deeply affect the human conscience.

To respond to the humanitarian emergency, the Security Council has been able to mobilize. The first positive action has been taken under resolution 2165 (2014), adopted by the Council three months ago, for cross-border humanitarian assistance across the Syrian-Jordan and Syrian-Turkey borders and for cross-line assistance through lines of conflict. However, the parties to the conflict, particularly the Syrian authorities, continue to ignore the demands of resolution 2139 (2014). Indiscriminate attacks against civilians, schools and hospitals, bombardments using barrel bombs, the denial of humanitarian assistance and the use of starvation as a weapon of war continue unabated. Administrative obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance remain. The suffering of the Syrian people will not be relieved by half measures, the issuance of visas at a snail's pace nor by the approval of a few additional national non-governmental organizations. We demand that the parties, in particular the Syrian authorities, adopt concrete measures to implement resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014) in their entirety. This is all the more urgent as the Syrian people will soon face their fourth winter since the conflict began.

We hope that progress on the humanitarian front will facilitate the task of those seeking a political

solution, the only possible solution to the conflict. As Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos said yesterday, we urgently need a political solution. Such a solution entails a political transition that responds to the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, in line with the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) of June 2012. In that regard, we support the efforts of the Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to restart talks on the political level.

Luxembourg is gravely concerned by the findings of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons fact-finding mission, published on 10 September. It is now well-established that a toxic chemical, specifically chlorine, was used as a weapon systematically and repeatedly against villages in northern Syria. Witness statements contained in the report established a link between the attacks with chlorine and the use of helicopters. However, only the Syrian armed forces possess helicopters in Syria.

A year ago, with the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), our goal was clear. It was to ensure that crimes using chemical weapons were not repeated again in Syria. In our view, the Security Council should not tolerate violations of resolution 2118 (2013), which are being ignored in silence.

Today, we can no longer be indecisive or procrastinate in the face of war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated in Syria, whether committed by the Syrian authorities or extremist or terrorist groups, chief among them the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. That group, which is neither a State nor Islamic, defiles Islam and merely strives to spread its reign of terror to take root in Syria and Iraq and to destabilize the entire region. The advance of ISIL makes it even more urgent and necessary for the international community to provide support to the countries suffering the impact of the Syrian conflict — Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. We encourage the political leaders of Lebanon to elect a President who can continue to implement the policies of dissociation from the conflict.

My country fully supports the measures adopted to counter the terrorists of ISIL, the Nusra Front, Al-Qaida and their affiliates to cut off their funding channels to prevent radicalization and stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. We can do that under resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014). Beyond the actions taken at the political, economic, military and humanitarian level, it is important to redouble efforts to combat impunity, whoever is responsible for the crimes. It is

at least important to give a ray of hope to relatives of victims of the Syrian conflict and the victims of the ISIL throat-slitters and other terrorist groups; the hope that in the end, justice will be rendered; the hope that the perpetrators of the heinous crimes in Syria and Iraq will be held accountable for their terrible actions. In our opinion, the International Criminal Court must play a key role in nurturing that hope for justice.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking you, Madam President, for having convened this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I also wish to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing. I commend his personal commitment, especially his recent mission to the region and, in particular, to Gaza, which enabled him to assess the situation on the ground and the extent of the human and material damage suffered by the Palestinian population during Israel's most recent military operations.

My statement will focus on the question of Palestine. My country appreciates the convening in Cairo on 12 October of the Gaza reconstruction Conference and welcomes the commitments made by donors to contribute to Gaza's rebuilding and development efforts.

Nevertheless, my country believes that the time has come for the international community to take responsibility and establish safeguards to ensure that the aggression against the Gaza Strip does not become a recurrent phenomenon every two or three years, jeopardizing all peace efforts and wasting the enormous financial resources allocated to Gaza's reconstruction. From that perspective, it seems crucial to us that we emerge from that vicious cycle and end the continuing spiral of violence, thereby leaving behind the cycle of continuing construction and reconstruction.

Furthermore, we must not lose sight of the fact that the Palestinian problem is not confined to aggression against Gaza. Clearly, it is important to end the blockade and to protect Gazans from all forms of aggression. Above all, however, there must be an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, which has persisted for far too long and for which no durable or permanent solution seems to be visible on the horizon.

Despite the well-known parameters for a solution, Israel continues to hamper the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and prevent the two-State solution by flouting the relevant United Nations resolutions and its other international commitments.

Concerning the upheaval in the Middle East, especially the hotspots and impasses in armed conflict that encourage radicalization and terrorism, such situations are both unacceptable and extremely dangerous. We deplore the fact that many years of negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians have not yielded any concrete results.

In that context, there must be a change in strategy and to explore other options. It is the responsibility of the international community to bring Israel to reason in order to renounce its intransigence by accepting a negotiated political solution leading to the realization of the vision of two independent States living side by side in peace and security based on the pre-1967 borders. In the absence of that, the international community will have to finally recognize the State of Palestine and thereby ensure protection of the Palestinian people even under occupation, based on respect for international law.

In that respect, the new initiative of Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority, supported by the League of Arab States, sets a date to end the Israeli occupation and form a Palestinian State based on the pre-1967 borders. It deserves the full attention of the international community.

In that regard, we salute the adoption by the United Kingdom Parliament of a resolution calling on the Government to recognize the State of Palestine. We also commend Sweden's courageous decision to recognize the State of Palestine. Those positions, beyond the profound symbolic character, represent a step in the right direction to put an end to the historic injustice that the Palestinian people have bitterly experienced on a daily basis for six decades.

We are profoundly concerned by the recent actions of the Israeli occupation forces and groups of extremist settlers on the esplanade of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in carrying out profane attacks against the holy sites and brutally attacking pilgrims who have made the journey in fulfillment of their religious duty. Such actions are provocations — even attacks — against the feelings of the Muslim world that risk undermining the peace efforts.

We also condemn the settlement policy and the destruction of Palestinian homes and all arbitrary acts committed against the Palestinian population.

In that vein, it is Chad's belief that aggressive acts committed by Israel against the civilian Palestinian

population in the Gaza Strip, the displacement and transfer of civilians by the Israeli authorities, the destruction of civilian property and all acts of collective punishment represent grave violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights.

To conclude, I wish to again stress that the international community must emerge from its inertia and assume its historic and moral responsibility by considering all possible options and exerting the necessary pressure upon the parties to ensure the relaunching of the peace process in order to end the suffering of the Palestinian people and enable them to exercise their right to a sovereign, independent and viable State. That also constitutes the road map to settling other conflicts in the Middle East.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I will take a minute, as an aside, to note that sometimes we have that impression in the Security Council that we are unable to do here what we are able to do elsewhere. If we can turn off our cellphones in cinemas and theatres, I would ask participants, out of respect for the topic we are considering and for the speakers taking the floor, to silence their cellphones.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate. We also highly appreciate the presence of the Secretary-General and thank him for his tireless efforts towards dialogue between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Chile promotes peace between both peoples and the two-State solution. We therefore recognized the State of Palestine in 2011, including for the sake of supporting negotiations.

Under the framework of the recent conflict in Gaza, my country repeatedly condemned the rocket launches by Hamas and the disproportionate use of force by Israel in densely populated areas leading to the loss of life of hundreds of innocent civilians. That is why my country called for consultations with the Ambassador of Israel during the conflict and contributed financially through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. We have also continued participating in the bilateral cooperation programme of the Latin American region.

Chile welcomes the role of mediator played by Egypt, as well as the ceasefire agreed on 26 August in Cairo. However, as has been mentioned, the ceasefire cannot mean a return to the status quo ante, which is

unacceptable and a fertile breeding ground for violence. The international community must support the urgent restart of negotiations. In addition, the parties have the responsibility to move towards a mutual understanding and to refrain from taking decisions that undermine dialogue. In that vein, threats by Hamas and other radical groups against the Israeli civilian population must come to a halt. Israel must put a stop to building settlements in occupied Palestinian territory and lift the blockade imposed on Gaza.

The Charter of the United Nations is clear in the functions it assigns to the Security Council. It is our task to speak out on this issue and thus isolate those who advocate for extremist positions. The Quartet also has a role to play in resolving the conflict, as we have said in the past. Chile wishes for peace for both peoples. In that spirit, my country is organizing an international meeting with prominent Israeli and Palestinian figures to advance dialogue and understanding, which will take place in November in our capital.

With respect to the problems affecting Lebanon and the side effects resulting from the Syrian conflict, we agree with the remarks made by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme at the latest meeting of the International Support Group of Lebanon. It is not only a humanitarian crisis, but a crisis of development and stability. Lebanese political leaders must return to dialogue with a focus on national unity. It is crucial to follow the principle of dissociation established in the Baabda Declaration and for the Lebanese militia, including those with political aims, to refrain from taking part in the Syrian conflict. There will be no peace in Lebanon as long as there is conflict in Syria.

We deplore the fact that in this latest conflict there is a continued violence from all actors against the civilian population. We express our concern at its effects on women, which has taken the form of sexual violence and summary executions, as well as the ongoing aggression against children, including their recruitment as soldiers.

We are alarmed by the advance of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and its offensive against the city of Kobani, which has displaced thousands of people. We also add our concern to that expressed by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs on the situation of those people who continue to be trapped in Kobani without having access to humanitarian assistance.

Finally, we encourage the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Syria's continued efforts to mediate between Syrian and regional actors to break the stalemate and find a political way out. Despite the difficulties before us, we must persevere, for that is the only way of putting an end to the tragic situation in the region.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda): I would like to start by expressing my appreciation to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his comprehensive briefing on the recent developments in the Middle East. I also thank Ambassador Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine, and Mr. David Roet, representative of Israel, for their respective remarks.

The general situation in the Middle East remains delicate. The current status in many parts of the region is not sustainable as it may lead to a spiral of violence, terrorism and destruction across the Middle East. Parties and belligerents should therefore understand that in no way can there be any military solution in the region. Rather, they should make a serious commitment to seeking or resuming political talks in order to find peaceful solutions to all contentious issues within or between countries of the region.

On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is important for the leadership in Tel Aviv and Ramallah, with the support of such key stakeholders as the United States, the Quartet and the League of Arab States, to keep up the momentum of the talks aimed at achieving a two-State solution for two peoples living side by side in peace and security. The parties should make additional efforts to resume direct and genuine negotiations while refraining from all provocative actions that would derail the current process. In that respect, Rwanda believes that the sustainable solution to the outstanding issues must be negotiated in good faith and that any unilateral action may further complicate the current situation.

On Gaza, the humanitarian situation remains a cause for concern. Rwanda welcomes the outcome of the Cairo donor conference for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip held on 12 October. We commend the Governments of Norway and Egypt for successfully co-hosting the conference, which achieved even more than expected. We hope that pledges made in Cairo will soon be kept and have a concrete impact on the ground. We take this opportunity to call on other donors and international partners to join the international effort to rebuild Gaza.

In the same vein, we welcome the recent trilateral agreement between Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations to enable them to work at the scale required in the Strip, involving the Gaza private sector and giving a leading role to the Palestinian Authority in the reconstruction efforts, with the hope that the construction materials will not be diverted from their civilian purpose. Furthermore, we call upon the parties to continue to uphold the commitments contained in the Gaza ceasefire agreement brokered by Egypt in August this year. We believe that a sustained implementation of the commitments will allow people's livelihoods in Gaza to be restored, but even more importantly it will provide the trust and political environment needed to reach a larger and sustainable solution to the Palestinian question.

With respect to Syria, it is unfortunate that military confrontation continues to escalate to dangerous levels and that the three-and-a-half-year conflict has claimed the lives of over 190,000 people, with 10.8 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. As we look forward to the briefing to the Council by Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura focusing on possible avenues to end conflict in Syria, we reiterate our call on all the concerned parties to resume the Geneva II peace talks, which is the only possible way to end the political crisis with its dramatic security, human rights and humanitarian consequences.

However, it is clear that political talks with terrorist and/or genocidal forces should never be envisaged. In that context, Rwanda reiterates its firm support for the ongoing fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which commits mass atrocities against civilians, beheads journalists and humanitarian workers and persecutes religious minorities, including Christians and Yazidis. We believe that it is important that the Security Council, which has always been unanimous in its fight against terrorism — most recently in resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014) — support the coalition led by the United States aimed at degrading and ultimately defeating ISIL. The fight to save the population of the Syrian town of Kobani from barbaric extermination, which is going on even as we speak, should be a reaffirmation of our collective responsibility to protect.

The situation in Lebanon remains severely affected by the conflict in Syria, with cross-border shelling, arms smuggling and further influxes of refugees. The involvement of different Lebanese armed groups in the

Syrian conflict, violating the Lebanese Government's dissociation policy, has raised tensions, leading to sectarian violence mainly along the Lebanese-Syrian border areas that have claimed civilian lives and seen the kidnapping of members of the Lebanese Armed Forces.

We commend the Lebanese Armed Forces for containing threats to the country's security and stability, and we reiterate our call on all parties in Lebanon to continue to uphold the Baabda declaration and its dissociation policy.

In same vein, Rwanda also welcomes the announcement of new assistance to the Lebanese army and encourages further assistance in priority areas. However, Rwanda expresses its concern over the prolonged vacancy in the presidency for over four months now, which increases the country's vulnerability in facing the mounting security, economic and humanitarian challenges. We express our appreciation for the efforts of Prime Minister Salam and his Government in ensuring stability in the country. We hope that the parties in Lebanon, with the support of the countries of the region, will overcome their differences and put an end to this constitutional gridlock.

To conclude, I would wish to recall that for all conflicts and crises in the Middle East, the genuine resolve and unwavering support of those who have real influence on the parties are prerequisites for any progress or breakthrough. It is therefore critical that regional and world Powers remain committed and coordinated so as to ensure lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing and appreciate his tireless efforts to promote the peace process in the Middle East.

China has listened attentively to the statements made by the representatives of Palestine and Israel. China is greatly concerned about the situation between Palestine and Israel and by the plight of the Palestinian people. We are grieved by the large number of casualties caused by the conflict in Gaza, including civilian casualties and women and children. We strongly condemn any indiscriminate use of force or actions that cause casualties among innocent civilians.

In spite of the ceasefire in Gaza, the situation on the ground remains fragile, and the humanitarian situation

is worrisome. To change the situation once and for all will require Palestine and Israel to work together with the rest of the international community. The recurrent conflicts between Palestine and Israel in Gaza show once again that a deadlock in the peace talks is bound to aggravate tension and drag both parties into a vicious cycle of returning violence for violence. It is also one more reminder to the international community that peace talks are the only way out on the question of the Middle East.

We hope that Palestine and Israel will adhere to the strategic choice for peace talks and seize the opportunity offered by the ceasefire to resume as soon as possible and push forward substantive negotiations, so as to achieve an early settlement of the question of Palestine that will eventually create an independent State of Palestine that enjoys full sovereignty on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Palestine and Israel live next to each other as neighbours. Peace between them will therefore require goodwill from both sides. We call on Israel to put an end to the construction of settlements in the occupied territories, release Palestinian prisoners as soon as possible, lift the blockade on Gaza and create the conditions necessary for the resumption of peace talks. We hope that the Palestinian factions will strengthen their unity and work together in support of the national consensus Government.

Meanwhile, the legitimate security concerns of Israel should be addressed. Peace and security should be enjoyed and maintained by both Palestine and Israel. At present there is a pressing need for reconstruction in Gaza, and China is pleased by the positive outcome of the recent Cairo conference on reconstruction in Gaza. We hope that the international community will deliver promptly on its commitments. We hope also that Israel will cooperate actively with the international community's relief efforts so as to enable relief to reach the people of Palestine quickly and smoothly.

The question of Palestine is one in which international peace and security is at stake. The Security Council should shoulder its responsibility and play a role, as is called for. It should push Palestine and Israel to keep the ceasefire in place so that the safety and security of civilian lives and property can be protected, and push also for substantive progress on the question of Palestine. We welcome the draft resolution of the Security Council recently distributed by Arab

States and support action being taken by the Security Council so as to effectively respond to the reasonable request made by Palestine and other Arab States.

China is a firm supporter and sincere mediator for peace between Palestine and Israel. China has been pushing for peace and negotiations between Palestine and Israel, including the five-point proposal for peace submitted shortly after the recent outbreak of conflict. We have also twice provided emergency humanitarian assistance in cash to the people of Gaza. We are ready to join the rest of the international community in a continued and tireless effort to achieve peace between Palestine and Israel so as to maintain regional peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): I thank the Secretary-General not only for his briefing but especially for his unflinching and abiding efforts to achieve peace and security in the Middle East.

My comments will focus on three issues, namely, the Palestinian question, Syria and Lebanon.

On the question of Palestine, we note that both sides are abiding by the terms of the ceasefire agreement of 26 August. That has provided ample opportunity for the international community to focus attention on the much-needed reconstruction of Gaza. We welcome the convening of the donors conference in Cairo on 12 October, co-chaired by Norway and Egypt, to fund the reconstruction. We commend the leadership of the United Nations for its role in brokering an agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority providing a framework for the reconstruction effort.

While we pay close attention to the reconstruction of Gaza, we must never lose sight of the need to move forward the peace process in a very determined manner. We must seize every moment, and I believe that the current ceasefire should be viewed as representing an opportunity for both sides to restart the stalled negotiations. We are convinced that dialogue remains the only viable means of resolving the question of Palestine. The two parties should heed the well-meaning appeals from various stakeholders to resume direct negotiations without further delay. That dialogue must be complemented by concrete action to demonstrate the sincerity of both parties. It should also be consistent with relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Quartet road map and the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. We restate our support for a two-State solution with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

Concerning Syria, we welcome the successful completion of the work of the Joint Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations for the Elimination of the Chemical Weapons Programme of the Syrian Arab Republic. Syria's declared chemical weapons materials have now been destroyed in designated facilities outside the country. The progress achieved in the completion of that delicate process is a significant milestone in the implementation of Council resolution 2118 (2013). We acknowledge the cooperation of the Syrian Government with the Joint Mission, as well as the efforts of Member States who contributed financial and material resources in aid of the Mission.

With the steady progress on the chemical weapons track in Syria, the Council must now focus its attention on seeking ways to achieve a cessation of violence and, indeed, a political settlement. In that regard, we look forward to the Council's engagement with Special Envoy Mr. Staffan de Mistura in order to assess the way forward in reviving the stalled peace talks. We urge the parties to the conflict in Syria to lay down their arms and embrace dialogue and negotiation within the framework of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) of June 2012. There cannot be a military solution to the conflict in Syria.

With regard to Lebanon, we are deeply concerned by the challenge posed by the presence of armed militias to the security and sovereignty of the country. There seems to be no indication of progress towards the disbanding and disarming of the militias, as called for in resolution 1559 (2004). By their very nature, armed militias weaken the legitimate authority of the State and foster an atmosphere of lawlessness. They have no place in a system of democratic governance and, indeed, their presence fuels sectarian tensions. Nigeria would like to see all militias active in Lebanon disarm and disband, in line with their commitments under the Taif Agreement of 1989. As long as militias continue to operate unimpeded in Lebanon, the peace, stability and sovereignty of the country will remain under threat.

We urge the political leaders of Lebanon to demonstrate the political will necessary to break the impasse caused by the inability to reach a consensus on a president to fill the vacuum left since President Suleiman's term ended in May. As one of the three principle offices in Lebanon's political establishment, the presidency is a crucial component of the country's power equation. An early consensus in choosing a

successor to President Suleiman will, in great measure, help to stabilize Lebanon.

Mrs. Jakubonė (Lithuania): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate and I also thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union.

The surge of violent extremism has reached an unprecedented scope. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other terrorist groups ruthlessly hijack religion to control territory and vital economic resources. They callously brutalize, kill and expel all those who do not accept their rules and beliefs. They abduct, rape and sell to slavery women and children. They target and slaughter minorities. Only a coherent and coordinated response can tackle what is truly a global and indiscriminate threat. We must all act together to dismantle and destroy ISIL and the likes of it, working in tandem with the countries affected by that plague and in support of the local populations.

We call for a thorough and comprehensive implementation of recent resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014). ISIL and other terrorist groups in the region must be denied safe havens. All channels of their financing, arming and recruiting must be disrupted. Factors conducive to their radicalization and grievances that drive support for such terrorist groups must be addressed with all due urgency.

The phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters exacerbates the threat by adding a new dimension to it. Thousands traveled from abroad to fuel the conflicts. They have little to do with the local communities, and they also become tools for the most reprehensible and barbaric acts of terror. The Security Council has two powerful tools at its disposal: the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, and the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism. They were both given strategic and practical tasks, within their respective mandates, to tackle that scourge. We look forward to regular updates on their work in that regard.

