



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

9139th meeting

Wednesday, 28 September 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. De Rivière/Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault	(France)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil	Mrs. Espeschit Maia
	China	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Gabon	Mrs. Koumba Pambo
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	India	Mrs. Kamboj
	Ireland	Mr. Mythen
	Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Alhefeiti
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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22-60388 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, to participate in this meeting.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Wennesland.

Mr. Wennesland: Today's briefing is devoted to the twenty-third report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). The reporting period is from 17 June to 20 September.

Paragraph 2 of resolution 2334 (2016) calls on Israel to,

“immediately and completely cease all settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and ... fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard”.

Settlement activity nevertheless continued during the reporting period. Between 19 and 21 July, Israeli settlers erected tents across the occupied West Bank in a widely publicized campaign by a settlement organization to establish new outposts. Israeli authorities subsequently removed the encampments because they were illegal under Israeli law.

On 25 July, Israeli authorities advanced plans for the construction of 1,215 housing units at the Lower Aqueduct site, adjacent to Kibbutz Ramat Rachel and the Palestinian neighbourhood of Umm Tuba. Some units are intended for construction across the Green Line in occupied East Jerusalem.

On 27 July, Israel's Supreme Court reversed its ruling ordering the evacuation of settlers from the illegal outpost of Mitzpe Kramim, near Ramallah. The Court accepted the Government's argument that the Palestinian land had been allocated to the settlers in good faith and that the principle of so-called market regulation should be applied.

On 28 July, Israeli settlers, accompanied by Israeli security forces, moved into an empty Palestinian-owned house in the H-2 Area of Hebron. That is the second takeover of a Palestinian home in the H-2 Area this year.

On 5 September, Israeli authorities advanced plans for 700 units in the planned East Jerusalem settlement of Givat Hashaked, adjacent to the Palestinian neighbourhoods of Beit Safafa and Sharafat.

Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures continued across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israeli authorities, citing the lack of Israeli-issued building permits — which are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain — demolished, seized or forced people to demolish 316 structures. Those actions displaced 237 people, including 116 children; 41 of those structures were donor-funded.

On 21 July, Israel's Supreme Court partially accepted the appeal of a Palestinian family under threat of eviction in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan, freezing the eviction order until proceedings are completed in a lower court.

On 25 July and 8 August, Israeli security forces demolished four homes belonging to family members of Palestinians accused of or indicted for killing Israelis in April and May, displacing 31 people, including 13 children.

Israeli pressure on two Palestinian communities to leave their homes in Area C continued to mount. On 12 July, 16 of the 35 households comprising the herding community of Ras Al-Tin left the Area after facing settler-related violence, demolitions and confiscations.

In Masafer Yatta, movement restrictions continued, including for humanitarian access, and the arrests of Palestinian residents also continued. On 8 September, Israel's Supreme Court upheld the military commander's decision to reject the planning permission requested by the Masafer Yatta community. The Court ordered a stay on demolition orders until 29 September.

On 12 July, Israeli authorities announced that they would advance six plans for Palestinian construction in Area C.

Paragraph 6 of resolution 2334 (2016) calls for,

“immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction”.

Unfortunately, daily violence continued.

Overall in the West Bank, 29 Palestinians, including six children, were killed and 1,813 Palestinians, including 27 women and 194 children, were injured by Israeli security forces during security operations, demonstrations, clashes, stone-throwing incidents, attacks and alleged attacks against Israelis, and other incidents. Of those injuries, 1,206 were caused by tear gas inhalation and 202 by live ammunition. In addition, Israeli settlers or other civilians perpetrated some 128 attacks against Palestinians, resulting in one death and 51 injuries and/or instances of damage to Palestinian property.

In Gaza, during the August escalation between Israel and Palestinian armed groups, 49 Palestinians were killed, of whom at least 26 were civilians, including four women and 17 children. According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, 360 Palestinians were injured, including 151 children and 58 women. Israeli officials reported that two Israelis were moderately injured and at least 62 lightly injured, including nine children. Ten houses in Gaza were completely destroyed, and 48 were severely damaged and rendered uninhabitable. According to the Gaza authorities, more than 600 housing units were damaged, displacing 84 families.