Iraq has been badly affected by the onslaught of ISIL. The newly elected Government of Iraq needs to consolidate and sustain efforts seeking a credible process of reconciliation, overcome past sectarianism and divisiveness. Lessons from previous leaders' mistakes must be learned quickly. There is no time to

lose. The humanitarian situation is dire. We encourage all parties to the conflict to ensure the safe, unhindered passage of civilians fleeing the violence and safe access for humanitarian actors to all affected populations.

The fierce fighting over Kobane has become a symbol of resistance, but also recalls the Syrian Government's refusal to fight ISIL. In the face of ISIL's expansion, Al-Assad continues to fight his own people, not terrorism. The humanitarian situation in and around Syria, extreme violence and grave violations of basic norms of international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict remain our biggest concern. The denial of access, starvation as a method of war, the use of chemical weapons and continued barrel bombings of civilian areas constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity. We must make sure that all perpetrators of such crimes be brought to account. At the same time we note that, without an inclusive political negotiation urgently addressing all the legitimate aspirations and grievances of all Syrian people, the situation will continue to deteriorate. We fully support United Nations Special Envoy Mr. Staffan de Mistura in his efforts and look forward to his briefing in the Council.

Lebanon, too, is increasingly affected by the situation in the region. In August, the attacks in Aarsal recalled the looming threat of expansionist extremism to that country. Strong democratic institutions are essential to withstand that threat, which is affecting the fragile balance among communities in Lebanon. We express our full support to Lebanon, including its Armed Forces, and call on all parties to put aside their differences and urgently elect a new president. The political vacuum must be filled in order to strengthen Lebanon's resilience to the dramatic challenges it faces.

In Yemen, the use of force by the Houthis, in disregard of the National Dialogue Conference outcomes and the Peace and National Partnership Agreement, is a significant blow to Yemen's peaceful transition. The occupation of civilian and government buildings must stop. Heavy military equipment must be handed over to the Government. The unity and territorial integrity of Yemen must be preserved and all political forces should unite behind crucial economic reforms, as further fragmentation will threaten the very survival of Yemen as a State. The Council should no longer hesitate to use the tools at its disposal under resolution 2140 (2014) and impose sanctions on those who are behind the attempts to undermine the peace, security and stability of Yemen.

Turning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we commend Egypt and Norway for convening a conference on the reconstruction of Gaza. Let us hope that this was the last time the international community is called upon to rebuild Gaza. There cannot be a return to the status quo ante. We need to see a fundamental and durable change in Gaza, within the framework of a two-State solution. The Palestinian Authority must assume its full responsibilities in the Gaza Strip. We are encouraged by the recent Palestinian Cabinet meeting in Gaza. The understanding reached on 25 September was a positive step and should be implemented swiftly and fully.

The Government of Israel needs to lift restrictions on the socioeconomic development of the Gaza Strip, in particular in the field of movement and access. We welcome the adoption of the trilateral agreement on the reconstruction mechanism. At the same time, we remain concerned by the recent tensions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including in the Temple Mount-Haram Al-Sharif complex, and the price tag attack on a mosque in the West Bank. The Israeli decision to approve a plan for new settlement activity in the area of Givat Hamatos is another worrying development. We call on all parties to refrain from any actions heightening tensions and risking a reversal to open conflict. We call on the Government of Israel to put an end to its settlement policy in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. We also call on the Palestinian leadership to use its United Nations status constructively.

In conclusion, only a credible resumption of the peace negotiations can lead to a durable solution. Our ultimate objective remains a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security, and mutual recognition. Lithuania is fully committed to working towards that end.

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

I thank the Secretary-General for participating in this open debate. I also thank the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine for his statement. I also thank the representative of Israel.

At the outset, I will briefly address the situations in Syria and Iraq, before turning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as the central focus of our quarterly debates.

While the world's attention is focused on the military campaign against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq and Syria, efforts to reach a political solution to the Syrian crisis tragically seem to have been relegated to second or even third place. We must therefore bear in mind that the expansion and consolidation of ISIL and the spread of sectarian violence throughout the region are the result of the prolonged and uncontrolled militarization of the Syrian conflict, which is rooted in the inability and unwillingness of local, regional and international actors to reconcile their differences by peaceful means.

Therefore, just as in Iraq the formation of an inclusive new Government is a central component of the strategy to help stop the spread of extremism, so in Syria must the resolution of the conflict by peaceful means be at the centre of the priorities of the international community. Without peace in Syria there will be no peace in the region and the expansion of ISIL and other extremist groups will continue.

We therefore hope to be able to start working soon with the new Special Envoy, Mr. De Mistura, to begin to forge the consensus needed for effective action by the Security Council. At the same time, we take this opportunity to reaffirm our demand that all actions in the fight against ISIL be framed with respect for international law and for human rights, including the Charter of the United Nations and relevant resolutions of the Security Council, and observe the highest standards for the protection of civilians.

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on 12 October Argentina added its contribution to the efforts of the international community for the reconstruction of Gaza. After 50 days of extreme violence and unprecedented devastation, rebuilding Gaza and meeting the vast needs of the victims is a humanitarian, political and moral imperative. It is an urgent task. The cooperation of all stakeholders under the leadership of the Palestinian Government of national consensus will be essential for turning promises into tangible results.

While reconstruction work begins, and the work of rebuilding from previous years continues, it is crucial to bear in mind the message that resonated with such force in Cairo: we must bring to an end this destructive cycle through a durable solution that goes beyond the sort of short-term assistance that leaves the underlying causes of violence intact. The people of Gaza do not need only

humanitarian assistance. The people of Gaza do not need only cement, bricks and wood. What they need ultimately is freedom. Reconstruction must therefore be accompanied by a process of genuine political change to end the 47 years of illegal occupation. Otherwise, we are volunteering to continue managing the conflict by accepting the fallacy that, with sufficient resources, the occupation can be more dignified. Let us make no mistake: that is impossible! Dignity and occupation are absolutely incompatible concepts.

We believe, therefore, that it is necessary to do more than where we have done to date. It is not enough to condemn the excessive use of force by Israel or the launching of rockets by Hamas; to be horrified at the killing of civilians; to weep when we witness the murder of women and children; to repeat time and again that the building of settlements is illegal and hinders peace; or to express our deep concern about the impunity enjoyed by extremist settlers and their acts of incitement and violence in the holy places of Jerusalem. This is not enough. We have had enough of such repetitive rhetoric. We have had enough, above all, of such unnecessary violence.

Over the past 20 years, various negotiating formats and initiatives have been tried and have failed. Far from resolving the conflict, they have perpetuated the status quo at the expense of the rights of the Palestinian people. But these 20 years have not been useless; they have served to crystallize within the international community a set of principles and parameters that outline a two-State solution, contained in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. It is crucial that progress be made in its implementation before it is too late. We believe that the Security Council should assume its political and institutional responsibilities, acting as a key player in this task by helping to create the conditions necessary for this to be occur.

That is why we support, and will continue to support, all proposals containing the elements which enjoy the overwhelming acceptance of the international community to resolve the conflict, which are based on international law and inspired by justice, seek the full independence of Palestine, and guarantee the right of Israel to live in peace and security. From this perspective, we have determined and supported from the beginning the initiative launched by President Abbas and endorsed by the League of Arab States for the Security Council to adopt a resolution containing

parameters, targets and clear deadlines for ending the occupation. The fact is that for too long, using the excuse that the peace process must be protected, the Security Council has tacitly consented to practices that have actually undermined the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, which are one of the main objectives of the negotiations.

We are not naive. While peace can be achieved overnight, violence, too, can happen overnight. We are not naive. The interests and reasons that continue to block effective action by the Security Council are known to all. We must decide whether we want to continue to be part of the problem or to begin to be part of the solution. My country believes firmly that the Council cannot continue to look the other way, since it is clear that every time it has failed in its mission the human cost has been intolerable. And in a region where extremists are imposing an agenda of more and more violence and more and more hatred, it is our duty to support those who strive to build peace, not merely infrastructure. It is our duty to those who wish to build peace through peaceful and legitimate means. Argentina continues to be ready to support those efforts.

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

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

I wish to inform all concerned that we will be carrying on this open debate right through the lunch hour, as we have a very large number of speakers.

Mr. Oyarzábal took the Chair.

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

Mr. Salam (Lebanon): I would like to thank Argentina for organizing this timely meeting, and the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing as well as his efforts to address the situation in the Middle East.

Three months ago, Israel launched its third major campaign of collective punishment against the 1,800,000 people of Gaza in less than six years. In July and August Israel's air force launched more than 6,000 attacks,

and its army and navy fired about 50,000 artillery and tank shells, killing more than 2,100 Palestinians and wounding more than 11,000. The majority of those casualties were, as we all know, defenceless civilians, and it is estimated that more than half of them were children, women, the disabled and old people. More than 450,000 inhabitants of Gaza were forced to leave their homes, and 277 schools, 17 hospitals and clinics and more than 40,000 other buildings were damaged.

All those who stood against the savage Israeli assault on Gaza and its dreadful methods of indiscriminate killing and wanton destruction of homes and property deserve to be commended. I should also add that it was particularly heartening to see an open letter published on 23 August in *The New York Times* in which 327 signatories from 26 countries, representing four generations of survivors and descendants of survivors and victims of the Holocaust, stated:

“As Jewish survivors and descendants of survivors and victims of the Nazi genocide we unequivocally condemn the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza and the ongoing occupation and colonization of historic Palestine. ... Nothing can justify bombing United Nations shelters, homes, hospitals and universities. Nothing can justify depriving people of electricity and water.”

Realizing the enormity of the destruction, the international community pledged \$5.4 billion at a Cairo Conference for the reconstruction of Gaza, and that generosity is indeed to be commended as well. No less important, however, is the fact that all participants in the Conference stressed the unavoidable importance of addressing the root causes of the conflict. The Secretary-General summed it up by saying that it was time to chart a course to a just and final peace between Israelis and Palestinians, one that addresses all the outstanding issues.

More than 20 years ago, more than 20 years after the Oslo Accords and two years after United States Secretary of State John Kerry's renewed efforts to relaunch the peace talks, it is heart-wrenching to witness not only the drastic humanitarian situation in Gaza but how this body, which is entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, can still stand idle before the continued and repeated violations by Israel of its obligations under international law, from the rampant illegal settlement activities and evictions of Palestinians from their homes to the provocations and

incitement by Israeli soldiers and settlers, in particular at Al-Haram Al-Sharif in occupied East Jerusalem. Let the lessons of Gaza spark a new beginning for the peace process, to bring a clear end to the Israeli occupation, help the State of Palestine achieve full independence and meanwhile ensure that its people have international protection. In that context, we applaud the decision by the Government of Sweden to recognize the State of Palestine, as well as the motion of the Parliament of the United Kingdom to that effect.

Time and again, my Government has reiterated its commitment to the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and has called on the international community to compel Israel to abide by its obligations under that resolution, withdraw from the remaining occupied Lebanese territories and end its violations of Lebanese sovereignty by land, air and sea. Today we would like to renew that call and to underline that it is only by reinforcing its capacities that the Lebanese army will be able to fulfil its tasks in cooperation with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon in southern Lebanon, combat terrorism and maintain security and stability throughout the country. The events in Aarsal are only the latest chapter in the Lebanese army's fight against terrorism. In that regard, my delegation is very grateful for the continued support that has been expressed for our army, particularly during the International Support Group for Lebanon's meetings in Paris, Rome and here in New York, on the margins of the General Assembly.

Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, the flow of refugees into Lebanon has continued unabated. The staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees register an average of 2,500 new refugees every day. Indeed, with more than 1,145,000 refugees now registered, the impact is affecting every aspect of life in my country. For example, the number of student refugees is expected to exceed 140,000 this year, amounting to 57 per cent of public-school students in Lebanon. Clearly, the stability of my country is being threatened by the fallout from the Syrian conflict.

As the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said, preserving Lebanon's stability is everybody's business. Burden-sharing is a fundamental prerequisite for the success of our collective endeavours to address the dire humanitarian situation of Syrian refugees and their host communities. In that context, and on the eve of the Berlin conference on Syrian refugees, let me underline how important it is to include a greater

number of those refugees currently in Lebanon in any resettlement programmes.

Finally, the dire humanitarian situation of Syrians, whether displaced in their own country or now refugees in Lebanon, Jordan or Turkey, should be enough in itself for the international community to redouble its efforts to help reach a political settlement to the Syrian crisis.

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

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Palestinian question is a recurring item on the agenda of the Security Council, and has been since the establishment of the Organization following the Second World War. Today, we are discussing this item once again following the tragic events in the Gaza Strip last summer, in which a large part of the Palestinian State was involved and which proved to everyone that the failure to reach a lasting and just settlement of the Palestinian question remains a threat to international and regional peace and security. The events in Gaza have revealed a few realities that we should highlight today.

First, the solution to the Palestinian question is well known and has been unanimously welcomed at the international level — the establishment of a viable, independent Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital. That vision remains elusive, primarily owing to the ongoing Israeli occupation and the other illegitimate expansionary practices, which flagrantly violate resolution 242 (1967).

Secondly, and in that respect, I would like to stress Egypt's total rejection of the recent Israeli decision to seize Palestinian territory in the West Bank.

Thirdly, the pretexts and justifications for the war in Gaza — the right to legitimate self-defence and the need for a deterrent factor — do not hold water, as evidenced by the three wars waged against Gaza in the past decade. Those wars refute the allegations that a blockade of Gaza could ever achieve security for the Israeli State, as does the significant humanitarian cost to the people that those conflicts entailed.

Fourthly, since the 1990s the Palestinians have opted for the political path, which is the only viable way to settle the Palestinian issue and which must lead to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. However, the difficulties that this process has

encountered, including the continued illegitimate and illegal practices aimed at establishing new settlements and a new reality in occupied Palestinian land over a fairly short period of time, has placed the Palestinian leadership in a very difficult situation when it comes to its own people.

The Palestinian people place great hopes in their leaders' ability to secure their freedom and dignity and the establishment of an independent State on their behalf, especially since the uninterrupted expansion of settlements threatens to dismember the Palestinian State's territory by undermining in practice the two-State solution that was agreed on internationally. That has led the Palestinian leadership to request a timeline for an end to the occupation in order to preserve the rights of the Palestinian people. In that respect, I wish to quote the words of the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt during the International Conference on the reconstruction of Gaza on 12 October:

“Egypt, on the basis of its historic and regional role and its vision, which stems from its longstanding principles and values, calls for an end to this conflict and the achievement of a comprehensive and just settlement. I launch this appeal not only to heads of State, but to the peoples of the entire region, peoples who have suffered from the throes of war and who continue to be wounded by this war. I launch a vibrant appeal to the people and Government of Israel. It is high time to put an end to this conflict as soon as possible in order to respect people's rights and restore security.”

Egypt, on the basis of its historic responsibility with respect to the Palestinian question, has consistently supported the aspirations of the Palestinian people in order to enable the Palestinian Authority, under the leadership of Mahmoud Abbas, to achieve its aspirations. In that respect, I would like to stress the important achievements that have taken place since the Cairo Conference. Through that Conference, under the joint chairmanship of Norway and Egypt, the international community was able to provide assistance that would allow the Government of national consensus to rebuild Gaza. I would like to pay tribute to all of the States that made a commitment to provide generous assistance to the reconstruction of Gaza.

Egypt has contributed to understandings that allowed for the formation of a Government of national consensus in Palestine. Egypt calls upon the Security Council and its member States to fully shoulder their

responsibilities through effective action that is free of any consideration other than maintaining international peace and security by taking the measures that are necessary to bring an end to the occupation as a prelude to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State.

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

Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria): First of all, I would like to thank the Argentine presidency for the programme of work they have scheduled for this month and for organizing today's special meeting on the situation in the Middle East. I thank the Secretary-General as well.

There is no need to recall the consequences and the profound impact of 50 continuous days of the Israeli pounding of Gaza. The killing of 500 children is the most appalling fact, but we must also mention the 100,000 displaced, with the tragic irony of Palestinian sons of refugees being displaced once again within their own land. I would like to quote the Secretary-General's statement, made just 10 days ago in the Gaza Strip: "I am here with a very heavy heart. The destruction which I have seen coming here is beyond description."

No further words are needed. Let us leave it to the independent commission of inquiry established by the Human Rights Council pursuant to its resolution adopted on 23 July for the investigation of all violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Let us just say that accountability and justice are essential for the international system. We have also witnessed the formidable international response for the reconstruction of Gaza. The successful convening and conclusion of the International Conference convened in Cairo and hosted by Egypt and Norway resulted in pledges of \$5.4 billion, and it is a good omen that the Palestinian Government of national consensus will carry out the reconstruction plan in coordination with the United Nations. Algeria will obviously continue to provide its full support for the Palestinian cause in that regard. During the Cairo conference, my Government pledged \$25 million in financial aid, which is in addition to humanitarian aid, food and medical supplies totalling more than \$22 million.

It is obvious that the international community, States, international organizations and civil society have been responsive to the situation. There is a strong and urgent need that must be fulfilled. But it is legitimate to ask ourselves: are we going to reconstruct and simply write off the damages, destruction and death, with

no hint of a peace process in sight? Are we not just paving the way for the next Gaza destruction? Are we going to endlessly continue to act as the — obviously necessary — fireman, while never addressing or facing the arsonists?

The current status quo is destructive. While we still evoke the need for a resumption of the peace talks, Israel has chosen not only to renege on its past commitments but also to blatantly continue its illegal settlement policy and practices. The most recent decision on the construction of more than 2,600 new units in occupied East Jerusalem is not only a blatant violation of all norms of international law but also another stumbling block on the already uncertain road to peace. We repeat and underline that such a situation needs the effective and genuine response of the international community, in particular the Security Council. That is an obligation that cannot be evaded or ignored.

Concerning another important issue with regard to the extremely volatile situation throughout the region, let me mention that, with respect to Syria, the window of opportunity is narrowing daily. It would be extremely short-sighted to think that anyone would ever benefit from the current situation. Destroying houses and souls goes with the building of incessant hatred, terrorism and war.

Let me just recall simple facts. Palestine is illegally occupied. There must be an end to the occupation for the sake of justice and peace for the people of the entire region. There are international principles for the establishment of a just settlement of the issue. Otherwise, it will continue for another generation. The prospective settlement is being completely destroyed by Israeli policies and practices, which are making it progressively impossible to achieve peace. That is why my country fully supports the initiative of President Abbas to set a time frame for the end of the occupation. That is also why my country fully supports the urgent need to protect the Palestinian population in accordance with international humanitarian law.

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

Ms. Bolaños Pérez (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and your team on your country's leadership and work as President of the Security Council this month, which is a particularly busy one. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his informative briefing.

Guatemala remains steadfast in its belief that diplomacy and dialogue are the best way to achieve a long-term solution in each of the conflicts that undermine the Middle East region. Although the extent of the existing intransigence and hostilities could suggest that such a view is naive, we continue to believe that political solutions to the disputes that have divided the region for years are the only path that offers lasting stability and the possibility of returning to the path of progress and development.

The recent events between Israel and Palestine have not been encouraging. The 51 days of conflict had disastrous consequences. More than 2,100 Palestinians died, along with more than 70 Israelis. Almost one third of the population of the Gaza Strip was expelled from their homes. Many of them lost all their belongings. Whole neighbourhoods, including basic public infrastructure, were devastated. Dozens of schools, hospitals and clinics were destroyed or damaged. United Nations facilities were affected and United Nations staff lost their lives. The Secretary-General called the destruction indescribable. The successful reconstruction of Gaza requires a strong political basis.

In that regard, we deem the reconciliation agreement reached on 25 September in Cairo to be positive. We hope that all stakeholders will strive to ensure that it is fully implemented. We also believe that the Conference on Palestine and the reconstruction of Gaza that took place in Cairo on 12 October is a step in the right direction. It is encouraging that the reconstruction work has begun. We hope that such work helps the civilian population most affected by the conflict. In that regard, we recognize the success of the temporary tripartite agreement negotiated by the United Nations in ensuring the entry of reconstruction materials into the Gaza Strip.

However, the peace process must continue. It is therefore necessary to promote an environment conducive to peace, mutual understanding and respect for human rights. That should include an investigation into all possible violations of international humanitarian law committed by all sides during the conflict. We also believe that it will be important to strengthen the ceasefire agreement for the resumption of any kind of peace talks. Along the same lines, it is vital that all parties refrain from any unilateral action and provocations that could contribute to increased tension.

It is essential not to lose sight of the root causes of the recent hostilities: a restrictive occupation that has

continued for nearly half a century, the ongoing denial of Palestinian rights and a lack of tangible progress in the peace negotiations. The parties must make a true and renewed effort to chart a clear path towards a just and lasting negotiated peace that includes, among other things, the lifting of the embargo, the cessation of settlement construction, taking Israel's legitimate security concerns into account and the establishment of two States living side by side in peace and security.

We are aware of the enormous challenges that the pursuit of a political solution at both the national and the international levels may mean for the parties. However, we insist that it is the only way left. Continuing along the current course will only deepen the divisions, thereby hampering the desired goal of peace. The status quo is not an option.

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

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to start by congratulating you, Sir, your country, Argentina, and its delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. Allow me to begin with a number of questions.

How long are we going to continue meeting here simply to make statements that express concern about and the condemnation of Israel's continued occupation of Arab territories in Palestine, the Golan and southern Lebanon? That occupation, unprecedented in its duration, violation of international law and settlement policies, has destroyed any glimmer of hope for the establishment of a Palestinian State, for which we all yearn, and for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

The occupying Power has always flouted all the meetings of this international Organization and the resolutions adopted, even though Israel itself was established as a result of a United Nations resolution. Everyone knows that such Israeli disregard for the United Nations, its ongoing persecution of the Palestinian people and its occupation of Arab lands, including the Syrian Golan, are primarily due to a number of influential States that are Council members irresponsibly supporting Israel at the political, military, economic and media levels.

Some people claim day and night that they are concerned about preserving the rights of the Syrian people. However, their true intentions and misleading words are now known to all, in particular with regard to

the condemnation of the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan since 1967. That almost leads us to believe that reacquiring the Syrian Golan is not a natural right of the Syrian people, that the Golan is not an occupied Syrian land or that Syrian citizens who suffer under the Israeli occupation are not a part of the Syrian population. Where are those representatives who laud human rights and international humanitarian law when it comes to putting an end to the Israeli settlement campaigns and the suffering of Syrian citizens, which has continued for nearly half a century. Where are their noble words and intentions when those citizens suffer from policies of repression, racial discrimination and torture, and when they are deprived of their natural resources, including oil, gas and water?

The most recent developments in the region, which have pushed the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) to temporarily evacuate some of its positions, are not just coincidence. They have come at the right time to reaffirm what we had warned against, that the support led by certain regimes, including Israel, to Al-Qaida-related groups in the area of separation is not only a flagrant violation of the Disengagement Agreement, international law and all Security Council resolutions, but it also exposes the United Nations forces to danger, thereby making them unable to discharge their mandate. That is what happened when these terrorist groups repeatedly kidnapped peacekeepers, members of UNDOF, and fired against those soldiers or their positions, which prompted them to evacuate some of those positions under threat of fire. That occurred under a process of coordination with a regime that sponsors terrorism and claims that it is a mediator, but it does that to cover up the fact that it pays bribes and ransom money to terrorists. That is inadmissible.

What we cannot understand is that every single warning, all the information that we have communicated repeatedly to all the parties — the United Nations and others — including about Israeli support to terrorist groups and about the fact that Syrian positions were being directly targeted, was all disregarded. That is done to help those groups to achieve their ends. What about the request we officially submitted calling for an investigation of the possible collusion between Qatari intelligence services and the kidnapping of UNDOF peacekeepers, especially members of the Filipino contingents?

Those terrorist groups continue to act on the basis of their conviction that the United Nations is not even

going to lift a little finger to intervene, that Israel will continue to lend them all logistical military support and that Qatar will keep paying millions of dollars in ransom money to release those who have been detained. That is taking place in the framework of what is nothing more than a masquerade to justify the financing of the Nusra Front, after the adoption of resolution 2170 (2014), regarding the prohibition on the financing of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and the Nusra Front, caused new constraints and limitations to be imposed upon them. That does not, however, exempt Qatar of its legal responsibility — it is a flagrant violation of resolution 2133 (2014), which bans the payment of ransoms to terrorist outfits. It is high time for the United Nations to come into play, to end the Turko-Saudi collusion aimed at shedding Syrian blood and that promotes the Judaization of Jerusalem.

We would like to reaffirm our ongoing position in support of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and the building of an independent State throughout its whole territory, with Jerusalem as its capital, while guaranteeing the right of refugees to return to their lands, to their homes, in keeping with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948. That is a non-negotiable right. It is a right that will never disappear or evaporate. It is reaffirmed by international law and United Nations resolutions and all the relevant international instruments.

Syria condemns the Israeli violence against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. That is yet another new chapter in the overall plot and the overall aggression against the Palestinian people. Israel's continuation of such acts of aggression has exacerbated tension in the region. They have reached an unprecedented level, one that will have very heavy consequences and will not be limited to the region alone. That is why we call upon the United Nations, including the Security Council, to bear its responsibilities by putting an end to the Israeli occupation and the barbaric policy of continued aggression and by forcing Israel to withdraw from all occupied Arab lands to the line of 4 June 1967, in keeping with the relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981).

We are again today witnessing repeated attempts by the United States of America and its allies aimed at killing off the very hope embedded in the agenda item under consideration, "The situation in the Middle East". That is being done to cover up Israel's crimes and

its ongoing violations of international law by deflecting attention from those very facts. The policies of those States — headed by the United States, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and others — violate the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of international law by resorting to the use of terrorism and defamation as tools to combat the Syrian State, including through the building — or should I say, the creation — of training camps for terrorists and mercenaries by claiming that they are the moderate opposition. Then they send them into the Syrian interior, crossing our borders with neighbouring countries, in violation of all the Security Council resolutions on counter-terrorism.

The statements made by delegations have revealed that the very same States that back terrorism in my country, Syria, are also working to protect Israel, attempting to ensure that it never faces embarrassment and covering up its crimes. The United States of America has not just used the right of veto 61 times to protect Israel, to prolong its occupation of our territories that suffer under its occupation. No, the United States has even disregarded Security Council resolutions in the past to forge illegal alliances targeting the sovereignty of a great many States Members of this Organization. Those are illegitimate alliances that were forged by the United States and the United Kingdom outside the confines of the Security Council, and they have resulted in nothing but violence, destruction, anarchy and terrorism throughout the world, and that came at the cost of respect for the rules of international law and human rights.

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

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the brotherly Argentine Republic for having organized this meeting.

(*spoke in English*)

I also thank the Secretary-General for his briefing. Brazil also wishes to acknowledge the interventions by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Israel and by the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine.

This quarterly exercise of reviewing the situation in the Middle East is once again happening against the backdrop of increasing tensions and threats to international peace and security in different parts of the region.

In Gaza, almost two months of conflict — the third in six years — left us with a legacy of extensive destruction and exacerbated distrust. The appalling number of Palestinian civilians dead, injured and displaced and the scale of destruction of homes, basic infrastructure and even United Nations facilities are no less shocking. It is time to break the cycle of violence and to ensure that both Israel and Palestine live side by side in peace and security. We must confront the recurring dramatic consequences of our collective failure to deal with the fundamental aspects of the Palestine question, including the settlement policies pursued by Israel in the occupied State of Palestine. A clear, united message against business as usual in the aftermath of conflict is urgently needed. We believe that there should be a fundamental change in the way we approach the question of Palestine, including in the Council. As President Dilma Rousseff stated on 24 September at the opening of the general debate of the General Assembly, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict “must be properly resolved, not precariously managed” (*A/69/PV.6, p. 8*). If the international community can be convened to help rebuild Gaza after each conflict, why not help devise a political solution to prevent new episodes of destruction so as to make peace much more than the mere absence of war?

There is some solace in the fact that the ceasefire agreed under Egyptian auspices is currently being maintained. We strongly encourage the parties to consolidate the basic agreement so that they can resume substantial talks aimed at resolving the underlying causes of the conflict. The trilateral agreement between Israel, Palestine and the United Nations for the reconstruction of Gaza is important and commendable, but it is not sufficient. The blockade should be completely lifted, allowing for the urgently needed humanitarian aid to enter the Strip and granting the people of Gaza their right to start rebuilding their lives.

At the international donors Conference held in Cairo on 12 October, another significant measure aimed at mitigating the effects of the destruction in Gaza, Brazil recalled its recent efforts to contribute to the objective of a viable, peaceful and sustainable State of Palestine. We also pledged an additional contribution of 6,000 tons of rice and 4,000 tons of beans to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to be distributed in Gaza. While supporting the reconstruction of Gaza, this must be the last occasion on which Gazans need to rebuild. All efforts

should be undertaken to ensure accountability on both sides for the human rights violations and violations of international law and humanitarian law committed during the conflict. Fighting impunity is another way of preventing the recurrence of abuses and violations.

Brazil is increasingly concerned with the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in Iraq. We condemn in the strongest terms the attacks and heinous executions perpetrated by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which seeks to destabilize the region and spread extremist ideologies. The steps taken by Iraqi leaders in forming a new Government and declaring their commitment to stay united against the threats posed by ISIS are commendable. We encourage the new Government to ensure inclusiveness and to work to meet the needs of all Iraqi citizens, irrespective of their ethnicity, religion or sect. The international community should support Iraq in combating terrorism in a way that is fully and strictly compatible with the Charter of the United Nations.

Turning to Syria, it is greatly disturbing that violence continues unabated and the humanitarian situation is deteriorating further, despite the adoption of resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014) and the United Nations efforts to implement them. We strongly condemn the continued violations of human rights committed by all sides, as has consistently been denounced by the Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. As the Commission's Chair, Mr. Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, stated during the presentation of the Commission's latest report in August 2014 (A/HRC/27/60), the number of innocent Syrians killed, including at the hands of terrorist groups, is climbing even higher, and their stories and their pain seem increasingly obscured by the extent of the tragedy.

It is as clear as ever that there is no military solution for the crisis. It is, however, dismaying to learn that there continues to be a belief in the merits of putting more weapons in the hands of armed groups. Brazil commends the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Mission, which concluded its activities in September and whose efforts led to the successful removal and destruction of the chemical weapons declared by Syria. We expect the destruction of the 12 remaining production facilities on Syrian territory to start as soon as possible.

We applaud the outstanding generosity shown by many countries in the region, including Lebanon,

Jordan, Turkey and Egypt, in receiving Syrian refugees. The international community should support that honourable effort. Brazil has also contributed to that effort by receiving more than 1,500 refugees from the Syrian conflict.

Brazil is also concerned about security and stability in Lebanon. We strongly condemn the terrorist acts perpetrated by extremist groups in the Beqaa Valley and surrounding areas, including the towns of Aarsal and Brital. We stand by the Lebanese Government in its fight against terrorism. Our participation at the Ministerial Conference on International Support for the Lebanese Armed Forces, held in June in Rome, derives from our firm solidarity with Lebanon's State institutions. We would like to underline once again our support for the policy of dissociation from regional crises agreed in the Baabda Declaration of June 2012. Brazil's participation in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, whose Interim Maritime Task Force has been led by Brazilian officials since 2011, plays a prominent role in translating our commitment into practical actions. In addition, the Brazilian Navy School in Rio de Janeiro trains Lebanese Navy cadets.

The Security Council has a paramount legal and political responsibility and cannot abstain from its duties. Brazil expects the current situation in the Middle East to prompt the Council into a new phase of active diplomatic engagement to resolve those questions to the direct benefit of Palestinians, Israelis, Iraqis, Syrians, Lebanese, Libyans and other peoples in the region. Brazil is ready to offer assistance and support.

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

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM). I wish to convey the Movement's appreciation to your delegation, Sir, for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, at this crucial time. We also wish to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing to the Council today and to express the Movement's appreciation for his tireless efforts to uphold the Charter of the United Nations and promote peace, including his recent participation in the Cairo Conference and his visit to the occupied Palestinian territory, where he visited the Gaza Strip and witnessed at first hand the horrific tragedy and massive destruction inflicted on the Palestinian people during the Israeli military aggression of July and

August. I must also not fail to say that NAM strongly welcomes the convening and the success of Cairo International Conference on Palestine “Reconstructing Gaza”, co-hosted by Egypt and Norway on 12 October.

The Non-Aligned Movement takes this opportunity to reaffirm its long-standing solidarity with the Palestinian people and to reiterate its support for the realization of their legitimate national aspirations and inalienable rights, including their rights to self-determination and freedom in their independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as for a just solution for the plight of the Palestinian refugees in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948.

In this International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, NAM reiterates its call for intensifying international efforts to actively advance a peaceful, just and lasting solution based on the long-standing parameters rooted in the relevant United Nations resolutions and major initiatives undertaken in the past decades. There is international consensus that the status quo is unsustainable and that the realization by the Palestinian people of their freedom and human rights is long overdue, and all efforts must be exerted to end the Israeli occupation and the prolonged conflict.

We meet at a time when our memories are still freshly filled with images from the Israelis’ latest onslaught in Gaza. NAM strongly condemned the military aggression by Israel that traumatized the entire Palestinian population and shocked the whole world. The international community witnessed with horror the more than 50 days of criminal military aggression that caused massive human devastation, with thousands of injured and lives that perished and widespread physical destruction throughout Gaza.

The humanitarian disaster persists today as urgent and comprehensive recovery and reconstruction efforts continue to be delayed due to the ongoing Israeli blockade. Homes and entire neighbourhoods remain in ruins. More than 100,000 people remain homeless. Food insecurity is rampant. And injured civilians continue to die due to the severity of the wounds they sustained and the lack of lifesaving medical treatment and basic medicines in Gaza.

NAM condemns the Israeli blockade, which constitutes gross and systematic collective punishment of the Palestinian people, and urges the international community to persist in demanding that Israel, the

occupying Power, end the blockade and all illegal actions against the Palestinian people under its occupation and abide by international law, including humanitarian and human rights law.

In that regard, NAM expresses its strong condemnation of Israel’s continuing and escalating settlement construction throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and United Nations resolutions, including those of the Council. We especially condemn the series of illegal actions in recent weeks, including the seizure of 1,000 acres of land near the Palestinian town of Bethlehem and the advancement of plans to build 2,600 settler units in and around occupied East Jerusalem. Those and other ongoing violations, including the demolition of homes, forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, the arrest and detention of Palestinians, including children, and incessant violence, terror and provocations by Israeli settlers and extremists, including vis-à-vis sensitive religious sites, particularly Al-Aqsa Mosque, have worsened conditions on the ground, deepening already grave doubts regarding Israel’s claimed commitment to the two-State solution and peace.

Despite serious international efforts and repeated calls for a peaceful and comprehensive solution in conformity with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, Israel’s military occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands continues, as does the denial and violation of the inalienable rights and freedoms of the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power. The failure to resolve the question continues to undermine the credibility of our international system and the rule of law at the international level.

The Security Council cannot remain on the sidelines in the quest to find a just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, especially while the situation continues to deteriorate dramatically. The Security Council must play its rightful role in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. NAM therefore urges the Council to act forthwith to put an end to the plight of the Palestinian people and to undertake resolute action towards bringing an end to the Israeli occupation and the decades-long injustice.

The question of Palestine has been on the United Nations agenda now for more than 66 years, yet there is not a glimmer of hope among the Palestinian people in

realizing their right to self-determination and freedom. Despite their decades of good-faith participation in peace efforts, the plight and predicament of the Palestinians has worsened on all fronts due to Israel's illegal policies and practices that have entrenched the occupation and undermined all peace efforts.

It is time for the Council to take a historic step towards putting an end to the occupation of the Palestinian land and paving the ground for peaceful resolution of the conflict. In doing so, the Council would fulfil its Charter duty for the maintenance of international peace and security and genuinely contribute to a solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which remains a source of grave concern for the region and for the international community as a whole and for the prospects of global peace and stability.

Lebanon continues to suffer from consecutive Israeli violations of its borders and incursions against its territory, followed by subsequent years of occupation and aggression. Unfortunately, Israel continues to violate Lebanese airspace, intensifying its incursions over Lebanon. Such activities are blatant violations of Lebanese sovereignty and the relevant international resolutions, in particular resolution 1701 (2006), whose provisions should be implemented in a manner that guarantees the consolidation of the foundations of stability and security in Lebanon and that will prevent Israel from carrying out its daily violations of Lebanese sovereignty.

With regard to the occupied Syrian Golan, the Movement condemns all measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan, which have intensified after the outbreak of the Syrian crisis. The Non-Aligned Movement demands once again that Israel abide by resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967, in implementation of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Let me say a few words in my national capacity, in response to the statement made by the Israeli representative today in the Council. He once more repeated the nonsense and baseless rhetoric along the same lines as that which was recently stated before the General Assembly and then refuted, derided or ignored by those present.

The words stated by the Israeli representative today were objectively wrong at the core. It has not been Iran, but the Israeli regime that has been the root cause of every crisis and predicament in the Middle East in the past seven decades. That regime's continued occupation of other people's lands and its periodic aggressions to support that policy lie at the heart of the current situation in the region. Displacing and imprisoning people, besieging Gaza, creating terror networks, target murdering and terrorist acts in the region and beyond, including in Iran, stockpiling nuclear weapons, using prohibited weapons against children and women in Gaza, et cetera, are all consequences of the policy of occupation and aggression pursued by that regime.

There should be no doubt that such Israeli policies are the most important factor in creating a space for terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, Al-Qaida and Jabhat Al-Nusra in the region.

The statements replete with baseless allegations against my country that the representatives of that regime read out from time to time are designed only to justify the aggression and atrocities they commit against other people in the region and the apartheid policy they implement within their borders on a continuing basis. While my Government is trying to resolve the misunderstanding about its peaceful nuclear programme, it is preposterous that the same regime with a highly known record of stockpiling hundreds of nuclear weapons ventures to falsely accuse others of trying to acquire similar weapons.

It is also well known that this regime has always done its best to sabotage and disrupt earnest and serious negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 group, as the negotiations could deprive them of an excuse to continue the occupation and aggression.

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

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month. I thank you for convening this open debate. I also wish to express my delegation's appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his comprehensive briefing.

Malaysia associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and with the statement made

by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Malaysia welcomes the Secretary-General's visit to the Middle East last week, which helped to maintain the attention of the international community on the urgent need to address the root causes of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Malaysia fully concurs with the Secretary-General in that the status quo is neither sustainable nor desirable.

Last month, the Russell Tribunal on Palestine convened in Brussels to examine violations of international law during the recent conflict in Gaza. Based on the findings made by 12 renowned experts from various fields and countries, the Tribunal found Israel to have committed crimes against humanity and genocide. The Tribunal also stated that Israel, as the occupying power in the Gaza Strip, could not justify its military aggression in Gaza as self-defence. Under international law, people living under colonial rule or foreign occupation are entitled to resist occupation. Thus, Israel's actions were aimed at perpetuating its occupation and suppressing resistance rather than resorting to force in lawful self-defence. Israel was also found to have violated two cardinal principals of international humanitarian law, namely, proportionality and the need to clearly distinguish between civilian and military targets.

In recent months, Israel announced a new expansion of illegal settlements in occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. Palestinians continue to be subject to forced displacement as their houses and property are demolished by the occupying Power. Those Israeli settlements are without a doubt illegal under international law and an obstacle to the creation of a Palestinian State.

Malaysia is also deeply concerned about increasing attacks and provocations by Israel on various holy sites in Jerusalem, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. We strongly condemn attempts by Israeli authorities to change the status and identity of the holy sites in Jerusalem. We call for such provocations to cease before the situation escalates and turns into another senseless and tragic incident.

The international community has repeatedly urged the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities in view of persistent and flagrant violations by Israel of international law, international humanitarian law, United Nations resolutions and the advisory opinion of

the International Court of Justice. And yet the Security Council remains in paralysis, and Israel carries on its illegal actions with impunity.

Since the Security Council continues to shut its door on Palestine, it should not blame or punish Palestine for trying to open other doors in reliance on international law and multilateralism in order to attain the fulfilment of its long denied right to self-determination. The Palestinian decision to accede to various international conventions and treaties earlier this year, including the four Geneva Conventions, should be welcomed. The move is a step in the right direction, that is, towards making Palestine a responsible member of the international community, bound by the rules and norms of international law.