One Israeli civilian and one member of the Israeli security forces were killed, while 50 Israelis and eight Israeli security forces personnel were injured by Palestinians in clashes, rock-throwing and Molotov cocktail-throwing attacks, and other incidents. The majority of those were stone-throwing attacks on Israelis, including settlers, which resulted in injuries and damage to Israeli-owned property.

Israeli security forces carried out 906 search-and-arrest operations in the West Bank, resulting in the arrest of 1,528 Palestinians. On 19 June, Israeli security forces shot and killed an unarmed 53-year-old Palestinian while he was attempting to enter Israel, reportedly for work, through a breach in the separation barrier near Qalqilya. On 24 June, a 16-year-old Palestinian was killed by Israeli security forces while throwing stones in Silwad village near Ramallah.

In the village of Jaba'a, near Jenin, on 2 July, Israeli security forces shot and killed a 17-year-old Palestinian

after he reportedly threw Molotov cocktails, and in a separate incident, on 6 July, killed another Palestinian as he was running away during a search operation. On 5 July, an Israeli man was seriously injured after being stabbed in Bnei Brak in central Israel. Israeli security forces arrested a Palestinian man under suspicion of carrying out the attack. On 19 July, an Israeli was stabbed and injured by a Palestinian on a bus in Jerusalem. The assailant was subsequently shot and injured by an Israeli civilian. On 26 July, Israeli security forces shot an unarmed 59-year-old Palestinian man with a mental disability at Huwwara checkpoint, south of Nablus. The man subsequently died of his injuries.

On 9 August, four Palestinians, including a senior militant commander and a 16-year-old, were killed by Israeli security forces in Nablus, while 76 people were injured with live ammunition during a search operation and subsequent clashes. The same day, a 16-year-old was killed by Israeli security forces in Hebron while throwing stones. On 14 August, a Palestinian opened fire at a group of Jewish worshippers in Jerusalem's Old City. Eight civilians, including a pregnant woman, were injured, two seriously. The assailant was arrested. On 15 August, Israeli security forces shot and killed a Palestinian during a search operation and subsequent clashes in Kufr Aqab, north of Jerusalem. Israeli security forces said that the man was attempting to stab officers, but an eyewitness denied that allegation. On 17 August near Joseph's Tomb, in Nablus, Israeli security forces shot and killed a Palestinian and injured three others with live ammunition in clashes after Palestinians threw stones and reportedly fired on buses transporting Jewish worshippers to the site, in accordance with established procedures. On 30 August, Palestinians opened fire at a car with five Jewish worshippers inside, injuring two, as it entered Area A without prior coordination, which is illegal under Israeli law. On 19 August, an unarmed 58-year-old Palestinian man — an apparent bystander in an armed exchange — was shot and killed in Tubas during an Israeli security forces search operation.

On 6 September, Israeli security forces shot and killed a Palestinian man live-broadcasting a punitive demolition and related clashes in Jenin. Sixteen other Palestinians were injured with live ammunition during the clashes. One of them subsequently died. On 8 September, a 16-year-old Palestinian attacked and likely injured a member of Israeli security forces with a hammer before being shot and killed by Israeli security forces. On 13 September, an Israeli security forces

officer and two armed Palestinian men were killed in an exchange of fire near Jalama crossing in Jenin. One of the Palestinians killed was an intelligence officer in the Palestinian security forces. On 15 September, Israeli security forces shot and killed a 17-year-old Palestinian attempting to launch a Molotov cocktail during clashes in Kafr Dan, near Jenin.

The President (*spoke in French*): Mr. Wennesland, would it be possible for you to give us your remaining account of these incidents in written form and to move on to the substance of your briefing?