While Malaysia agrees that the final solution of the conflict remains in bilateral negotiations, it is not acceptable to allow negotiations to go on forever, as the Palestinian people continue to suffer. We are perpetuating the historic injustice against the Palestinian people if we insist that their only hope for a Palestinian State depends on endless negotiations with Israel, while at the same time, we allow Israel to move further and further away from a two-State solution. Malaysia therefore strongly supports the Palestinian effort to set a time frame to end the Israeli occupation. We call on the international community, especially the Security Council, not to shut its door again but to back the endeavour to end colonialism and apartheid against Palestine for the sake of peace and stability in the region.

Malaysia welcomes the outcome of the recent donors Conference in Cairo. We commend the Governments of Egypt and Norway for convening the conference. Malaysia remains committed to providing and facilitating the delivery of assistance to the Palestinian people. As part of our contribution to the reconstruction of Gaza, Malaysia contributed a sum of \$1.35 million to Palestine, both bilaterally and multilaterally. That includes \$100,000 to the Gaza Flash Appeal launched by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and \$100,000 to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Islamic Solidarity Fund from the Palestine People's Humanitarian Trust Fund set up by the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the recent clashes in Gaza this summer, Malaysian non-governmental organizations also delivered 40 tonnes of humanitarian and medical supplies to the Palestinians in Gaza to help ease their suffering.

The international community needs to do more than just rebuild Gaza. As emphasized by the Secretary-General during his visit to Gaza this week, the build-destroy/build-destroy cycle must be broken. The 50-day conflict in the summer of 2014 was Israel's heaviest assault on the Gaza Strip since the beginning of its occupation of Gaza in 1967. We pray that it will be the last.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Mayr-Harting: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

In the interests of time, I will deliver a substantially shortened version of my statement. The complete text will be distributed.

The European Union welcomes the successful outcome of the Cairo Conference on Palestine, "Reconstructing Gaza". It is now essential that the Palestinian Authority assume its full Governmental responsibilities in Gaza and that the Israel lift restrictions to socioeconomic development, particularly in the field of movement and access. It is also essential that the threat to Israel posed by Hamas and other militant groups in Gaza as demonstrated by rocket attacks and tunnel construction is brought to an end. All terrorist groups must disarm and be prevented from rearming.

The 25 September understanding reached by the Palestinian parties and the 9 October meeting of the Palestinian Government of national consensus in Gaza are positive steps in the right direction which should be pursued further. The European Union welcomes the temporary monitoring mechanism negotiated by the United Nations, Israel and the Palestinian Authority, as a first step towards the necessary opening of all crossing points, as well as initial measures announced by Israel on movement and access, which should be implemented and expanded.

We remain ready to further develop our efforts to build the capacities of the Palestinian Authority, particularly with a view to its swift deployment at the border crossings and to support an effective and secure

lifting of the closure through an EU presence at Gaza crossing points. Furthermore, we are ready to explore ways to support the creation of a land link between the West Bank and Gaza and to analyse the feasibility of a maritime link between Cyprus and Gaza.

We remain convinced that clear parameters defining the basis for negotiations are key elements for a successful outcome. As it is urgent to make tangible progress towards a two-State solution, the European Union will continue to actively promote its position with regard to parameters and is willing to work with the United States and other partners on an initiative to relaunch the peace negotiations, based on the following principles.

There must be an agreement as to the borders of the two States based on the 4 June 1967 lines, with equivalent land swaps as may be agreed between the parties. The European Union will recognize changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, only when agreed by the parties. There must be security arrangements that, for Palestinians, respect their sovereignty and show that the occupation is over, and that, for Israelis, protect their security, prevent the resurgence of terrorism and deal effectively with security threats, including with new and vital threats in the region. There must be a just, fair, agreed and realistic solution to the refugee question. Both parties' aspirations for Jerusalem must be fulfilled. A way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of both States.

We urge all parties to refrain from actions that could undermine a resumption of negotiations and the prospects for peace. We also reiterate our call on the Palestinian leadership to use its United Nations status in a constructive manner.

The developments on the ground make the prospects for a two-State solution increasingly unattainable, and a one-State reality would not be compatible with the aspirations of both parties. In that regard, we strongly deplore the recent Israeli decisions to approve a plan for new settlement activity in Givat Hamatos and to allow for further settlement expansion in Silwan in East Jerusalem. That represents a further highly detrimental step that undermines prospects for a two-State solution and calls into question Israel's commitment to a peaceful negotiated settlement with the Palestinians.

Settlements are illegal under international law. We call on the Government of Israel to urgently reverse its

decisions and put an end to its settlement policy in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem; to put an end to settler violence, to the worsening of living conditions for Palestinians in Area C, to demolitions — including of EU-funded projects — evictions and forced transfers, including of the Bedouin communities in Area C, and to increasing tensions and challenges to the status quo on the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif. We reiterate our offer to both parties of a package of European political, economic and security support and of a special privileged partnership with the European Union in the event of a final peace settlement.

We are committed to tackling in a comprehensive and coordinated manner the regional threat posed by terrorism and violent extremism and addressing the underlying instability and violence which has given the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/Daesh and other terrorist groups a foothold. We support the efforts made by more than 60 States to tackle this threat. The European Union calls on all partners to enforce the relevant Security Council resolutions, including 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014). Non-inclusive policies in Iraq and the instability in Syria caused by the Al-Assad regime's brutal war against its own people, massive human rights violations and systematic obstruction against democratic reforms have allowed ISIL to flourish. As a consequence of its policies and actions, the Al-Assad regime cannot be a partner in the fight against ISIL. We reiterate our firm commitment to counter the serious problem of foreign fighters.

International efforts to achieve a Syrian-led transition remain a priority. We will continue to provide political and practical support to the moderate opposition. The European Union is determined to support all efforts for a political solution by mutual consent based on the Geneva communiqué and in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions. We call on all parties to engage constructively in negotiations, and we express our full support to the United Nations Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura. The active engagement of regional and international actors will be required to deliver a viable transition.

The European Union firmly condemns the indiscriminate killings and human rights abuses, including systematic sexual and gender-based violence, perpetrated in Syria and Iraq by ISIL and other terrorist organizations, in particular against Christian and other religious and ethnic groups, women and children.

The European Union reiterates also its condemnation of the gross, widespread and systematic violations of

human rights and international humanitarian law by the Al-Assad regime. The European Union is seriously concerned about the human rights abuses and sectarian violence that are being committed in Iraq.

All responsible for abuses and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law must be held accountable, and there can be no impunity for them. We reiterate our call on the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court and our call on Iraq to accede to the Rome Statute.

We reiterate our firm commitment to Iraq's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We welcome the coalition's efforts, including the decision by individual Member States to provide military material and expertise to Iraq to reduce ISIL's capacity to attack civilian populations, which come in response to an explicit request for support by the Iraqi Government. Ultimately, however, the solution to the crisis can only be political. We call on the Iraqi Government, whose formation we welcomed, to reach out to all components of Iraqi society and to pursue, without delay, a process of national reconciliation. We urge all components of Iraqi society to unite in the fight against ISIL and to support a process of national reconciliation.

The EU is deeply concerned by the humanitarian predicament of millions of Syrians and Iraqis. We will continue to support humanitarian relief efforts and provide assistance to support the resilience of refugees and host communities. We condemn the Al-Assad regime's continued intransigence on humanitarian access and the use of administrative procedures to hinder the rapid and sustained delivery of aid. We reiterate our call on all parties, in particular the Al-Assad regime, to implement in full the provisions of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014). We will continue to implement those resolutions to deliver cross-border and cross-line assistance. We are also deeply concerned that ISIL has significantly affected the presence and operation of humanitarian agencies and actors in northern Syria. We call on the Government of Iraq to do more to contribute to the humanitarian relief efforts across the country.

We are fully aware of the immense challenges that the current developments in Syria and Iraq pose in particular to Lebanon and Jordan. We are determined to seek ways to further enhance our support to both countries. The European Union looks forward to the Berlin conference on 28 October.

We understand the extraordinary security, humanitarian, social, economic and political challenges that Lebanon is facing. We strongly condemn the repeated attacks by violent extremist groups on Lebanon's territory and commend the Lebanese security agencies for their joint efforts in responding to the numerous security threats. We stress the importance of strong institutions in preserving the stability and internal unity of Lebanon. The European Union encourages Lebanon's leaders to open the way for the election of a new President without further delay.

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

Mr. Atlassi (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on having assumed the presidency of the Council for this month, and I thank you for having taken the initiative to put this item on our agenda, given its importance at the Arab and Islamic levels. My delegation would like also to associate itself with the statement made by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and to make the following comments in our national capacity.

We are meeting today at a very sensitive time and at a turning point for the Middle East and the world as a whole. We have witnessed unprecedented developments with negative consequences for international peace and security and the economic and social fabric. The persistence of the Israeli occupation of the Arab and Palestinian territories and the spread of extremism and terrorism has sounded the alarm today, and it is necessary to intervene before it is too late.

The unjustified and unacceptable Israeli aggression against Gaza has had and will have dire consequences that have jeopardized all the efforts deployed so far in order to push forward the peace process. It has pushed the region as a whole into the unknown and has ignited hatred.

His Majesty the King has strongly condemned this aggression since it began. It was also condemned by the various social groups, parties and unions in Morocco. Upon the directives of His Majesty, Morocco, since the onset of the aggression in Gaza, has provided humanitarian and financial assistance to our Palestinian brothers in a show of solidarity.

Morocco and other supporters of peace were relieved that on 26 August the ceasefire was signed thanks to the Egyptian mediation. We welcome once

again this ceasefire and hope that it will be a lasting one and pave the way to putting an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories.

The Kingdom of Morocco took part in the donors conference organized by Egypt in collaboration with the Norwegian Government and held on 12 October, and we will contribute to the plan for rebuilding Gaza through several projects that will be defined and implemented in coordination with the Palestinian Authority and in the framework of the relevant United Nations mechanism. This will be in addition to the technical support that we will be providing through the training of the Palestinian personnel undertaking the reconstruction.

The plan to rebuild Gaza prepared by the Palestinian Authority reflects the seriousness of our Palestinian brothers, their love for peace and their aspiration to live in peace and security as part of a two-State solution. It is indeed an opportunity to encourage the Palestinian private sector by building new partnerships between with other stakeholders and countries. To that end, the first step will be to lift the blockade and allow access for the provision of assistance in all its forms, in collaboration with the Palestinian National Authority and in the framework of the relevant United Nations mechanisms.

His Majesty the King, as Chair of the Jerusalem Committee, has condemned all the provocative measures in Jerusalem and the Judaization efforts and has been calling for respect for the demographic and legal specificities of Jerusalem, as a land for the coexistence of all religions. We would like to remind the Council of the outcome of the twentieth session of the Jerusalem Committee, hosted by Morocco in January under the chairmanship of His Majesty the King, which emphasized that Jerusalem was at the core of any political settlement for the Islamic nation.

The sufferings of the Palestinian people since 1948 will end only through a just and permanent settlement that includes the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital, based on the June 1967 borders and in accordance with the relevant international resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Madrid principles, with both States living side by side in peace, security, coexistence and collaboration. That is the only legitimate formula that is accepted by the international community and can put an end to the conflict. The international community must therefore give that issue the utmost priority in

order to find a speedy settlement to the conflict, so that the region can enjoy peace, security, prosperity and coexistence.

The Syrian crisis, which has been growing daily at all levels, must also be brought to an end. The Syrian people have paid a high price as a result of the killing and displacement of millions of Syrians, famine and the degradation of their living conditions. In that connection, we welcome the appointment of Mr. Steffan de Mistura as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria. We support his efforts at finding a political solution and initiating a democratic transition based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) of 2012, with a view to avoiding further destruction and human suffering. We also call for the provision of more medical and humanitarian assistance to the victims of the bombing and the blockade. Morocco is ready to provide more humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people and to alleviate the burdens of displaced persons and refugees. My delegation would like to reiterate the need to safeguard Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

I reiterate once again my delegation's commitment to Lebanon's independence and territorial integrity. I commend the national spirit and great responsibility shown by the various segments of the Lebanese population in safeguarding the country's security, stability and sovereignty.

The deterioration of the situation in Yemen is also a source of concern for us. After the important strides that were made in the peace process the consensus reached under the auspices of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, the situation has deteriorated once again and could jeopardize what has been achieved so far. We therefore call upon all the stakeholders in Yemen to show wisdom and give priority to the common interests of Yemen, including its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

I began by saying that we should sound the alarm. We should indeed, because the scourge of terrorism has taken a very worrisome turn and is today threatening not only the Middle East, but the entire world. It is jeopardizing our safety and security. The best proof of that is the expansion of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the killing and degrading treatment in which that group is engaged. The use of religion by terrorist groups to justify their ideological, political, expansionist and destructive goals has

nothing to do with Islam and harms the teachings of Islam, which calls for coexistence, tolerance and peace. In that context, we reiterate our condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We must not link terrorism to any religion, race, nation or civilization. Terrorism must be fought relentlessly, and the phenomenon of the foreign terrorist fighters must also be fought and eliminated. In that regard, the Kingdom of Morocco commends resolution 2178 (2014), adopted in September, to address that scourge.

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

Mr. Pedersen (Norway): The war in Gaza this summer took a terrible toll on civilians and left the Gaza Strip in ruins. The rockets fired out of Gaza terrorized people all over Israel. Once again, for the third time in less than six years, the international community was reminded that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a threat to international peace and security.

Norway commends Egypt for its role in brokering a temporary cessation of hostilities. Absent a permanent ceasefire between the parties, however, all attempts at stabilizing the situation in and around Gaza are doomed to fail. Therefore, Norway urges the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators to take courageous steps when they meet again in Cairo later this month.

On 12 October, Norway, Egypt and Palestine co-hosted the Cairo International Conference on Palestine "Reconstructing Gaza". Representatives of more than 90 countries and organizations participated and pledged an impressive \$5.4 billion dollars — half of which will be allocated to recovery and reconstruction in Gaza. Just as important as the money pledged were the clear political messages given.

First, the Gaza Strip constitutes an integral part of the territory occupied in 1967 and is part of a future State of Palestine. Efforts to benefit Gaza will be successful only if placed within the overall framework of support to Palestine. The donors emphasized the need for one single and legitimate recipient Government for Palestine. They made clear that reconstruction was not possible without conducive political and security environments in Gaza. Security must be ensured for all civilians. Therefore, the participants called on all parties involved to support a process that results in the Palestinian Authority regaining all its functions and effective control in Gaza. Norway calls on all

Palestinian factions to cooperate for Palestinian unity under the leadership of President Abbas.

Secondly, the reconstruction of Gaza will simply not be possible unless border crossings to Israel are opened, socioeconomic development is facilitated and economic recovery accelerated. The Palestinian private sector plays a key role in that regard. Norway welcomes the announcement made by a representative of Israel of decisive changes in the current restrictions, as the people of Gaza cannot live under blockade and in poverty and misery. Norway calls on Israel to make significant contributions to the reconstruction efforts.

Thirdly, the challenges faced in Gaza and the West Bank can be fully addressed only in a final status agreement that resolves all core issues between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Norway deplores recent announcements of settlement building, including in occupied East Jerusalem, and calls for a resumption of serious, committed and productive negotiations that can bring an end to the conflict and the occupation that began in 1967. Norway reiterates its call on the Security Council to give leadership and guidance both to the stabilization efforts after the military confrontations this summer and to the resumption of the peace process.

Extremist forces bent on death and destruction in Iraq, Syria and beyond must be confronted head-on. In the face of brutal and criminal acts by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other terrorist groups, the international community must unite against the threat they pose.

At the same time, it is necessary to reach political solutions in both Iraq and Syria. Those conflicts, which kill and maim people and tear apart the social fabrics of both countries, cannot be brought to an end by military means alone.

With respect to Syria, it is crucial that the United Nations and Special Envoy de Mistura succeed in engaging the parties and the region in a political process underpinned by the emerging convergence of interests among a broad spectrum of Syrians, as well as key regional powers. Norway fully supports his efforts.

Norway is doing its part in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism, including through active support for the international humanitarian and military efforts in Iraq.

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

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Argentina on its presidency of the Security Council and to express our thanks and appreciation to its Government for having convened today's meeting. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his presence here this morning and his personal commitment to the Palestinian cause, including through his recent visit to the Gaza Strip.

We agree that the Security Council and the entire membership of the United Nations should proceed to consider the best means for achieving a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, in particular a two-State solution. The recent escalation in Gaza is a reminder of the need to reach a lasting solution to the situation there and in the entire occupied Palestinian territory. We have come to the conclusion that temporary solutions or a piecemeal settlement are neither viable nor acceptable.

As we express our condolences to the brotherly people of Palestine following the catastrophic tragedy caused by the military aggression against Gaza, we stress that it is high time for the Security Council to assume its legal and moral responsibilities and take action to ensure that such an escalation does not recur — an escalation that had negative consequences on both sides, especially the Palestinian one.

We call on the Council once again to adopt a resolution to oblige Israel to end its occupation of the Palestinian territories, cease its construction of illegal settlements and put an end to all other practices that go against international humanitarian law. We also call on the Council to adopt a time-bound and clearly defined political plan for the realization of the two-State solution. Security, stability and peace in the region, including that of Israel, require daring steps towards such a solution — that is, the establishment of the State of Palestine on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel. The solution should include the withdrawal from all of the occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, the Sheba'a farms and the Lebanese villages.

The desecration of holy sites and the denial of the freedom to worship in Palestine must be stopped, as must Israel's policy regarding Al-Haram Al-Sharif, including the attacks and the denial of the right to prayer.

Qatar is among the States that have sought, and continue to seek, to play a genuine and positive role in working towards a lasting and fair solution to the

question of Palestine. We were among the first States to take audacious steps to support means to reach a peaceful settlement to the Palestinian question. However, at the time of the recent military aggression in Gaza, Qatar took diplomatic measures to bring an end to the violence, which contributed to the agreement that ended the aggression. In that respect, Qatar welcomes the agreement reached in Cairo, brokered by Egypt.

On the humanitarian front, Qatar responded to the humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip, announcing at the Gaza reconstruction Conference held recently in Cairo that it would contribute \$1 billion for the reconstruction of the Strip, representing half of the financial contributions needed according to the United Nations plan for the reconstruction of Gaza.

Qatar, through collaboration with the relevant agencies of the United Nations, has contributed in many other ways to strengthening stability in Gaza and supports the efforts of the national unity Government in Palestine to benefit the Palestinian people and enhance their national unity. We welcome the convening by the Government of Palestine of its first meeting in Gaza.

The recent developments in Syria and the broader region call for a coordinated international response in keeping with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The crimes committed by terrorist groups have recently reached an indescribable level, and they share characteristics with the crimes committed by the Syrian regime against its people. The regime's continued mistreatment of its people led to the conflict, which has had such a negative impact on Syria and the broader region and has created the breeding ground for the terrorism we are witnessing. Qatar warned against such developments at the Security Council in January 2012 (see S/PV.6710).

The humanitarian situation in Syria has become one of the worst in the world, including the situation of the internally displaced persons and refugees. As made clear by the remarks of the Secretary-General, the repercussions of the crisis on Syrian infrastructure, especially in areas that are hard to reach, are extremely significant. The Syrian refugee crisis is the most serious situation in the world, calling for an international response in line with the magnitude of the burden now being borne by the host countries. Qatar continues to provide humanitarian assistance for the Syrian people affected by the crisis, pursuant to the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly

and Security Council, including resolution 2139 (2014). We contributed \$20 million to the consolidated humanitarian appeal to enable Syrians in hard-to-reach areas to rebuild their lives.

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

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): Current developments in the Middle East affect Turkey in many ways. The situation in Palestine remains a source of concern to us, for humanitarian and political reasons. The immediate needs of Palestine in general and Gaza in particular constitute a priority for the international community. With that understanding, the total amount of our official development assistance to Palestine over the past decade has reached \$350 million. More recently, we announced at the Cairo Conference an additional \$200 million for the reconstruction of Gaza from 2014 to 2017. In addition to the aid that we channel through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the transfer of wounded Palestinians to Turkey — 123 to date — the construction of a hospital in Gaza, our projects to supply humanitarian aid, fuel, electricity and water will continue. We also welcome the trilateral agreement brokered by the United Nations on a temporary mechanism involving Israel, Palestine and the United Nations to secure the entry of reconstruction materials to Gaza.

Following the tremendous humanitarian suffering, death and destruction inflicted by the Israeli attacks, we should focus on preventing the recurrence of such a catastrophe in the future. Returning to the status quo is not an option.

The need to find a negotiated political settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on two States living side by side in peace and security, within the pre-1967 borders and in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, remains an urgent priority. Any negotiations should take place on an equal footing. Although the Israeli side has been enjoying its statehood since 1948, the Palestinians have been denied that inherent right. That is unacceptable, and we urge all members of the international community to recognize the State of Palestine. We reiterate that negotiations cannot take place while one party is unilaterally claiming and confiscating the other's land. Israel should therefore end its occupation and illegal settlement activities. With that understanding, we support President Abbas's

initiative, announced during this year's general debate in the General Assembly, regarding the introduction of a draft resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for adoption by the Security Council (see A/69/PV.12).

Palestinian unity is crucial to reaching a lasting solution. We should all support President Abbas and the Palestinian Government of national unity. Turkey, in cooperation with international partners, will continue its efforts to find a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict. We remain committed to supporting our Palestinian brothers and sisters in their quest to live in peace, prosperity and dignity.

Turkey shares 1,295 kilometres of borders with Syria and Iraq. The instability in the region, particularly as represented by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), is a national security threat for us. In the light of that situation, our Government has obtained the necessary authority of Parliament to enable it to respond to potential security challenges. We are increasingly feeling the strain of the current state of chaos on our doorstep resulting from the serious humanitarian and security situation on the ground. The combination of the non-inclusive policies of the former Government in Iraq and the crisis in Syria caused by the regime's brutal war on its own people and massive violations of human rights have allowed ISIL to flourish.

We welcome the Iraqi Government's appointments on 18 October to Iraq's Ministries of Defence and the Interior, and to other vacant ministries. A new, inclusive political start is essential to solving Iraq's problems. That significant development is an important step in the process and will help the new Government take the measures necessary to overcome the threat of terrorism. For our part, we are taking necessary measures to combat the activities of the extremist groups. Full compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, including 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014), is important. Preventing the illegal transportation of logistics and manpower across the Turkish-Syrian border is a high priority. Such transnational threats require full and efficient international cooperation, with a comprehensive, coordinated strategy. From a security perspective, I would also like to emphasize that the destruction of Syria's chemical stockpiles should not be considered a closed case, and the international community and the Security Council should remain vigilant concerning the matter.

Our cooperation with the international community in eradicating terrorism and ISIL will continue. In that

regard, it is crucial that we address the root causes of the problem through a comprehensive plan. Taking steps to ensure that there is a transfer of power to a representative Government, the result of a genuine political transition, in accordance with the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), should be our shared priority. We have always been in the forefront in defending the rights and freedoms of the Syrian people, including the Kurds, with whom we are continuing our dialogue. Any group in Syria must work for the common goal of a democratic and prosperous Syria and refrain from taking unilateral steps. The future constitutional structure of a new Syria can be decided only by a parliament formed as the result of free and fair elections. The territorial integrity and unity of Syria must be preserved.

With the recent influx of nearly 200,000 people from the Ayn al-Arab/Kobani region, the total number of Syrians in Turkey is more than 1.5 million. In the face of that enormous challenge, we must reiterate that sharing burdens actively and meaningfully is the collective responsibility of the international community. In the context of the cross-border operations by the United Nations agencies being conducted under resolution 2165 (2014), 155 trucks transporting humanitarian assistance have entered Syria so far.

I would like to conclude by reiterating that our strong commitment to peace and security in the region and our full solidarity with the Palestinian people will continue.

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

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on Argentina's assumption to the presidency of the Council this month. We wish you every success in managing the Council's work, and we also pay tribute to the United States for its presidency last month.

We should recall the deeply troubled circumstances in whose shadow the recent debate on the Middle East has been taking place, specifically those of 22 July, when Gaza became the target of the worst kind of attacks under the hateful Israeli aggression, which lasted for 15 days, resulting in thousands of dead and wounded and indescribable destruction, worse than in Gaza in 2009. Israel, the occupying Power, has also perpetrated horrendous violations of human rights and international law, including of the Fourth Geneva Convention, on the protection of civilians in time of war.

Israel continues to pursue its policies of provocation and aggression, risking undermining the foundations of peace and paving the way for a serious period in the Middle East that represents the antithesis of peace and security, owing to Israel's intransigence in the face of every genuine effort to establish a comprehensive, just and lasting peace between the two parties. In that regard, we welcome the efforts of the Arab Republic of Egypt to reach a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Palestine on 26 August.

At the same time, we affirm the inalienable rights of the Palestinians and the legitimate fulfilment of their aspirations for a independent State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We also reiterate our request that the Security Council shoulder the responsibility conferred on it by the Charter of the United Nations to work for and maintain international peace and security by taking the necessary measures to address such problematic issues relating to peace by adopting the draft resolution that the Arab Group proposes to introduce in the Council. I should like to make the following points.

We must set a deadline for ending Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories. We must urge the Government of Israel, the occupying Power, to end its policies of settling and confiscating land, as well as those designed to evict Palestinian from their lands, farms and property and detain them in Israeli jails. Israel must renounce its racist, extremist and systematic plans aimed at the total Judaization of Jerusalem, and end its attacks on the city's holy sites. It must lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip and guarantee open border crossings to ensure that humanitarian aid can pass through them and thus meet the basic needs of the people of Gaza. We must support the Palestinian demands for international protection of their people and the occupied territories and for that occupation to end.

While very positive, the results of the recent Cairo International Conference on Palestine "Reconstructing Gaza", which collected pledges of \$5.4 billion for those efforts, must lead to concrete, practical steps that can ensure that we will really be able to rebuild Gaza. We should use all possible means and resources to achieve a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. We also welcome the decision of the Kingdom of Sweden to recognize the State of Palestine, and I reiterate the call to States that have not yet done so to follow Sweden's example and thus contribute to the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab

Peace Initiative, with the goal of two States living side by side in peace.

The State of Kuwait reiterates its call on Israel to implement resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the 4 June 1967 lines. Kuwait also reiterates its commitment to stand shoulder to shoulder with the brotherly country of Lebanon by supporting all measures to protect and safeguard its security and sovereignty.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Fodé Seck, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. Seck (*spoke in French*): I would first of all like to express our deep appreciation for the able manner in which you, Mr. President, have guided the work of the Security Council in October. I would also like to pay special tribute to the Secretary-General for his support for the exercise of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people and his constant assistance during the conflict over the summer. We are grateful for his detailed briefing on the results of the recent Cairo Conference and his visit to the region. The tireless efforts of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Robert Serry, and of the Commissioner General for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Mr. Pierre Krähenbühl, together with their outstanding specialized teams on the ground, must also be recognized. I also take this opportunity to commend Ambassador Mansour for his presentation to us this morning.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has condemned, in the strongest possible terms, the excessive and disproportionate use of force during the Israeli assault on the occupied Gaza Strip, which resulted in the deaths of more than 2,100 Palestinians. The Committee also condemned the indiscriminate rocket fire emanating from Gaza.

We were therefore greatly dismayed to hear, in the wake of that conflict, Israel's announcement of new plans for settlements and for annexing land outside its 1967 borders. The Committee and the entire international community strongly condemn such actions, which are not conducive to a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis.

In Gaza, the Secretary-General expressed the view of the vast majority of Member States when he said that there would be no peace in the Middle East, nor security for Israel, while the crisis in Gaza was not resolved. He also emphasized that the “build-destroy” cycle must be broken and that the mindless pattern of blockade, rockets and destruction must stop. The Committee shares the conviction of the Secretary-General and calls for an immediate end to the blockade of Gaza by the occupying Power.

The Committee would also like to express its appreciation for the efforts of Egypt and Norway in organizing last week’s Cairo International Conference. We welcome the generosity of the international community in pledging \$5.4 billion to support reconstruction in Gaza and meet the urgent needs of the Palestinian people. In that connection, the Special Coordinator must play a particularly important role in overseeing the delivery of construction materials through a negotiated, tripartite access regime. The international community, especially the Security Council, will need to ensure that the mechanism works appropriately to meet the needs of those most affected.

Together with the rest of the international community, the Committee welcomes the establishment of the Government of national consensus in Gaza. Its effective work will help to consolidate governance and secure the importation of equipment that is critical for the reconstruction efforts. The decision by the Government of Israel to facilitate access for Palestinian Ministers from the West Bank to Gaza is a step in the right direction, and the Committee hopes that Israel will continue to thus facilitate the efforts of the new Government to accomplish the immense task before it.

The Committee also welcomes the decision by the new Government of Sweden to recognize the State of Palestine, and appreciates the commitments made by the Government of France. Together with the vote last Monday by the British Parliament calling for recognition of the Palestinian State, those separate decisions have given new impetus to the international momentum in support of the exercise of the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Along with the rest of the international community, the Committee hopes that this momentum will breathe new life into the negotiations between the parties, which must be restarted as soon as possible, this time with a specific deadline and a firm commitment to agree on

viable borders for both the State of Israel and the state of Palestine. Moreover, the Committee supports the proposals made by the state of Palestine at the United Nations and invites the Security Council and the rest of the international community to support that initiative.

To the pessimists and extremists on all sides, I would like to offer a lesson from Professor Noam Chomsky, an eminent thinker and a public figure who is emblematic of our universal conscience, who addressed our Committee a week ago to the day. Professor Chomsky emphasized that the choice before the international community, and in particular its organ that is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council, was either a viable two-State solution or a continuation into the indeterminate future of the status quo, with more Israeli settlements and a continued siege of Gaza, and thus a prolonged period of instability for both Palestine and Israel.

The United Nations Committee for the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People can certainly not support that second option, which would guarantee the *fait accompli* of the occupation and the denial of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people. During this International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Security Council must not allow the status quo to stand.

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

Ms. Young (Belize): On behalf of the delegation of Belize, please permit me to congratulate Argentina on assuming the presidency and to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting.

The problem of Palestine has been on the agenda of the Security Council since the end of the British Mandate in 1948. It was included in the Council’s agenda because, on 29 November 1947, in its resolution 181 (II), the General Assembly recommended to the United Kingdom, as the Mandatory Power for Palestine, and to all other Members of the United Nations, the adoption and implementation of a Plan of Partition with Economic Union for the future Government of Palestine.

That Plan, set out in resolution 181 (II) B, called for, *inter alia*, “Independent Arab and Jewish States and the Special International Regime for the City of Jerusalem”, to come into existence “in any case not

later than 1 October 1948". The boundaries of the Arab State, the Jewish State and the city of Jerusalem were settled, and the Security Council was requested to take the necessary measures to implement the Plan. Bolivia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Panama and the Philippines were elected to a United Nations Commission on Palestine to act under the guidance of the Council.

Sixty-six years later, the conflict between the Jews and Arabs that should have been neutralized with the implementation of the Plan has become increasingly contentious. The bombing of Gaza by the Israeli Defense Forces between June and August of this year, in a disproportionate use of force that killed more than 2,000 Palestinians and destroyed businesses and key infrastructure, could be described as the last straw. In addition to the killing and destruction over the summer, there was the annexation of approximately another 950 acres of Palestinian territory on the West Bank.

When the response to that bombing is an assertion that Israel has the right to defend itself, it should also be remembered that in the same way as the historical displacement and oppression of Jews by others produced relentless resistance on the part of the Jewish people, Israeli oppression and displacement of Palestinians will produce relentless resistance on the part of the Palestinian people.

However, the political tide is surely turning. The new Swedish Government, which came to power in September, announced its intention to recognize Palestine as a State. In the week of 13 October, the House of Commons in Britain passed a non-binding resolution that endorsed the diplomatic recognition of the Palestinian State by a vote of 274 to 12.

It is time for those in the Security Council who habitually block decisive action aimed at redressing the wrongs perpetrated on the people of Palestine to seriously consider that the continuation of the death and destruction of an oppressed people will likely open the door for extremist philosophies to enter and flourish. The recent urging of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for the Security Council to set a specific deadline for Israel to end the occupation is reasonable and should be taken onboard by the Council. Measures should be adopted to achieve the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of the crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from the Gaza Strip in line with resolution 1860 (2009). Through the negative trade measures that the European Union brought against us in March, Belize

has experienced only too well the ways and means by which super-Powers can achieve their goals once there is the will.

In negotiations with Israel, Palestine needs the support of the Security Council and of individual powerful countries to help level the negotiating field. There is no doubt that the United States plays a critical role in any negotiations on the issue. Members of the Security Council ought therefore to work with the United States to relaunch the peace negotiations that collapsed in April.

We owe it to the people of Palestine and of Israel to help them return to that time of optimism in 1993 when the Oslo Peace Accords were signed. At that time, to quote the words of Amy Marcus, a reporter for *The Wall Street Journal* based in Israel from 1991 to 1998, in her book *Jerusalem 1914*:

"Everyone, Israelis and Palestinians alike, seemed to be signing a deal — to sell tomatoes to the Persian Gulf, to look for oil in the Dead Sea, to open a casino in Jericho. There was talk of a new Middle East, the falling of borders, and an era of open trade."

My delegation thinks that it is not too much for the Palestinian and the Jewish people to ask for. We owe that to them.

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

Mr. Khiari (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We thank you for having convened this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, at a time when the region is witnessing unprecedented events. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing today on his recent visit to the region.

Today, we meet as the occupation forces and the Israeli settlers continue their aggression against the Palestinian people, in particular on the West Bank and in Gaza, in blatant violation of international law and agreements and with impunity. A few weeks after the brutal attack on the Gaza Strip, which left thousands of people dead or wounded, the majority of whom were women or children, and caused major damage to homes and infrastructure, the Secretary-General visited the Gaza Strip and witnessed the occupation

forces continuing their daily violations of Islam's holy sites, in particular in Jerusalem. Today, the settlers are attacking the Al-Aqsa Mosque, preventing believers from entering it to pray and humiliating them.

Tunisia strongly condemns such practices and rejects all occupation policies that seek to violate the Islamic and Christian holy sites on occupied Palestinian land. The occupying forces continue their settlement policies despite the international condemnation of such policies. We all agree that those policies are illegitimate and a violation of international law.

Mrs. Perceval returned to the Chair.

Such practices, policies and other daily violations being carried out by the occupying Powers on the West Bank and in Gaza and Jerusalem, which has been subject to a blockade for more than eight years, apart from the humiliation and mistreatment of Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli prisons, prove undeniably that Israel persists in imposing the status quo policy, seeks to buy time so as to change the status quo by force and obstructs all attempts and initiatives to open new horizons for peace on the basis of the two-State solution, the most recent being the mediation efforts brokered by the United States.

Tunisia would therefore like to reiterate that it is unacceptable for the current situation to continue. It is high time for the international community, in particular the Security Council, to live up to its responsibilities and put an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and to the illegal practices against the Palestinian people. It is time to undertake a real change in dealing with the Palestinian issue within the Security Council, thereby providing a true opportunity for the achievement of a peaceful, just and comprehensive solution on the basis of the two-State solution and international law and instruments.

Tunisia would like to reiterate its full support for the self-determination of the Palestinian people and for an independent, sovereign, viable and geographically contiguous State on territory occupied since 1967. That means a united political entity that encompasses the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

In the same context, we express our support for the demands of the Palestinian leadership with regard to the adoption of a time frame for putting an end to the Israeli occupation, for the declaration of an independent Palestinian State within the borders that I have just

mentioned and for reaching a comprehensive solution to all final status issues, including that of East Jerusalem. We also call for the protection of Palestinian civilians in the civilian Palestinian territories to be ensured in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, international law, international humanitarian law, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and international human rights law.

Tunisia also reiterates its support for the independent commission of inquiry established by the Human Rights Council to investigate the aggression against Gaza. We look forward to seeing the commission complete its investigation into the crimes and aggression perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian people. Tunisia calls for the blockade on the Gaza Strip to be lifted and for all border crossings to be opened for the free access and movement of people and goods, as well as humanitarian assistance for the citizens of the Gaza Strip, in particular following the most recent attacks.

Tunisia welcomes the outcome of the Cairo Conference on the reconstruction of Gaza. We urge that all parties to live up to the commitments that they made at that conference.

Tunisia underscores that a lasting and a just peace in the Middle East can be achieved only through the total withdrawal of Israel from all the Arab and Palestinian occupied territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan. We express our deep concern about the deterioration of the situation in Syria and its dire consequences on both Syria's future and that of the whole region. We hope that the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura will allow us to reach a political settlement that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people for freedom and democracy and safeguards its sovereignty, territorial integrity and social unity.

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

Mr. Shava (Zimbabwe): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. On behalf of the 15 member States of the South African Development Community (SADC), I wish to thank you for convening this very important debate on the Middle East.

SADC aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

We continue to witness the persecution of the people of Palestine at the hands of Israel. Recently, the world witnessed the brutal and indiscriminate bombardment of the Gaza Strip that resulted in the deaths of over 2,000 civilians, rendered 103,000 homeless and destroyed social and economic infrastructure. While Israel perpetrated those heinous acts, some in the international community who always preach about the responsibility to protect remained conspicuously silent. It is unacceptable that Israel violates the territorial integrity of Gaza and the human rights of the Palestinian people, and the Security Council fails to intervene decisively. The Council must uphold its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations and act to protect innocent Palestinian civilians. The collective failure of the Security Council and the international community has fostered Israel's flagrant violations of all Security Council resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The pretext by Israel that it acts in self-defence against victims of its illegal occupation defies all logic. Israel's self-defence cannot justify the scale of violence it perpetrated in its maiming of innocent women and children. Israel must be held accountable and perpetrators must be brought to justice. SADC welcomes the decision by the Human Rights Council to establish an independent international commission of inquiry to investigate all violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in the occupied Palestinian territory. We call on Israel to lift the seven-year illegal blockade on Gaza. The international community must exert the necessary pressure to compel Israel to end the inhuman blockade by which it has wilfully inflicted a humanitarian disaster in Gaza that affects every single dimension of life for every woman, man and child.

Israel's recent announcement that it would acquire 1,000 acres of Palestinian territory in the West Bank is a blatant violation of various Security Council resolutions. It demonstrates Israel's belief that it can continue to act with impunity, which arises from the protection it receives from some within the Security Council. The international community's constant appeasement of Israel has fostered the belief that it is a State above the law, and has enabled it to pursue atrocities against the Palestinian people. The illegal acquisition of Palestinian territory continues to undermine the vision of a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders.

This tragedy underscores the need for serious efforts by all concerned to address the root causes of the conflict, if the international community truly wants to realize a just and lasting peace between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. The core problem, which is Israel's belligerent occupation of Palestinian territory, must be addressed in accordance with the United Nations resolutions and international law. While we commend efforts to mobilize resources for the reconstruction of Gaza, SADC believes it will be an exercise in futility if a more comprehensive agreement is not reached that includes the lifting of the illegal blockade. It is ironic that some Member States leading the campaign to mobilize funds for the reconstruction process in Gaza are the same that give tacit approval to massive destruction by Israel under the so-called right to self-defence. The international community must act in unison to compel Israel to comply with international law.

History has shown us that we run the risk of getting into a cycle of building and destroying if the status quo is maintained. The key to moving forward is addressing all issues undermining prospects for attaining a peace agreement. We urge the international community to address the conflict in its entirety rather than narrowly focusing on the recent events in Gaza. In that vein, SADC expresses its unwavering support to current efforts by Prime Minister Abbas to garner support for a peace plan that he hopes will compel Israel to negotiate the framework for a two-State solution within a specific time frame. The plan, announced by Prime Minister Abbas when he addressed the General Assembly on 26 September (see A/69/PV.12), entails a resumption of negotiations to demarcate the borders, reach a comprehensive agreement and draft a peace treaty. Palestinian authorities hope that the plan will be adopted in a Security Council draft resolution.

SADC supports negotiations towards a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East leading to the restoration of the Palestinian people's legitimate right to establish an independent State coexisting peacefully with the State of Israel. There is no option to peaceful dialogue to achieve the two-State solution based on the June 1967 borders. Any other manoeuvres to change demographic realities through settlements or use of force will only prolong the suffering of the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, allow me to recognize Egypt's important role in brokering the ceasefire that ended

50 days of Israel's bombardment of Gaza, its continued efforts in trying to find a lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and for hosting a successful reconstruction conference that brought some hope to all those whose homes were destroyed in Gaza.

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

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): Let me begin by thanking you, Madam President, for convening this open debate. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his comprehensive briefing this morning.

Indonesia associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Iran and Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, respectively.

I would like to focus my statement on the question of Palestine. The last time that the Security Council convened an open debate on the situation in Middle East, including the Palestinian question, was in mid-July, at the height of the Israeli aggression against Gaza (see S/PV.7222). Now that the aggression is over, the international community is preoccupied with the issue of the reconstruction of Gaza. To that end, Indonesia expresses its support for last week's International Conference on Palestine "Reconstructing Gaza", which was convened at the initiative of Egypt, Norway and Palestine. We also commend the generosity of countries that have pledged their assistance to Palestine.