Mr. Wennesland: I can definitely do that, but it is outside the normal procedures for an oral presentation. On the basis of your request, Mr. President, I will revert to the Secretary-General's observations, but I would like that to be noted in the record.

In conclusion, I would like to share the Secretary-General's observations concerning the implementation of the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016) during the reporting period.

"I remain deeply troubled by continued Israeli settlement expansions in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and attempts by some Israelis to further expand the settlement footprint through the establishment of outposts, which are also illegal under Israeli law. I am also concerned about the possibility that the Supreme Court's Mitzpe Kramim decision could set a precedent for the legalization of additional outposts under Israeli law. I reiterate that Israeli settlements have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. I call on the Government of Israel to cease all settlement activity immediately.

"Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned property remain a serious concern. I am particularly concerned about the ongoing situation in Masafer Yatta, where more than 1,000 Palestinians, including 569 children, are at imminent risk of eviction. I urge Israeli authorities to immediately cease the demolition of Palestinian-owned property and the forcible displacement and eviction of Palestinians, in line with Israel's obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, and to approve plans that would enable Palestinians to build legally and address their development needs.

"I am deeply concerned about the tragic civilian deaths and injuries, including of children, caused by the latest escalation in Gaza. Israel must abide by its obligations under international humanitarian law, including the proportional use of force, and take all feasible precautionary measures to spare civilians and civilian objects during military operations. Furthermore, I condemn the indiscriminate launching of rockets by Palestinian armed groups from highly populated neighbourhoods in Gaza into civilian population centres in Israel, which also resulted in casualties and violates international humanitarian law, putting the lives of civilians at risk.

"I am gravely concerned about the deteriorating security situation in the occupied West Bank, including the increase in attacks and armed exchanges between Israelis and Palestinians. The high number of Palestinians killed and injured by Israeli security forces in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, remains deeply troubling, particularly in the light of reports that some did not appear to pose a threat. The possible excessive use of force by the Israeli security forces continues to raise serious concerns, particularly their use of live ammunition. Security forces must use lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable in order to protect life and must promptly and thoroughly investigate all instances of death or injury resulting from its use and hold those responsible to account.

"I am particularly appalled that children continue to be killed and injured in large numbers. Children must never be the target of violence or put in harm's way.

"I remain deeply concerned about the high levels of settler-related violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, which often occurs in the presence of Israeli security forces. I urge Israel to abide by its obligations under international law to protect the Palestinian population from all acts or threats of violence, to ensure that all attacks are investigated promptly and transparently and to hold perpetrators to account.

"I condemn all acts of terrorism against civilians, including the 14 August attacks targeting Jewish worshippers near Jerusalem's Old City. The glorification of such acts is unacceptable and

further undermines the possibility of a peaceful future for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

“I am deeply troubled by the Israeli security forces’ search and closure of the offices of seven Palestinian non-governmental organizations. I remain concerned about the shrinking space for civil society in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territory.

“I reiterate my call for the parties to respect and uphold the status quo, taking into account the special and historic role of Jordan as custodian of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

“The absence of intra-Palestinian unity continues to undermine Palestinian national aspirations and prevent a common Palestinian approach towards resolving the conflict and addressing the needs of the population. I call on all Palestinian factions to redouble efforts to reunite Gaza and the occupied West Bank under a single, democratic, national Government. “Gaza is, and must remain, an integral part of a future Palestinian State, as part of a two-State solution. It is also crucial that Palestinians hold elections — not only as a key step towards Palestinian unity, but also as a means to renew the legitimacy of national institutions.

“I welcome United States and regional support pledged to East Jerusalem hospitals, which are vital Palestinian institutions. Israel’s commitment to improving movement and access for Palestinians at the Allenby Bridge and the transition to 4G technology to support economic growth are also important and welcomed. I call on the Member States to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) with sustainable funding sources to protect the delivery of vital services to millions of Palestine refugees. That is crucial to upholding their rights and supporting the stabilizing role of the Agency in the region.

“In Gaza, the humanitarian and economic situation remains dire, although some important improvements have taken place in access and movement, particularly the increase in the number of permits for Palestinians from Gaza to work in Israel. The limited availability of key materials and equipment, coupled with cumbersome protocols and restrictions, continues to impede private sector development, job creation and economic growth. I

encourage the parties to solidify the ceasefire and enable further economic development. Ultimately, the debilitating Israeli closures should be lifted, in line with resolution 1860 (2009).

“The current negative trajectory puts at great risk the socioeconomic and institution-building that has prepared the Palestinian Authority for statehood. There must be a bridge between those immediate challenges and the longer-term objective of achieving the vision of two States — Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestinian State — living side by side in peace and security, within secure and recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the shared capital of both States.

“I welcome the four strategic elements put forward in the report of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, on 22 September, for a comprehensive package of incremental, durable and meaningful steps that the parties and their partners should take to address the current situation, strengthen the Palestinian Authority and advance the goal of sustainable peace: first, address the continuing drivers of conflict and instability; secondly, strengthen Palestinian institutions and address the challenge of Palestinian governance; thirdly, improve access, movement and trade, thereby creating space for the Palestinian economy to grow; and fourthly, better align the framework of economic and administrative relationships with the economic transformations of the past decades.”

Before concluding, I wish to note a few important developments during the opening of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, just after the closure of the reporting period.

First, I commend Prime Minister Yair Lapid’s reaffirmation of support for the two-State solution in his statement delivered on 22 September (see A/77/PV.8). I also wish to acknowledge the continued commitment of President Mahmoud Abbas to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, as well as his urgent appeal for the re-establishment of a political horizon, in his statement delivered on 23 September (see A/77/PV.10).

A number of important meetings were held on the margins of the Assembly’s general debate, including a meeting on the Arab Peace Initiative co-hosted by the

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the European Union; a ministerial meeting of the Munich format; a Jordanian and Swedish co-hosted event in support of UNRWA; and a meeting of the Norwegian-chaired Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, which focused on preserving the viability of the two-State solution and moving the State-building process forward.

Returning to my conclusion, we continue to see little progress in the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) since its adoption in December 2016. The absence of a meaningful peace process to end the Israeli occupation and resolve the conflict fuels a dangerous deterioration across the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in the West Bank, driving the perception that the conflict is unresolvable.

Israelis and Palestinians must determine how they envision the future. Negotiations can no longer be put off indefinitely. The current course is leading us towards a perpetual state of violence and conflict. Meaningful initiatives are needed to turn the current trajectory around, and they are needed quickly. Ending the occupation and realizing the two-State solution must drive those collective efforts. I remain actively engaged in advancing those objectives with Israeli and Palestinian leaders and with key international and regional partners.

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

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

Ms. Juul (Norway): I too would like to thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing.

Last week, Norway chaired the annual ministerial meeting of the donor group for Palestine — the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee — here in New York. The Committee urged Israelis, Palestinians and international partners to take steps to restore a political horizon for peace as a matter of urgency. The need to improve cooperation and the situation on the ground and the need to strengthen Palestinian institutions were emphasized. While some recent progress has been made on trade issues, work permits and Palestinian reform plans, it is clear that the situation is challenging, and more concrete progress is needed.

Norway welcomes Prime Minister Lapid's support for the two-State solution expressed in his statement to the General Assembly last week (see A/77/PV.8).

We also welcome the fact that, from the same rostrum, President Abbas recognized that statement as a positive step and reiterated the same commitment from Palestine (see A/77/PV.10). We are convinced that a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders is the best way to ensure the rights and safety of both Palestinians and Israelis.

Since we previously met (see S/PV.9107), there has been little progress in the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). As the Special Coordinator noted, settlement-building, demolitions and evictions have continued apace. Let me underline that the illegal settlement activity not only erodes trust but also fuels and deepens tensions and undermines the two-State solution.