Nonetheless, we must be clear. The success of the Conference, in our view, should not blind us to the root of the problem, which is none other than the continued Israeli occupation. The international community's view has been very clear and consistent on this particular matter — the status quo ante is unacceptable. The occupation must end, and it must end immediately. Unless we focus on bringing the occupation to an end, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory is destined to remain volatile, and violence will erupt with the least provocation.

Against that backdrop, Indonesia again voices its call on Israel to heed the demands of the international community to resume peace negotiations and allow the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We also take this opportunity to remind the Security Council of its responsibilities under the Charter of the United

Nations. By allowing Israel to continue with the occupation, the Council not only fails to uphold those responsibilities, but it also calls into question the very principles of justice and humanity that are the foundations of the United Nations. It is therefore high time that the Security Council fulfil the demands of the Government of Palestine to set a deadline for Israel to end its occupation.

It is also very disturbing to see Israel's persistent policies aimed at frustrating the peace process. The blockade on Gaza remains in place, and in the West Bank the construction of illegal settlements continues. Earlier this month, the Israeli Government announced its intention to construct more than 2,600 housing units in East Jerusalem. To add to our dismay, Israel has also been continuing its practices of desecrating religious sites. Again last week, several Israeli politicians, protected by soldiers, entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque. We also take note of the recent incidents in which Israeli soldiers stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque and evicted worshippers. Those deplorable developments clearly underline the proposal that Palestine be put under a United Nations protection mechanism. It is also one more reason for the international community to support the work of the Human Rights Council commission of inquiry. It is our hope that the commission will contribute to the efforts to end Israel's culture of impunity.

I will conclude by reiterating Indonesia's steadfast support for the Government and the people of Palestine in their pursuit to strengthen unity among all factions. We believe strongly that Palestinian national reconciliation is an encouraging factor in the quest for lasting peace, and not an obstructing one. In that regard, I underline Indonesia's suggestion that this courageous move of Palestine receive the sustained support of the international community, including through the recognition of the State of Palestine. The struggle of Palestine is the just and legitimate struggle of a people under foreign occupation. That is a fact that should not be ignored by members of the international community.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Auza (Holy See): My delegation congratulates you, Madam President, on the Argentine Republic's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. On behalf of

Pope Francis, who has been duly informed of today's meeting and follows it with interest, I commend you highly for convening this timely open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The Holy See has always followed the situation in the Middle East with great interest and concern. It has always pleaded for negotiations and dialogue among the parties involved. It has always tried to do all it could to help the victims of violence.

Given the rapidly deteriorating situation in the region during these past months, Pope Francis has intensified his efforts to push for negotiations and to call on all parties to respect international humanitarian law and fundamental human rights. During the first week of the current month, the Pope convoked in the Vatican the Papal Ambassadors to the Middle East countries, including Egypt and Turkey, the permanent observers of international organizations and high-ranking Vatican officials to discuss the Middle East situation. Just yesterday, 20 October, the Pope held a meeting with the Cardinals and Bishops from the Middle East to discuss the same issue. Following those meetings, the Holy See reiterates its conviction that peace in the Middle East can be sought only through negotiated settlements and not through unilateral choices imposed by the use of force.

With regard to the Israeli-Palestinian question, the Holy See reiterates its support for a solution based on two States, Israel and Palestine. With the vigorous support of the competent organs of the United Nations and the entire international community, we must work towards the final objective, which is the realization of the Palestinians' right to have their own State, sovereign and independent, and of the right of the Israelis to peace and security. Pope Francis reaffirmed this in a statement to the Palestinian authorities on 25 May, when he visited Bethlehem, where he said:

“The time has come for everyone to find ... the courage to forge a peace which rests on the acknowledgment by all of the right of two States to exist and to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.”

With regard to the horrific situation in Syria, the Holy See urgently calls on all parties to stop the massive violations of international humanitarian law and fundamental human rights, and on the international community to help the parties find a solution. There is no other way to alleviate and put an end to the untold sufferings of the entire nation, half of whose population

needs humanitarian assistance and around one third has been displaced.

Turning to Lebanon, the Holy See calls for international solidarity at a time when the country is gravely affected by the Syrian crisis and by the massive presence of refugees. It exhorts Lebanon itself to find a solution as soon as possible to the vacancy of the presidency of the republic. The Holy See reaffirms its support for a sovereign and free Lebanon. For the Holy See, Lebanon is a message and a sign full of hope for the coexistence of the various groups that form it.

As to the grave violations and abuses committed by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, the competent organs of the United Nations must act to prevent possible new genocides and to assist the increasing number of refugees. The Holy See appeals in particular for the protection of the ethnic and religious groups, including the Christian communities, who are specifically targeted and victimized simply because of their ethnic origins and religious beliefs. The Holy See insists on respect for the right of those communities and all displaced persons to return to their homes and to live in dignity and safety.

The Holy See hopes that the United Nations will take the escalating, ruthless phenomenon of international terrorism as an occasion to urgently re-enforce the international juridical framework of a multilateral application of the responsibility to protect people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and all forms of unjust aggression. With lessons learned from our failure to stop recent horrors of genocide, and presently confronted with blatant, massive violations of fundamental human rights and international humanitarian law, now is the time for courageous decisions.

Finally, the Holy See reiterates its call on all religious leaders in the Middle East and everywhere else in the world to play a leading role in promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue, in promptly denouncing every use of religion to justify violence and in educating all in reciprocal understanding and mutual respect.

I wish to end by citing a passage from the words of Pope Francis during his meeting yesterday with the Cardinals:

“This unfair situation [in the Middle East] requires an adequate response by the international

community, as well as and in addition to our constant prayer”.

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

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): We thank the Secretary-General for his briefing today. His continued personal engagement in the Middle East gives us hope. His visit to the occupied Palestinian territory last week provided him with an opportunity to witness first-hand the frustrating build-destroy cycle.

We fully support his two-pronged strategy of sparing no effort to rebuild Gaza and sparing no time to jump-start the peace talks. We meet here for the Council's last open debate on this subject for the year — a year that we ourselves had declared the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. We cannot put a spin on what happened this year. The peace process collapsed, Gaza was devastated once again, Israel announced its largest land grab in over three decades, and tensions around the Al-Aqsa Mosque increased. The Council failed to fulfil its responsibility as Gaza was burning and 2,100 of its citizens — of whom one-third were women and children — were killed. We appreciate the pledges of \$5.4 billion made in Cairo to rebuild Gaza. But Gaza, as we all know, will remain vulnerable if the status quo continues.

An overwhelming majority of the international community continues to support a clear path towards full Palestinian statehood and sovereignty. The British House of Commons has recognized the State of Palestine. Sweden's new Government has also decided to recognize it. Those weighty pronouncements, coming from two major European Union countries, raise the hopes of the beleaguered Palestinian people. The Council must acknowledge these realities on the ground. Sustainable peace in the region is not possible without establishing an independent, viable and contiguous State of Palestine with pre-1967 borders and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, living side by side in peace and security with Israel.

All Arab lands, including the Syrian Golan must also be vacated. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, while addressing the General Assembly last month, said,

“The United Nations should facilitate a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions” (*A/69/PV.12, p. 38*).

We appreciate the United States' persistent efforts in the quest for peace. We hope that Secretary Kerry's efforts to reinvigorate the peace process will bear fruit. The Quartet also needs to be re-energized, but dialogue should not be pursued only for the sake of dialogue. It should not forever remain a mirage. It should have clear goals, timelines and benchmarks.

In Syria and Iraq, the international community has been challenged to face down the rising tide of primeval barbarism and criminality. The so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) does not derive its authority or writ from any religion. We must all, collectively, oppose and defeat its evil ideology of hatred, murder and destruction. We must remain united in our fight against this new face of terrorism and violent extremism. The political process must be revived to resolve the continuing conflict in Syria. Now is not the time to abdicate diplomatic responsibility in the hope that the warring parties will force the outcome through guns and blood.

The United Nations and regional players should use all diplomatic means at their disposal to prevent a further deterioration of the situation. It is now clear that if the Syrian conflict had been addressed two years ago, we would not have witnessed the rise of ISIS. We should hold fast to the lessons that we have learned so painfully in our contemporary history. As the Secretary-General said in Gaza, this “endless, needless, mindless cycle of suffering” must end. Whether in Palestine or Syria, dialogue and diplomacy need to be pursued with a real sense of purpose and urgency. That was the rationale behind creating the United Nations and we must not fail in fulfilling our duties in that regard.

We know from experience that the failure to resolve the Palestinian issue has spawned many more conflicts. The object lesson is that fixing Palestine will fix the Middle East; fixing the Middle East will cure some major ailments of our international polity.

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

Mr. Emvula (Namibia): It is a pleasure, Madam President, to see you presiding over the Council for the month of October. I wish to thank you for organizing this very important debate at this crucial moment, which affords the wider United Nations membership an opportunity to address the challenges facing the Middle East, particularly the people of Palestine.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Zimbabwe on behalf of the Southern African Development Community.

This debate is taking place following the indiscriminate massacre of over 2,000 Palestinian civilians — including innocent women and children — with more than 100,000 Palestinian people left without a place to call home during the more than 50-day criminal Israeli military aggression against Gaza. That genocidal aggression by the Israeli occupation forces took place under the watchful eye of the international community, including the Security Council. No one stopped the aggression. We reiterate our call on the Human Rights Council to take immediate action to investigate the genocide against the people of Palestine.

Furthermore, the international community is bearing witness to Israel's fixation on its illegal settlement enterprise, which includes the destruction, theft and confiscation of Palestinian lands and property, the construction and expansion of both the settlements and the wall, and the forced displacement of Palestinian families. We applaud the decision of Sweden and the United Kingdom to recognize the State of Palestine and call upon the rest of us to do so as well.

My delegation has repeatedly cautioned that the illegal Israeli settlement campaign is undermining and fragmenting the contiguity and territorial integrity of the State of Palestine and threatens the viability of and prospects for the physical realization of a two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. As the Security Council debates the situation in the Middle East, the turmoil and the deterioration of the situation in the occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, persist due to the illegal and provocative policies that Israel, the occupying Power, continues to pursue. Those illegal policies have a negative impact on and prejudice the situation on the ground and enflame already heightened tensions between the two sides. We thank the Secretary-General for his efforts, including his participation in the Cairo donors' conference and his visit to the affected areas in the Gaza Strip.

Namibia will continue to draw the international community's attention to the ongoing plight of the more than 1.8 million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip who have dramatically suffered from the massive human devastation and physical destruction resulting

from the more than 50-day criminal Israeli military aggression. They must not be forgotten, and all efforts must be made to alleviate the suffering and hardship.

Thousands of families rendered homeless by the Israeli destruction of their homes in Gaza are sheltered in schools operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East or with host families. Thousands of civilians continue to require medical care due to Israeli attacks. Clean water for human consumption remains scarce. Electricity cuts last up to 18 hours a day due to power plants' lack of fuel, which affects every aspect of life. Thousands of pieces of unexploded ordnance launched by Israel at Gaza continue to threaten civilian lives and require removal before any effective reconstruction can take place. But how much longer will the international community continue to step in to reconstruct just for Israel to destroy again?

A clear demand must be made that Israel, the occupying Power, cease all its illegal actions and commit to the path of peace. It is the responsibility of the international community, especially the Security Council, not to tolerate the occupying Power's empty pretenses and utter violation of international law. Collective action is necessary if Israel, the occupying Power, is to be held accountable for its violations. In that regard, Namibia calls upon all members of the Security Council to fully support the Palestinian initiative to seek for a Security Council resolution that would, inter alia, delineate a time frame for an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967. That resolution would naturally be based on the long-standing parameters enshrined in United Nations resolutions.

While supporting the steadfast resolve of the Palestinian leadership in the face of the unprovoked aggression against its land and people, we reiterate our total condemnation of all of the illegal actions and crimes perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. In that context, we reiterate our call for the immediate establishment of a committee to investigate those horrendous crimes. We further urge the international community to continue to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to ease the suffering of the affected Palestinian communities, in particular the most vulnerable members of society such as women and children. We welcome the ongoing efforts to keep negotiations going and appeal to both parties to commit themselves to success, embrace the opportunity

presented and abide by the obligations under their previous agreements, in order to achieve lasting peace between Israel and Palestine.

I would conclude by reiterating Namibia's support for the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General, our unwavering friendship and solidarity with the people of Palestine in their just cause for freedom, independence and social justice, and our backing for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and its unconditional admission as a full member of the United Nations and its agencies, so that it can take its rightful place among the community of nations.

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

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Argentine Republic and you, Madam President, on having taken up the important task of presiding over the Security Council in this month of October.

To save time, I will read out only a part of my statement. My full text will be distributed in the Chamber.

(*spoke in English*)

The Gaza reconstruction Conference held in Cairo on 12 October proved to be a significant catalyst for renewing the international community's commitment towards the reconstruction of Gaza. We congratulate Egypt and Norway on their role in organizing that important conference. I would also like to pay tribute to the personal efforts of the Secretary-General, who just travelled to the region to re-energize the peace process. In Cairo, Japan pledged to provide more than \$20 million in aid towards the reconstruction and development process, which is in addition to the \$7.8 million in emergency aid already disbursed in August. These contributions are part of Japan's \$200 million aid package announced by our Foreign Minister Kishida in Jakarta in March.

It is essential that we build on the commitments made by the international community for attaining a sustainable ceasefire and reconstruction of Gaza. In that regard, the establishment of an international mechanism that addresses the issues of security, humanitarian aid and good governance is indispensable. Japan, in cooperation with Israel, Palestine and the United Nations among others, is ready to work towards that goal.

The recent crisis in Gaza demonstrates the urgent need for a just, durable and comprehensive peace based on a two-State solution. Efforts for the reconstruction of Gaza must also target the resumption of peace talks and the stabilization of the Middle East region. Regrettably, we have yet to see the resumption of direct negotiations since its interruption in April and the Gaza crisis in July. It is imperative that both Israel and Palestine work towards fostering mutual confidence and dialogue.

Japan stands ready to assist the parties in building mutual confidence. At every opportunity, Japan has called on leaders from both sides to work towards the resumption of peace negotiations, including, inter alia, during the visit by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to Japan in May and through the participation of Foreign Minister Kishida at the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee held in New York last month. Our Parliamentary Vice-Minister, Mr. Sonoura, is currently on a visit to Palestine and Israel to reiterate our message to both sides.

We call on Israel to completely freeze its settlement activities, which are illegal under international law. Israel's recent land seizures, which risk paving the way for further settlement activities, run counter to international efforts for the pursuit of a two-State solution.

Correspondingly, we look to the Palestinian National Unity Government, under the leadership of President Abbas, to remain committed to renouncing violence, the recognition of Israel and adherence to previous diplomatic agreements, on the path towards achieving national reconciliation and peace in the Middle East. Japan welcomes the convening of their first-ever cabinet meeting in Gaza, on 9 October, as a positive step. Japan also calls on Palestine to refrain from any unilateral action that may hinder the resumption of peace negotiations. From this perspective, we will closely follow discussions in the Council on this matter.

Japan is of the view that assistance for Palestine's nation-building efforts also strengthens the foundations of the political process towards a two-State solution. To this end, we have been making distinct contributions to this effort by mobilizing private investments in Palestine. One such initiative is the Jericho agro-industrial park project. It is a flagship project of the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" initiative that Japan has been implementing since 2006 in cooperation with Israel, Jordan and Palestine. Six companies have already signed tenant contracts. It is expected that the

industrial park will lead to the creation of 7,000 jobs, with expected annual economic benefits totalling more than \$40 million.

Another initiative of Japan is the Conference on the Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development. This is a process aimed at mobilizing East Asian resources for the sake of Palestinian development. During its second ministerial meeting, held in Jakarta last March, participants committed to carrying out numerous capacity-building projects. We have steadily been doing our part, for example, by conducting tourism-sector cooperation with Thailand as well as human-resource training for Islamic finance with Malaysia.

In the interest of saving time, I will stop here. Please refer to the full text distributed, which covers our stance on the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, and Syria.

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

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first time we are addressing the Security Council under your presidency, we wish to commend you, Madam, for your sterling leadership and in particular for the dynamism that you and your delegation have brought to the work of the Council.

Nicaragua reiterates its absolute and total solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle for freedom and the exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination, with the creation of a Palestinian State based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, allowing for the return of all refugees and in solidarity with all Palestinian political prisoners. We also demand the immediate lifting of the criminal blockade and an end to the settlement policy.

It is with a great deal of pride that we convey our greetings to the Palestinian national unity Government. We regret that this year, the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, at a time when the overwhelming majority of the international community has pledged to support the Palestinians in their struggle to claim once and for all their inalienable rights, we have witnessed yet another massacre — another genocide of Palestinian children, women and men, along with the destruction of their homes, schools, hospitals and infrastructure. We wonder if Israel and those who support it understand the meaning of the word “solidarity”?

That criminal aggression lasted more than 50 days, even as people looked on. Beyond the loss of life, it left behind a Gaza that is but scorched earth and has consequences for the future that we are all familiar with: more refugees, more overcrowding, more destroyed houses, hospitals and schools, and more Palestinian children, women and men traumatized by this horrible assault.

It is important that the funds recently pledged by donor countries for the reconstruction of Gaza become a reality. These must be immediate, new and unconditional so as to provide support and ensure reconstruction for this long-suffering people.

But I wonder how long we will allow the vicious circle of policies and practices by Israel: attack, destroy and massacre, and, once everything has been destroyed, accept a temporary ceasefire and then wash its hands of the tragedy that it caused, and, later, start anew.

As a developing country, the State of Palestine has every right to receive development aid and investments, but if we allow this vicious circle of mass destruction and massacres on the part of Israel to continue, the international community's aid will serve only to help that people merely survive. They deserve, as we all do, a sustainable development that is in keeping with their interests and promotes their well-being. They should not be destroyed in step with the cyclical agenda of the occupying Power.

Israel continues to refuse to negotiate in good faith, hiding behind the veil of impunity that a permanent member of the Security Council has historically offered it. Each time we have seen progress in the negotiations, inevitably we have seen Israeli policies and practices aimed at interrupting that process. We must put an end to this vicious circle. Countries with responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security cannot continue to allow this impunity or the suffering of this heroic people.

The Security Council must meet its responsibilities by adopting a resolution containing a set timetable for the creation of a Palestinian State based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, laying the foundation for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, and with two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the aspirations of peace-loving people.

Peace in the Middle East will hinge on not only resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but also on

liberating the Lebanese and Syrian territories occupied by Israel. The situation in the Middle East beyond the situation in Palestine and the rest of the occupied territories must be resolved through dialogue and negotiation, bearing in mind the legitimate interests of all the States in the region, without external interference. We cannot continue to encourage conflicts, finance terrorist groups or impose regime-change policies. All of this, as has been shown since 2003, has brought nothing but death and destruction, extremism and radicalism. Syria, a brotherly nation, is a victim of those policies.

In conclusion, I call for us to work together with Security Council members for a Middle East zone of peace and development for their peoples.

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

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). I would like at the outset to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month and wish you every success. Moreover, I express my gratitude for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. We thank His Excellency the Secretary-General for his briefing and his efforts in that context.

Today's meeting is of particular importance because it follows the inhuman Israeli military aggression against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, which lasted 51 days. During that time, the Israeli war machine burned fields, claimed lives, destroyed infrastructure and indiscriminately targeted elderly civilians, women and children. It resulted in the death of more than 2,800 martyrs, including 516 children, 11,100 wounded, and the demolition of more than 10,620 houses and residential complexes, including several assaults on United Nations institutions and premises. All those actions constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity and will not be forgotten by future generations. They constitute a flagrant disregard of all the international community's appeals to Israel to end such practices, which are truly a stain on humankind's conscience.

The OIC expresses its support for and solidarity with the population of Gaza and all the Palestinian people, and strongly condemns the successive,

continuous and brutal Israeli campaigns against the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation holds Israel solely responsible, as the occupying Power, for its shameful killing of innocent Palestinians and destruction of thousands of homes, buildings and infrastructure, and holds it fully responsible for all human and material damages suffered by the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

The OIC member States stress that the disasters and consequences caused by the Israeli aggression must be at the forefront of the international community's concerns. In that regard, we welcome the Conference of international donors for the reconstruction of Gaza, which was held in Egypt, on 12 October. In addition, we commend the efforts of Egypt and Norway, who chair the international coordination committee for aid to the Palestinians. We also emphasize the need to fulfil the declared contributions, and not to surrender to disappointment and frustration after Israel destroyed the infrastructure projects for which the donors had contributed originally. Moreover, we reiterate our call for an end to the illegitimate blockade of the Gaza Strip in order to enable the Palestinian people to live in dignity, freedom and peace in their native country.