We are particularly concerned about plans to legalize dozens of farm outposts in the West Bank. Settlements and outposts remain violations of international humanitarian law. They destroy the fabric of communities and break apart territorial continuity for a Palestinian State. We condemn any and all settler violence against and harassment of Palestinians.

Norway would also like to reiterate its deep concern about the situation in Masafer Yatta. Movement restrictions impede children's access to education. Teachers are denied access to their classrooms, and children must walk long distances to reach school safely. That is unacceptable. We encourage the Israeli authorities to remove restrictions and revoke all eviction and demolition orders, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

We are also troubled by the deteriorating security situation in the West Bank and the clear risk that it could spiral out of control. Earlier today in Jenin, several people were killed and many more were injured. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, more than 80 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli security forces in the West Bank to date this year. While we recognize Israel's legitimate security concerns, we call for restraint and proportionality. Force must be used only when necessary and in a manner that minimizes harm against civilians, including children, and preserves life.

I would also like to draw attention to the five prisoners executed in Gaza, on 4 September. The use of the death penalty is cruel and fails to provide deterrence. Let me underline that this practice is simply unacceptable and must be stopped immediately.

There is also a need to end the internal Palestinian divisions and strengthen the Palestinian Authority, including by ensuring democratic renewal and stronger institutions.

Finally, let me reaffirm Norway's strong commitment to a two-State solution. We will continue to work for that goal.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing.

During the general debate of the General Assembly last week, Heads of State and Government frequently brought up the Palestinian issue, showing that the plight of the Palestinian people has not been forgotten. A speedy, comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question continues to be a shared aspiration of the international community. The Security Council bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and is duty bound on the question of Palestine. It must take more robust action to support the Palestinian people in restoring and exercising their inalienable rights and achieving lasting peace in the Middle East.

First, we must advance a two-State solution, and it is the international consensus that a long-term solution to the Palestinian-Israeli issue must be based on the concept of two States living side by side. That is the bottom line in terms of fairness and justice and must be firmly adhered to. We noted that in his address to the General Assembly at its general debate, Prime Minister Lapid stated that

“[a]n agreement with the Palestinians, based on two States for two peoples, is the right thing for Israel's security, for Israel's economy and for the future of our children”, and that “a large majority of Israelis support the vision of this two-State solution” (see A/77/PV.8).

We also noted that President Abbas recognized that statement as positive and emphasized that

“[t]he real test of the seriousness and credibility of this position is for the Israeli Government to sit at the negotiating table immediately, to implement the two-State solution on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative and to stop all unilateral measures that undermine the two-State solution” (see A/77/PV.10).

China hopes that the parties concerned can translate their political will into constructive policies and actions and make concrete efforts to realize a two-State solution on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and other international consensus and norms.

Secondly, common security must be promoted. In the past two years the war in Gaza has claimed hundreds of Palestinian lives, violence in the West Bank has been steadily increasing and the peace and tranquillity at the religious holy sites in Jerusalem have been repeatedly broken. Israel and Palestine are neighbours that cannot relocate, and their security is independent and indivisible. If the security of one side is based on the insecurity of the other, the cycle of violence will continue and security will never be achieved. The international community should attach equal importance to the security concerns of both sides and encourage them to find their greatest common denominator, through dialogue and cooperation, in order to achieve common security. At the same time, the occupying Power should earnestly fulfil its obligation under international law to ensure the safety of the people in the occupied territories.

Thirdly, the rule of law at the international level must be upheld. Settlement activities violate international law and the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016). They encroach on Palestinian land, expropriate Palestinian resources and squeeze the living space of the Palestinian people. I have noted that the Special Coordinator mentioned that there has been little progress in implementing the resolution. We urge Israel to immediately cease all settlement activities. We support resolving the issue of the occupied territories in the West Bank in accordance with United Nations resolutions and delimiting the final Palestinian-Israeli borders through peaceful negotiations.

Fourthly, fairness and justice must be upheld. What is lacking in resolving the Palestinian issue is not a grand plan but a willingness to uphold justice. Whether the Security Council is fit for purpose depends not on grand pronouncements but on actual deeds. In his address at the general debate of the General Assembly, President Abbas once again asked the Council to take measures to implement its resolutions on the question of Palestine. The Council should perform its duties objectively and impartially, in accordance with international consensus, and promote a resumption of Palestinian-Israeli talks without delay, instead of

waiting for the so-called conditions for dialogue to mature. On issues concerning the future and the fate of the Palestinian people, no one has a right to a veto.

China supports the just cause of the Palestinian people in restoring their legitimate national rights and establishing an independent Palestinian State with full sovereignty, on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We are ready to work with all parties to encourage the Council to play its role in breaking the current stalemate and transforming the consensus on a two-State solution into action and its vision into reality, so as to realize peaceful coexistence between Palestine and Israel, harmony between the Arab and Jewish peoples and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Mythen (Ireland): I thank Mr. Wennesland for his sobering report. Ireland shares his concerns about the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) on settlements and other issues.

First of all, we are alarmed by the spike in violence today in Jenin following incursions by the Israeli security forces, with further loss of life and injuries to Palestinians. Along with the clashes in Nablus last week, those events clearly demonstrate that the fragile situation on the ground in the West Bank is continuing to deteriorate. Ireland is appalled at the level of casualties in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. So far this year, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Israeli forces have killed more than 80 Palestinians and injured more than 7,400 in the West Bank. We are particularly concerned about the level of civilian casualties, since the protection of civilians is of paramount importance and is required under international law. Israel has a right to defend itself. However, in doing so, it must respect its obligations under international law. Long-term security for both Palestinians and Israelis cannot be achieved through the use of excessive force or by acts of violence by anyone. Such actions by the Israeli military in the occupied Palestinian territory undermine the capacity and effectiveness of the Palestinian Authority, which needs to be empowered and supported.

We continue to see Israel's relentless expansion of new settlements and outposts, in flagrant violation of resolution 2334 (2016) and international law. Ireland again joins other members of the Security Council and the wider international community in calling on Israel to cease all settlement activities. This year has

witnessed a continued increase compared with previous years in plans for settlement construction in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Current Israeli plans for settlement establishment and expansion in the Nablus and Ramallah governorates, and on the outskirts of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, pose the greatest threat to the territorial contiguity of a future Palestinian State. We are particularly concerned about plans in Area E-1 and the Givat Hamatos, Atarot, Lower Aqueduct, Givat Hashaked and Har Gilo West areas, which would effectively encircle East Jerusalem, disconnecting it from the major urban areas in the rest of the West Bank.

Ireland is gravely concerned about the alarming increase in settler violence, with OCHA reporting a 34 per cent increase this year compared with last year in the monthly average of incidents causing injury or property damage and an 83 per cent increase compared with 2020. We call on Israel not to proceed with demolitions in the village of Khallet Athaba in Masafer Yatta. Forced evictions resulting from demolitions give rise to violations of human rights. The forcible transfer of the civilian population of an occupied territory is also prohibited under international humanitarian law.

I recently had the opportunity to meet with Lina Abu Akleh, the niece of the renowned Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. Ireland supports Lina's call for accountability and an independent investigation into the death of her aunt. Shireen deserves nothing less.

Last week's meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians recalled the colossal economic and social challenges facing the Palestinian people. The ongoing restrictions on movement and access are compounding those challenges. Economic and social assistance is urgently required.

I am pleased that Ireland was able to increase its support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) by €2 million, bringing its total support to €8 million this year. We urge all Member States, including those of the region, to step up their support for UNRWA.

Ireland is deeply concerned by the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, exacerbated by the ongoing Israeli blockade, in contravention of resolution 1860 (2009). While incremental increases in the quota of work permits granted to Gazans by Israel is welcome, the total number of permits is less than 1 per cent of the

population and has decreased significantly over the past years

The human rights situation in Gaza is also of great concern. We condemn in the strongest terms the execution by Hamas of five prisoners on 4 September. We call on Hamas to immediately end the practice of executions and to return captured Israelis, including human remains, to their loved ones.