In addition, the OIC reiterates its call for the immediate implementation of the Human Rights Council's decision to provide immediate international protection for the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the formation of an independent international investigation commission to investigate all violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws committed by Israel.

The OIC reaffirms the Islamic, Arab and Palestinian identity of occupied Jerusalem and that East Jerusalem is an integral part of the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967, and that its annexation by Israel, the occupying Power, remains illegal, unrecognized and condemned by the international community. The OIC condemns in the strongest terms the ongoing violations against the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Muslim worshippers committed by the Israeli occupying forces and settlers. The OIC stresses that those actions are a flagrant violation of the principles of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

Accordingly, we call on the Security Council to put an end to those violations, and to compel Israel,

the occupying Power, to respect the right to freedom of worship and to preserve the sanctity of the holy places and the worshipers. Moreover, the OIC condemns Israel, the occupying Power, for not permitting the international mission of experts mandated by UNESCO to reach the occupied city of Jerusalem to investigate the Israeli violations.

In addition, the OIC holds Israel, the occupying authority, fully responsible for the consequences of the heinous crimes practiced by extremist settlers against the Palestinian people, and calls for the inclusion of settler leaders and extremist settlers groups, including the Price Tag and Hilltop Youth factions, on the list of terrorists and criminals wanted for international prosecution by the States of the world and international organizations.

The continuation of illegitimate settling practices by Israel, the occupying Power, and its seizure of Palestinian land and the expulsion of its indigenous Palestinian population are clear evidence of the policy of ethnic cleansing it practices. That policy undermines the two-State solution and is a definite confirmation that Israel is not interested in peaceful solutions and only applies a policy of *fait accompli*, continuous occupation and deprivation of the Palestinian people of their rights. We call upon the Security Council to take the necessary measures to stop the Israeli settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory and to implement the relevant international resolutions, particularly both resolutions 465 (1980) and 497 (1981), which affirm the illegitimacy of the settlement policy and the necessity of dismantling the existing settlements.

The OIC stresses the necessity for the international community, especially the Security Council, to shoulder its responsibilities in maintaining international peace and security, to take all necessary measures to put an end to the continuing Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and ensure Israel's compliance with relevant international resolutions. If the Council is to avoid losing further credibility in the eyes of the international community and the conscience of the world, it is time to adopt a resolution establishing an imperative time limit to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories and compelling Israel to withdraw to the borders of June 1967, including a withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan and other occupied territories and to move forward towards implementing the two-State solution and the achievement of independence for the Palestinian people. In that regard, we reaffirm our support for Palestinian efforts seeking to use all legal

means based on international legitimacy to achieve those goals.

Together with the countless honourable people around the world, we cannot help but wonder what obstacles are preventing justice and putting a time limit for ending the illegitimate occupation, as stipulated in United Nations for many decades now. What is the obstacle that prevents resorting to legal means? The member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation welcome the recent decision by the Kingdom of Sweden and the decision of the House of Commons of Great Britain to recognize the State of Palestine, and we call on other countries to follow suit. The independence of the State of Palestine, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, and the granting to the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination are long overdue.

The States members of the OIC express their deep concern at the escalation of the violence, destruction, murder and other heinous crimes being committed against the Syrian people as well as the serious deterioration of the humanitarian situation and the failure to implement both Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014) due to the intransigence of the Syrian regime. Those resolutions stipulated the unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid to Syrian civilians. Moreover, we call on all States Members of the United Nations to fulfil their commitments to support the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people, especially since the number of displaced persons and refugees has reached over 10 million individuals inside Syria and in neighbouring countries, in addition to four million in need of urgent humanitarian aid in the besieged areas.

The States members of the OIC emphasize the need to achieve a negotiated political solution as soon as possible. In that regard, we call on the Security Council to shoulder its full responsibility towards the stalled political solution, and urge the United Nations Special Envoy, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to step up his efforts to form a transitional Government with full executive powers, according to the first Geneva declaration, so as to achieve the aspirations of the Syrian people for change, freedom, security and stability, and to guarantee that there be no place in such a solution for those whose hands are soaked in the blood of more than 100,000 Syrians — that is, those who have committed crimes against humanity, including aerial bombardment and the use of fire bombs, missiles and chemical weapons.

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

Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba once again expresses its pleasure at seeing you, Madam, preside over the Security Council. We commend you for the manner in which you have discharged your duties, as during its prior presidency.

We fully support the statement made by the representative of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Middle East situation has worsened in recent months and the international community remains highly attuned to developments there. The crimes committed by Israel in its latest aggression against the Palestinian people shocked global public opinion. Israel again acted with impunity. The Security Council, revealing once again its characteristic double standards, stood silently by as Israel murdered over 2,000 Palestinians, most of them children, women and elderly, and we again bore witness as Israel's massive military might destroyed homes, livelihoods, basic services and infrastructure.

Cuba reiterates that the Security Council must uphold the duties with which it is entrusted by defending international peace and security and by adopting, without delay, specific and practical measures to bring to an end once and for all Israel's aggression against the Palestinian people, and to hold it accountable for the crimes of aggression, collective punishment, arbitrary arrests, mass imprisonment and genocide committed against this people.

We fully support the Palestinian initiative seeking a Security Council resolution setting a deadline for the end of the Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian territories that began in 1967 and permitting the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination in an independent Palestinian State within its pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The General Assembly took a historic decision when its members adopted the majority resolution 67/19, granting Palestine non-Member observer State status in the United Nations. The international community must continue to support the Palestinian people in their legitimate call for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State and its admission as a full Member of the United Nations.

The construction and expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, the building of the wall of shame in the

occupied Palestinian territory, the destruction and confiscation of Palestinian land and property, the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian families and the transfer of settlers into occupied Palestinian territory are unacceptable. Following the recent announcement by the Israeli Government of the construction of over 2,000 new Israeli settlements in occupied East Jerusalem, we demand the immediate and complete cessation of all Israeli settlement activities in the Palestinian territories.

Such aggressive Israeli colonizing policies and practices deliberately contravene United Nations resolutions, international law and international humanitarian law; constitute a threat to regional and international peace and security; and deprive the Palestinian people of their fundamental human rights. Only the end of the colonization policy, the release of Palestinian prisoners and the recognition of the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people will allow for the launching of a meaningful political process that could lead to lasting peace in the region.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation in the besieged Gaza Strip, where living conditions have been exacerbated by the most recent atrocious bombardment, requires the urgent attention and support of the international community. Cuba reiterates its support for the Palestinian people in its just struggle for self-determination. We demand an end to the occupation of all Arab territories and reiterate our position in favour of a just and lasting peace for all the peoples of the Middle East.

We reiterate our call for the safeguarding of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria and for the right to self-determination of its people without foreign interference or intervention of any kind. Foreign intervention in Syria must stop. Cuba reiterates its opposition to the calls of those who promote regime change in the Syrian Arab Republic and are committed to the use of force and violence.

We cannot but reiterate our serious concern at the loss of innocent life resulting from the Syrian conflict. We condemn all acts of violence taking place in that country against the civilian population, but the supposed protection of human lives and the fight against terrorists cannot be used as a pretext for foreign intervention. Cuba reiterates its condemnation of all acts, methods and practices of terrorism in all their forms and manifestations, wherever and by whomever

they are committed, including State terrorism. We condemn all the acts of terrorism that have taken place in the Middle East and any support of irregular armed groups, including the use of mercenaries, which sows only destruction and death and attempts to obstruct the settlement of this conflict through diplomatic channels. We reject unilateral actions and those taken outside the United Nations, such as those of the United States, which is launching air strikes across boundaries of sovereign States in clear violation of international law. We recall that it is the duty of the Council to promote peace, not violence; to avoid destabilization and not to contribute to financing, arming and training those who would destabilize.

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

Ms. Gunnarsdóttir (Iceland): I would like to thank the Argentinian presidency for organizing this meeting and in particular for the way you have framed the debate.

Iceland agrees that in the wake of the ceasefire in Gaza, this open debate is an important opportunity to focus on that longstanding issue. That is not to diminish the importance and urgency of other crises demanding our attention in the region, or the importance of other forums where this issue is discussed, including the Quartet. But, as the President has pointed out, the Council can and must play a more active role and assume its responsibilities, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, by supporting all efforts and initiatives aimed at reaching a lasting peace. It is, after all, the Security Council that is charged with maintaining international peace and security.

The present state of affairs is sustainable neither for the Israelis or the Palestinians. When we look at Gaza, the facts on the ground are shocking. In the pointless war of the past summer, 20,000 homes were destroyed and more than 2,000 Palestinians killed, most of them civilians, including more than 500 children. More than 70 Israelis were killed, including 6 civilians. Iceland has condemned the disproportionate use of force by the Israel Defense Forces during the conflict, and we also condemn the indiscriminate rocket attacks by Hamas and other militant organizations in Gaza against civilian targets in Israel.

The phrase “facts on the ground” began as an innocent euphemism for Israeli settlements established in violation of international law. It has come to signify

the enormous gap between statements of political intent and actions — that is, what people have done in spite of what they say or have said. Those facts stand in disregard of international human rights and humanitarian law. The facts on the ground include widespread violations of the rights and dignity of Palestinians through denial of property rights and restrictions on their freedom of movement and expression. Those actions have clear consequences for the chances of the peaceful coexistence of two States living side by side. We have seen a series of actions over a long period that diminish the chances of establishing a two-State solution. And that means diminishing the chances of any solution that would allow both populations to live in peace for the long term.

A sea change is needed to move this issue onto a path that can lead to an enduring peace. The core problem on the ground is the occupation of Palestine, and that occupation must end. Without a clear political horizon there is no hope and the bloodshed will continue. Choosing the way of peace must bring results. On the twenty-fifth anniversary this year of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we should think about all the children whose names have been read out in this very forum at former meetings, to remind us that in the end, maintaining international peace and security is about people, and that the Security Council has both the responsibility as well as the tools to do its utmost to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as all the other conflicts in the region where children are suffering.

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

Mr. Kohona (Sri Lanka): I join other speakers in commending you for convening this important debate, Madam President. The Sri Lankan delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We are very concerned about the humanitarian impact of the recent escalation of violence resulting in large-scale destruction, devastation and displacement in Gaza. Sri Lanka joined the international community in mourning the tragic loss of life, including those of many children, during the violence. The extensive damage to public infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and United Nations buildings, further undermined the already precarious access to basic services that prevailed prior to the current conflict,

services that include electricity, water and sanitation, health and education.

Despite the open-ended ceasefire reached on 26 August, the situation in Gaza remains tense. The challenges ahead of addressing the immediate humanitarian needs and launching reconstruction activities are enormous. The international community must ensure that the injured, the displaced and the homeless are taken care of while addressing the broader question of peace in the region. In that regard, we welcome the successful convening of the conference on reconstructing Gaza held in Cairo on 12 October. It is essential that the unilateral sanctions and blockade of Gaza be lifted if we are to find a more permanent solution to its bleak economic conditions. The restrictions on imports and exports due to the blockade are stifling economic growth as well as aggravating the humanitarian crisis. We welcome the partial lifting of the restrictions within the framework of resolution 1860 (2009), which should contribute significantly to Gaza's economic advancement and the well-being of its people, and to creating an environment of hope.

We join the international community in appealing to all parties to refrain from indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks on civilians, since they are detrimental to the peace and security of both Israel and Palestine and to the stability of the entire region. Indiscriminate attacks on civilians will only worsen feelings of desperation and insecurity and widen the gap between the parties. The security needs of the people of Israel must be respected. A climate conducive to peace will be encouraged by a mutual approach sensitive to the concerns of both sides. We hope that all parties will engage constructively and sincerely to end the conflict, enabling the achievement of a lasting peace. The ongoing settlement activity, which is illegal under international law, particularly article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the relevant United Nations resolutions and an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, must end if a sustainable solution to this problem is to be negotiated.

Finding a just and durable solution to the situation in the Middle East has been a priority for the international community since 1948. It is disappointing that after more than five decades, we are still nowhere near a satisfactory solution. The Middle East conflict absorbs a considerable amount of international attention and resources. As we heard in the summit-level meeting of the Security Council on 24 September (S/PV.7272), the

conflicts in the Middle East, especially the lingering question of Palestine, are one of the main motives driving the recruitment of terrorists in the region and worldwide. Terrorism originating from the region has the potential to pose a serious threat to the security and stability of many countries.

Given the events of this year that led to the unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Gaza, we hope that every effort will be made to achieve a successful negotiated end to the conflict so that the people of both Israel and Palestine will be able to enjoy peace and prosperity in their own lands. In this year of International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we must not give up on our hopes for a lasting peace accord that leads to the establishment of a fully sovereign and secure State of Palestine. We are encouraged by the political rapprochement between Gaza and the West Bank with the formation of the unity Government.

Sri Lanka supports Palestine's application for admission to full membership in the United Nations. Let me conclude by reiterating Sri Lanka's support for the implementation of General Assembly resolutions regarding the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to statehood and the attainment of a two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders.

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

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan): As this is my first statement in the Council for this month, please accept my congratulations — to Argentina and you personally, Madam — on your assumption of the presidency. I thank you for convening this open debate on the very important topic of the situation in the Middle East. I also thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and for his tireless efforts to promote peace in the Middle East.

Along with the entire international community, we are alarmed that terrorist groups are creating quasi-State entities to fight against legitimate Governments and sow enmity and hatred. Kazakhstan strongly condemns the attacks by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and associated armed groups in the Middle East, which pose a major threat to the region and beyond, including our part of the world, and Central Asia in particular. They must be held accountable for their violations and atrocities and brought to justice by the international community.

We stress that terrorism can be defeated only by a sustained and comprehensive approach involving the active participation and cooperation of all States and international and regional organizations, to impede, impair, isolate and incapacitate the terrorist threat.

My delegation has already expressed to the Council Kazakhstan's concern about the developments in the Gaza Strip. Kazakhstan expresses its deepest condolences and profound sympathy for the senseless deaths among the civilian population of the Gaza Strip, most of which were of women, children and the elderly. We call for the immediate lifting of the Israeli blockade on Gaza. We are also concerned about the continuing settlement process on Palestinian territory.

It is clearly evident that the persistence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to threaten regional and international peace and security, and its negative implications are not confined to just that region, but are felt well beyond, across the globe. The ultimate goal of the efforts of all parties involved should be the restoration and promotion of the peace processes in all directions. That should be in accordance with Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles and the land-for-peace formula. All parties to the Middle East conflict must fulfil their commitments, as stipulated by the Road Map.

We support Egypt's peaceful initiative and welcome the outcomes of the 12 October Cairo talks on the long-term settlement conditions. Kazakhstan expresses its hope that international actions, including those of the Secretary-General, will contribute to the ceasefire and resumption of further peace talks. My delegation reiterates our recognition of the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, the creation of an independent State of Palestine within the 1967 borders in peaceful co-existence with Israel and full-fledged membership in the United Nations.

In conclusion, we again urgently call on all parties to commit their political will to ensure lasting peace and security, and freedom and justice for all people through a genuine multilateral approach.

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

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to commend your initiative, Madam President, to convene an open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I

would also like to welcome the briefing by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

From the beginning, the situation in the Middle East has been of particular concern for Peru. With respect to the question of Palestine, my country has consistently maintained a clear position in accordance with the rules and principles of international law, in particular peoples' right to self-determination. Therefore, my country recognizes the need to implement the relevant General Assembly resolutions, which are the basis for the creation of two States in the territory of Palestine, one Arab and one Jewish, coexisting side by side as neighbours within secure and mutually recognized borders, in peace and security and free from the threat or use of force.

Therefore, conscious of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to establish themselves as an independent State, and convinced that the creation of a Palestinian State is a key element in the peaceful and definitive resolution of the conflict, Peru has recognized Palestine as a State and supported the relevant United Nations resolutions, including through our sponsorship of historic General Assembly resolution 67/19, of 29 November 2012, in accordance with which Palestine was granted the status of non-member observer State.

The attacks against densely populated urban areas in the Gaza Strip carried out by Israel last summer were the subject of vigorous condemnation by my Government. In the same vein, Peru condemned the firing of rockets from Gaza towards Israeli civilian populations. Of course, Peru deplored the disproportionate use of military force during the conflict, which resulted in the deaths of more than 1,400 people in the Gaza Strip, mostly Palestinian civilians, including women and children, some of whom were seeking shelter in United Nations facilities.

Therefore, consistent with our ongoing call for the parties to act with strict respect for human rights and international humanitarian law and to take measures to protect the civilian population, Peru voted in favour of Human Rights Council resolution S-21/1 through which, in addition the attacks being condemned, Israel was asked to cease its settlement activities and end the blockade of the Gaza Strip. While my country recognizes the inalienable right of Israel to preserve its own existence and security, including by exercising its right to legitimate self-defence, we note that the exercise of this right must be carried out in accordance

with international law and international humanitarian law, in particular the principles of proportionality and lawfulness, within defined and internationally recognized borders.

On that last point, my delegation reiterates that the acquisition of territory by force is inadmissible in the light of international law, which is why any action by Israel to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration are null and void. In that regard, we reiterate our call on Israel to immediately cease the practice of the construction of settlements, house demolitions and evictions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, in accordance with the provisions of various General Assembly resolutions.

In accordance with our traditional and unchanging commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes, my delegation reaffirms its full support and calls for the search for a lasting peace in the Middle East, which can only be achieved as a result of negotiations with the participation of parties, and on the basis of full implementation by all parties of their obligations under the Madrid terms of reference, the Quartet Road Map and other agreements and full respect for international law, including Security Council resolutions on the subject. My delegation therefore hopes that the ceasefire agreement signed in August will pave the way for the parties to resume the peace process on the Middle East, in order to achieve a viable and lasting solution that ends the status quo and allows Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace, in two States, within secure and internationally recognized borders.

I would like to turn to a growing threat to the peace and security of the entire Middle East region, namely, the terrorist organization that calls itself the Islamic State, whose terrible acts and crimes cannot be tolerated. In that regard, Peru reiterates its strong condemnation and rejection of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, reaffirming its commitment to the fight against that scourge. In that context, Peru welcomes the recently adopted resolution 2178 (2014), which seeks to combat the spread of terrorism, in particular by reducing the threat posed by so-called foreign terrorist fighters given that their presence may increase the intensity and duration of conflicts. In addition, it represents a serious threat to their States of origin, transit States and the States to which they travel.

Finally, I wish to reiterate Peru's commitment to taking all necessary measures to combat terrorism

at the international and the national levels, while always bearing in mind the four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in strict accordance with international law, including the norms and principles of international human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law.

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

Mr. Mamabolo (South Africa): For countless years, in numerous Security Council meetings, the international community has utilized this forum to express its anger and disappointment at the senseless loss of life and the cruelty and barbarism meted out to women, men and children by warring factions that refuse to acknowledge the reality that peace will reign in the Middle East only as a result of peaceful negotiations, justice and fairness. On numerous occasions, the international community has reiterated its position that the conflict between Israel and Palestine can be resolved only through a two-State solution, with a viable Palestinian State living side by side with Israel and its other neighbours.

South Africa wishes to congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October and on having convened such an important debate. We also extend our gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing today and express our appreciation for the role that he plays in upholding the principles of the United Nations and in his involvement in the resolution of conflict in the Middle East. My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representatives of Zimbabwe on behalf of the Southern African Development Community and of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

This morning, we listened attentively to the briefing of the Secretary-General on his recent visit to the State of Palestine, including the Gaza Strip, in which he told us that he had witnessed first hand the massive destruction in those areas. South Africa, for its part, believes that such visits are helpful in drawing the attention of the international community to the reality of the horrific killing and the suffering of civilians in Palestine.

We also listened to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine to the United Nations, who told us that Palestinians now face the mammoth task of

rebuilding their lives after the deaths of 2,180 people, the majority civilians, including 516 children and 283 women. Clearly, we should unreservedly condemn such a situation in the Council. At the same time, we equally listened to the representative of the State of Israel, who pointed out Israel's readiness to find a lasting solution to the conflict. In order to demonstrate its seriousness, we believe that the starting point should be the lifting of the seven-year blockade on Gaza.

We are also pleased that the Palestinians and Israelis have concluded a ceasefire agreement. We are hopeful that the ongoing negotiations will lead to a permanent ceasefire arrangement. South Africa, for its part, believes that now is the time for our readiness to be put to the test and that attempts should be sought to indeed seek a genuine solution to the long conflict. South Africa is ready to support a Security Council resolution that will compel both Israel and Palestine to negotiate a framework for a two-State solution within a specific time frame. In that regard, we welcome the attempts of the Group of the Arab States, which is making an effort in that regard.

Lastly, South Africa very recently pledged its support for the ongoing humanitarian assistance effort taking place in Gaza. We are indeed pleased that the international community is making efforts to try and restore conditions in Gaza. In that regard, we have pledged 10 million South African rand, or \$1 million, as a contribution to that end. The funds pledged by South Africa will be transferred to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. We stand ready to be of assistance, if called upon, to share our experience in national reconciliation, nation-building, constitution-building and post-conflict reconstruction and development.

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

Mr. Alrowaie (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to sincerely thank you, Madam President, for having convened this open debate of the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. Allow me also to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing to the Security Council.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms that a lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question will be achieved only through the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its

capital in accordance with United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the decisions of the Quartet, as well as all international terms of reference in that regard. Just peace can be obtained only through a complete Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories and the lifting of the illegal Israeli siege of Gaza.

A peaceful settlement of the Middle East issue requires putting an end to the illegitimate Israeli occupation of Arab and Palestinian lands, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, as well as a complete Israeli withdrawal from other occupied Lebanese territories, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. The most recent brutal aggression against the Gaza Strip, which led to the widespread destruction and more than 2,000 martyrs, clearly demonstrates Israel's violations and its breach of all international resolutions, laws, norms and treaties owing to its expropriation of Palestinian land, construction of illegal settlements, their expansion and the imposition of the blockade.

The Kingdom of Bahrain underscores the words of His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, when he called for the international protection of the Palestinian people and their occupied land, Israel to commit to implementing the Fourth Geneva Convention, a specific timeline to end the Israeli occupation and the realization of the aspirations of the Palestinian people to set up their own independent State of Palestine on the basis of the 4 June 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital. All of this must be undertaken pursuant to the Arab Peace Initiative, the two-State solution, international legitimacy and relevant United Nations resolutions.

We pay tribute to the key role played by the Arab Republic of Egypt in securing the ceasefire and as co-host with the Kingdom of Norway of the International Conference on Palestine, "Reconstructing Gaza". The Kingdom of Bahrain will always support the principles of peace, freedom, justice, self-determination and coexistence. We support moderation and international resolutions, and will continue to act and work to ensure the implementation of resolution 1515 (2003).

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

Mr. Sareer (Maldives): My delegation wishes to thank Argentina, in its capacity as President of the Security Council, for convening this open debate in

connection with the agenda item on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I would also like to extend our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his briefing and his dedicated efforts towards a resolution of the conflicts in the Middle East.

Once again, the Maldives takes the floor in the Council to join the global chorus of voices condemning the violence in the Middle East, especially in the State of Palestine. For the past few decades, the international community has expended time, energy and resources towards the realization of a two-State solution based on relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Road Map. However, time and time again the progress made ends in the sound of gunfire, rockets, missiles and bombs. Time and time again, it ends in the cries of the innocent who unwillingly give their final measure in what we so nonchalantly refer to as collateral damage.

Generations grow up under the oppression of occupation and learn both hatred and violence, although there has been long-standing consensus on the parameters of a solution. United Nations resolutions and subsequent negotiations have made clear that the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 has no place in the modern world, and that the State of Palestine must be recognized. It must be granted full independence within its pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. As elaborated in these resolutions, the issues of refugees, borders, settlements, security, natural resources, prisoners and East Jerusalem must be addressed if there is ever to be hope for peace.

Yet with peace only a distant hope, the international community must first rally to keep this latest induced despair and human misery at bay. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East now estimates that 600,000 Palestinians were affected in the latest bombings that destroyed 100,000 homes, and the need for more aid is dire. Yet, with the current restrictions on movement, trade, employment and aid, the effort at rebuilding is severely hindered. A resolution from this Council ensuring the reopening of the Gaza Strip based on the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access, an end to the blockade and guaranteed protection of civilian populations is long overdue and much wanted.

This is the first step in easing the situation — the first step in rebuilding. Unless population recovers its God-given right to human dignity, the cycle of hatred

and violence will continue, not only in Palestine but around the world. Hatred breeds violence, contempt, extremism and the very worst that humankind has to offer. We have seen this hatred infect young people from every nation, race and creed. Yet today it spreads across the Middle East and threatens the future stability of the entire region. It is a threat facing the Islamic Ummah. Terrorist organizations, including the so-called Islamic State, are among the greatest emerging threats to the global community.

The President of Maldives, Mr. Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom, and the Government of Maldives condemn these groups, their ideologies and activities in the strongest terms. The Maldives welcomes initiatives that emphasize the global will to jointly address the issue of foreign fighters, including resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014). Unfortunately, far more needs to be done.

It is deeply concerning to note that an estimated 1.8 million Iraqi citizens have been internally displaced this year alone. It is deeply concerning that, every day, thousands of refugees are fleeing for their lives and that the refugee crisis is only worsening, with no end in sight. More than 3 million Syrians have been registered as refugees outside of the country, with another 6.5 million estimated to be internally displaced since the Syrian civil war began.

The need for continued aid is ever present. The ongoing violence in the region is once again creating a generation without access to basic needs including food, water, shelter, education, health care, peace and stability. Once again, a generation will grow up in fear and will learn hatred unless we begin to take steps that will address them in a holistic and long-sighted manner. It is time we stopped repeating our mistakes.

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

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine): First of all, let me join previous speakers in thanking you, Madam President, for organizing today's meeting of the Security Council devoted to the important issue of the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. Ukraine very much appreciates and supports Argentina's initiative in organizing today's open debate.

Ukraine is deeply concerned over the situation in the Middle East, and in the Palestinian territories in particular. It is our strong conviction that the solution

to the question of Palestine should be based on the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as the Madrid Peace Conference formula and the Oslo accords.

Ukraine is committed to a balanced and impartial position on the Middle East peace process, and is willing to develop stable and constructive relations with both Israel and the Arab States, including Palestine. On the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian settlement, Ukraine supports the principle of the coexistence of Israel and Arab states in peace and security. Ukraine welcomed the Israeli-Palestinian agreement on a ceasefire, which put an end to the killings among the civilian population and gave parties an opportunity to find diplomatic ways to solve their differences. The strategic outcome of the initiative is to create two States for two peoples that would coexist in peace and security, based on the expectations of the international community for a stable, democratic and prosperous Middle East.

Ukraine considers the principles of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative to be a key element of international efforts to reach a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. Ukraine reaffirms its commitment to the universal principles and basic norms of international law, in particular strict observance of human rights, territorial integrity, inviolability of borders and State sovereignty. Ukraine stands for an immediate end to the bloodshed and calls on to maximize the use of political and diplomatic means to resolve the conflict.

Ukraine proceeds from the fact that, according to the Charter of the United Nations, the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security lies with the Security Council, and specifically its permanent members. We consider the unanimous adoption of resolution 2178 (2014) on the fight against foreign terrorists to be an important example of such responsibility, and call upon all Member States to support its full implementation.

Ukraine supports the mission of Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, tasked with the Syrian crisis, as well as other initiatives brokered by influential international organizations, and calls on the parties to the conflict to rapidly and fully implement the Geneva agreements. Ukraine welcomes the cooperation of the Syrian Government with the overall aims of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Mission to destroy the arsenal of chemical weapons. We are confident that the final

removal of Syrian chemical weapons represents an important step for Syria and the whole Middle East region. Ukraine condemns the ongoing violence and systematic violations of human rights in Syria.

Ukraine takes a proactive stance on the Syrian issue. We supported General Assembly resolution 68/182, "Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic". The Ukrainian delegation took part in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th meetings of the Group of Friends of the Syrian People. Ukraine is concerned about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria, where the total number of internally displaced persons exceeds 6.5 million, and almost 3 million refugees were forced to move to neighbouring countries. In that regard, we call on Syrian authorities to remove all bureaucratic barriers and other obstacles to the expansion of humanitarian aid operations. We also support implementation of the provisions of resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014) to ensure the free access of humanitarian assistance to the affected population and the protection of medical personnel and United Nations humanitarian workers. Realizing the critical humanitarian situation in Syria, Ukraine has provided, through the relevant United Nations agencies, humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees.

Ukraine has clearly expressed its position in the statement issued by the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry on 16 September on the results of the International Conference on Peace and Security in Iraq, held in Paris. Ukraine, which decisively fights foreign-backed terrorists and itself faces direct aggression, shares the view that the terrorist group the Islamic State is a threat not only to Iraq and Syria, but also to the international community.

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

Mrs. Natividad (Philippines): Madam President, I thank you for convening this most important open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

The Philippines continues to closely follow developments in the region. There is a continuing need to take stock of the advances achieved by our Organization in helping secure a lasting and just peace in the region. We also need to be fully apprised of the continuing and emerging challenges that confront us. Even as we acknowledge the efforts being undertaken in the Middle East, we clearly realize that more needs

to be done, particularly on humanitarian assistance, given the toll that conflicts have taken on civilian populations. The Philippines continues to be concerned about the situation in Gaza. We welcome the ceasefire brokered by Egypt between the concerned parties. We express the sincere hope that all parties will continue working together for a long-term and durable solution.

Extremism continues to cast its long shadow, and the emergence of the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters further complicates the already complex terrain in the Middle East, with security implications extending beyond the region. The scourge that is the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) is particularly troublesome. The Philippines condemns ISIS and its atrocities in the strongest terms. The Philippines co-sponsored resolution 2178 (2014), believing that resolute and immediate action by the international community is necessary to suppress that group.

As a responsible member of the international community, the Philippines will do its part in the global efforts to thwart ISIS and its false ideologies. Resolution 2178 (2014) rightly indicates the importance of countering violent extremism and the need for States to step up their efforts to do so and to decrease the risk of radicalization to terrorism in their societies. The annual General Assembly resolution on interreligious and intercultural dialogue is a long-standing initiative of the Philippines and Pakistan that aims to counter violent extremism. Along with other initiatives, the international community can learn from the wealth of experience and expertise in that initiative.

Also worrisome is the existence of non-State actors in situations of armed conflict that impact the efforts of our Organization to maintain the line of peace. That is true for United Nations peacekeeping operations, particularly the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). The presence and actions of anti-Government armed elements have seriously affected the implementation of the UNDOF mandate. Peacekeepers, including those from my country, have been restricted in movement, held in siege conditions or kidnapped. That situation is unacceptable. While United Nations peacekeepers are known for their courage and professionalism, that alone will not help them implement their mandate. They should be provided with the necessary support to deal with emerging factors not contemplated when the mandate was formulated.

To ensure that UNDOF continues to successfully implement its mandate, it is necessary to revisit

outstanding operational and tactical issues, including United Nations command and control vis-à-vis the safety and security of peacekeepers during kidnapping and siege incidents, the accountability of peacekeeping mission leaders for decisions made during crisis operations, and multidimensional contingency plans and procedures to address similar situations. The Philippines believes that much can be learned from UNDOF's experience. In that regard, the inclusion of such lessons in the high-level review of peacekeeping operations called for by the Secretary-General should be sought and anticipated.

Finally, the situation in the Middle East requires all stakeholders to work together on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. My country is disappointed that, four years after the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), we have not yet convened a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. I wish to briefly recall that the issue was an integral part of the grand design that made the 2010 NPT Review Conference a success.

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

Mr. Mukerji (India): Since this is the first time I am addressing you, Madam President, let me begin by congratulating you on ably steering the Council as the President for this month and by expressing our appreciation for the convening of this quarterly open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I should also like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing earlier today.

When the Council held its open debate on 22 July on this agenda item (see S/PV.7222), we were faced with the unfortunate situation of the resumption of the tragic and steeply escalated conflict in Gaza, which resulted in a large number of civilian casualties and heavy damage to property. We in India, on our part, had called upon both sides to exercise maximum restraint and avoid taking actions that might further exacerbate the situation and threaten the peace and security of the region. We remain hopeful that the current ceasefire will be sustainable and that both sides will resume the peace process soon towards a comprehensive resolution of the Palestinian issue.

India's deep association with and continuing commitment to Palestine are rooted in our modern history going back to our own struggle for independence. We should also like to reiterate our support for a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian issue, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel.

Apart from strong political support to the Palestinian cause at the international, regional and bilateral levels, India has been contributing economic and development assistance to the Palestinian people. In keeping with those efforts, India pledged \$4 million in response to the Palestinian National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza, presented by Palestinian Authority during the recent International Conference on Palestine, "Reconstructing Gaza", held in Cairo on 12 October.

India remains firmly convinced that dialogue remains the only viable option that can effectively address the issues confronting the region and its people. We hope that both sides will demonstrate the necessary political will to return to the negotiating table and resume dialogue.

We are also deeply concerned about the activities of radicalized and extremist groups in the northern parts of Iraq and Syria, with a dangerous exacerbation of sectarian and extremist tensions critically impacting the peace and stability of the region. Efforts must be taken by all parties and stakeholders in the region to curb those trends. We believe that consolidation of political processes and solutions, while building durable State institutions, will be an effective way of addressing such extremism and radicalism in the region.

On Syria, we have consistently supported a Syrian-led, comprehensive political solution to the ongoing crisis, in alignment with the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex). We continue to urge all parties to demonstrate the requisite political will, exercise restraint and commit to seeking common ground in accommodating their differences.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of Israel has asked to make a further statement. I give him the floor.

Mr. Nitzan (Israel): Once again, we have heard serial human rights abusers, such as Zimbabwe, Syria, Nicaragua, Cuba, Iran and Saudi Arabia, as well as systematic religious rights violators such as Bahrain, Qatar and — once again — Iran and Saudi Arabia attack my country. President Kennedy once said, "No matter how big the lie, repeat it often enough and the masses will regard it as truth".

Today, I heard a lot of lies directed at the State of Israel, so I wish to clarify a number of issues. Israel respects and protects religious freedom and grants full religious rights to people of all faiths — an uncommon practice in our region. After reuniting Jerusalem in 1967, Israel abolished discriminatory laws. Israel introduced religious freedom that allowed millions of Muslims and Christians to visit and pray in the holy sites in Jerusalem. Today Jerusalem is an open city for all faiths that celebrates religious tolerance and diversity.

I want to remind some of the delegations here in this institution that Jerusalem had a Jewish character long before most cities in the world had any character at all. Jews have lived continuously in Jerusalem for 3,000 years, from the time that King David built his great palace in the city's rolling hills. By denying the history of the Jewish people, the Arabs and Palestinians are planting seeds of intolerance. The truth is that the Palestinian Authority incites violence in Jerusalem and on the Temple Mount. President Abbas and other Arab leaders try to advance their political agendas by inflaming tensions and encouraging violence. In doing so, they are playing with fire and distancing us from peace.

I have to admit that it was difficult to follow the complex conspiracy theory devised and delivered by the Syrian representative earlier today. Syria has become an expert at blaming others for its problems. The responsibility for the catastrophe of the humanitarian crisis taking place in the Syrian Arab Republic lies solely with the Syrian Government. Blaming Israel for the evacuation of United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) troops from the area of separation is nothing more than revisionist history. The truth of the matter is that the Syrian Army fled in the face of the advancing Jabhat Al-Nusra fighters, leaving UNDOF troops unprotected and at risk. Recognizing the danger, Israel opened its gates and provided UNDOF safe harbour.

Finally, I want to once again address the remarks made by the representative of Qatar. The Qatari representative once again had the audacity to criticize Israel. The fact of the matter is that Qatar serves as the chief financial sponsor for Hamas and others among the most brutal and dangerous groups in the Middle East. That is a matter that should be a source of concern for the Council and for the international community.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine has asked to make a further statement. I give him the floor.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I want to thank you, Madam President, and all of the members of the Security Council and the large number of representatives speaking on behalf of the entire international community for reaffirming their commitment to justice for the Palestinian people, and for their call for an end to the occupation so that we can actualize the global consensus on the two-State solution. We cannot have the two-State solution without ending the occupation. We challenge the one delegation that is refusing to accept that it is an occupier and refusing to tell everyone here, and throughout every corner of the globe, that it is willing and ready to withdraw from our land and to allow for the independence of our State with East Jerusalem as its capital, so that we can achieve the two-State solution.

Let me also say that those who speak about lies should not themselves tell lies. We know for a fact that Palestinians under 50 years of age are not allowed to come to Jerusalem to practice their religious freedom. We know for a fact that Palestinians from areas outside of East Jerusalem and the West Bank cannot freely come to exercise their religious freedoms in Al-Aqsa Mosque or in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. We have sent many letters to the Council telling the stories of the restrictions imposed by those who say that Jerusalem is a city that is open to everybody to practice their religion. We live the daily reality in which thousands and sometimes tens of thousands of Palestinians pray in the streets close to the holy sites in Jerusalem because the Israeli occupying authority denied them such rights.

Let me also note that the representative of the occupying authority said “since the unification of Jerusalem”. We know that there is a Security Council resolution saying that everything that Israel has done unilaterally in annexing Jerusalem is null and void and has no legal authority. Israel is alone — isolated — in

not accepting East Jerusalem as an occupied territory. The entire international community — those who are represented in this Chamber and those who are not — are all united in stating that Israel is occupying East Jerusalem and that it must withdraw from East Jerusalem. We agree that Jerusalem is one of the final status issues, yet the Israeli representative speaks to the Council with such disrespect, saying “since we unified Jerusalem” — in other words, they do not want to withdraw from it. Is the behaviour of such authorities — leaders, including the Deputy Speaker of the Knesset, who, together with extremists, stands on top of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and raises the flag of Israel — the behaviour of a Government that is really interested in peace with us? Or is it the behaviour of a cavalier colonial Power that disrespects the people that it occupies?

We are familiar with that behaviour — everyone here is familiar with that behaviour. All colonialists behave in the same way: they blame the victims for their own crimes. As all of them in history were defeated, we are confident that this colonial authority will withdraw from our land so that we can have a two-State solution.

We thank you again, Madam President, for this support. We look forward to seeing this collective will to be translated into the adoption of a draft resolution that demands from the occupying Power that it withdraw from our land and negotiate with us in good faith the end of occupation so that we can celebrate the two-State solution after the State of Palestine acquires its independence.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of Israel has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I would never stand in opposition to constructive dialogue, for which reason I shall give him the floor. Following his additional statement — he does have the right — I think we will be able to conclude the meeting. Again, as President of the Council and in my national capacity, we can never, in any way, cut off constructive statements. That is what I ask of his statement.

I give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Nitzan (Israel): I will be very brief. We are familiar with the Palestinian delegation’s selective descriptions of the reality on the ground. They are probably the result of selective hearing. We said it earlier today, we say it in each and every meeting, we say it every day: this is our dream, we want peace.

Unilateral steps by the Palestinian delegation here or by the Palestinian Authority, which are designed to incite violence in Jerusalem, will not give us peace; it will actually distance us from peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine, who wishes to make a further statement.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I will be very short. We are interested in peace. We also consider the building of settlements and declaring Jerusalem the capital of the State of Israel, and not an occupied territory, to be unilateral illegal actions condemned by everyone here, who also demand that Israel stop illegal settlement activities — because they are illegal — and to implement Council resolutions that state that the unilateral, illegal action of annexing Jerusalem is not acceptable.

For us, we are exercising our legal right to join treaties and conventions. We are doing it peacefully. We are doing it diplomatically. We are doing it legally. Even when we join the International Criminal Court (ICC) to go after those who committed crimes against our people, we are taking an action that it is our right to take. It is legal. It is civilized.

Why is Israel afraid of us exercising our right? Why does Israel call it “unilateral”, when it is the

one that is acting unilaterally and illegally? In Arabic literature we have a very famous saying: people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. We do not need those who are buried to their ears in illegal behaviour — settlements, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, the unilateral action with regard to Jerusalem — to lecture us that they do not want us to so-called “unilaterally” act on something on which it is our legal right to act.

We came to the General Assembly, which recognized the State of Palestine. It changed our status. It opened doors for us to defend ourselves peacefully, legally, diplomatically. Why is it a unilateral action when we exercise our right — our legal, peaceful, civilized, diplomatic right — to defend ourselves in a better way? If the Israeli leaders think they are not doing anything wrong, why are they afraid of our going to the ICC in order to go after those who are committing illegal acts against us?

I apologize for taking the floor for the third time.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.