Actions on the ground, particularly Israeli settlement expansion, in violation of resolution 2334 (2016), continue to undermine a political horizon. The Security Council must step up to discharge its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security and to reaffirm the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. We must move beyond talking about the need for a two-State solution and take real steps towards a just, inclusive and lasting peace. Progress is possible, but it requires political will.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Tor Wennesland for his briefing on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016).

The escalation in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict zone in August once again showed that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories will remain volatile until the parties reach mutually acceptable compromises on all final-status issues, based on the universally recognized international legal framework for a Middle East settlement.

From 5 to 7 August, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) conducted another military operation in the Gaza Strip. As a result of the bombing of the enclave, according to United Nations reports, hundreds of houses and facilities were destroyed or seriously damaged, killing at least 26 civilians, including 17 children.

We note the alarming regularity of such eruptions of violence in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. We attribute those renewed tensions primarily to the stagnation of the peace process, while the Israelis continue their unilateral actions to create facts on the ground and a *carte blanche* to use force against the Palestinians.

Mass arbitrary detentions of Palestinians occur on a daily basis, with more than 700 being held in Israeli prisons without charge. Provocative violations of the status of Jerusalem's holy sites by Israeli ultra-Orthodox groups and the violent suppression of Palestinian

protests continue, with more than 130 people killed in such clashes since the beginning of the year. We are concerned about reports of possible provocations at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the approaching autumn, which marks three key Jewish holidays, as well as a new Israeli election campaign cycle. The legal space is also rapidly shrinking. Press freedom has been restricted, even to the point of killing reporters, and the activities of human rights organizations are severely limited.

In the context of the Special Coordinator's briefing on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), we reaffirm the principled position reflected in that document, according to which the establishment of Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, is a violation of international law and a major obstacle to achieving a settlement based on the two-State solution.

Of particular concern is Israel's creation of irreversible facts on the ground — the increase in illegal settlement construction, while continuing the practice of the forcible eviction of Palestinians, the destruction of homes and the confiscation of property. In August alone, more than 100 people lost their homes, including 50 children.

At the same time, Israel's arbitrary illegal actions go beyond the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, affecting neighbouring Arab countries through numerous incidents of the violation of their sovereignty. I refer primarily to attacks launched against the territory of Syria and Lebanon. We oppose such methods of protecting national security, which provoke threats to other States and risk exacerbating the situation in the region as a whole.

We believe that the international community should play a constructive role, both in resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and in alleviating the severe humanitarian and socioeconomic problems in the occupied territories, especially in the Gaza Strip. We attach great importance to the ongoing effective work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which provides support to Palestinians, both in the occupied territories and in neighbouring Arab countries.

We believe that it is not possible to achieve the long-term stabilization of the situation without restoring the political horizon and reviving the peace process on a universally recognized international legal basis with a key element — the two-State solution, which we

consistently support. We are convinced that there is no alternative to direct negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis on all parameters of a final settlement.

We carefully listened to the addresses of the Palestinian and Israeli leaders during the general debate of the General Assembly at the start of the seventy-seventh session (see A/77/PV.10 and A/77/PV.8, respectively). We noted the reaffirmation of the readiness of both sides to seek a settlement based on the two-State solution. We support that approach on the understanding that a solution to the Palestinian question is possible only if all the parameters of the well-known international legal framework are met. We are ready to provide the necessary assistance to achieve those goals, including in joint formats in cooperation with regional actors.

In that regard, we believe that the actions of Washington are counterproductive. It has effectively blocked the activities of the Quartet of international mediators and seeks to replace meeting the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians to establish an independent State by forcing them to an economic peace.

Mrs. Koumba Pambo (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his informative briefing.

The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains an ongoing challenge for the Security Council and the international community as a whole. The recent general debate of the General Assembly again provided an opportunity for various delegations to express their concerns about the lack of progress on the Palestinian issue.

Instead of progress, we continue to see violence, with its toll of destruction and loss of life, as well as a deterioration of the humanitarian situation, particularly in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Gabon reaffirms its commitment to the two-State solution, living side by side on the basis of the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital.

We therefore call on the parties to resume negotiations in good faith, with a view to restoring trust and for the good of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, who legitimately aspire to live in peace. To that end, we believe the role of the countries of the region and of the Quartet to be crucial in assisting the resumption of peace talks.

We are encouraged by the address of the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Yair Lapid, at the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, in which he spoke in favour of an agreement with the Palestinians based on two States for two peoples, conditional on respect for the security of Israel (see A/77/PV.8). We also welcome the efforts of the Quartet and other partners, such as France, Germany, Egypt, Jordan and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, aimed at achieving the broadly supported two-State solution.

In conclusion, we reiterate our full support for the Special Coordinator's tireless efforts aimed at achieving peace in the Middle East. Diplomatic efforts must continue to be made to revive the peace process. This is the only way to stop the violence.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): I would like to begin by thanking Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his monthly briefing on the situation of the Middle East peace process.

Ghana takes note of the positive and deliberate attempts by Israel to improve ties with countries of the region, following upon the Abraham Accords. We also welcome the encouraging statement made by the Prime Minister of Israel during the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session (see A/77/PV.8), which was positively reciprocated by President Abbas. We believe that it takes bold leadership to invest in peace. We therefore encourage all efforts made in favour of good-neighbourliness and the sustenance of the two-State solution in the interest of peace in the Middle East, a region with strategic geopolitical and economic importance but engulfed in protracted conflict.

As we have stated in the past, we condemn all incidents of terrorism against Israel. We do not believe that violence can help resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and we urge all militant groups to channel their energies towards a robust political process that can deliver the much-needed peace.

Mindful of the security concerns of Israel, we continue to be equally concerned about the insecurity and dire humanitarian situation in parts of Palestine as well as the incidence of human right abuses, violations and detentions without charge or trial perpetrated against Palestinians, especially in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. We believe that the growing insecurity in the West Bank and Gaza does not augur well for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Rather,

it jeopardizes prospects for realizing the generally accepted two-State solution. We therefore urge the parties to de-escalate tensions and generate the required political momentum for direct negotiations.

I reiterate Ghana's request that all parties comply fully with international humanitarian law, the United Nations Charter and the many relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016). We urge Israel, to respect the inalienable rights of Palestinians and abide by its legal obligations and responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

In concluding, we reiterate our strong conviction that the path for lasting peace and stability in the Middle East can run only through the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. However, realizing the goals of the Middle East peace process requires that the Council and the wider international community be constructive by sustaining the engagement of the parties whose good-faith efforts are required to resolve this decades-long conflict.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): Last week, at the General Assembly, the Prime Minister of Israel highlighted in very clear terms the strong and unambiguous commitment of his Government in favour of the two-State solution (see A/77/PV.8). For the first time in more than a decade, an Israeli Prime Minister recommitted to a formula that the international community finds to be the most promising one to end the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, a statement welcomed by President Abbas as well.

A two-State outcome that protects Israel's security and provides sovereignty and dignity for Palestinians with a Palestinian State that is democratic and viable is the only way forward in securing peace with Israel as a democratic State while fulfilling Palestinians' legitimate aspirations. While we spend most of the time in this Chamber expressing worry about the trends of violence and tensions, which we always regret and condemn, this is the kind of message we expect from leaders, as it will inspire, I hope, both Israelis and Palestinians to engage in efforts to resolve the never-ending tragic conflict.

This land has always known violence in all forms and intensity. Violence has caused only victims, mostly civilians, from both sides. It has brought pain and suffering while reminding everyone that an endless

cycle of violence always ends up being a zero-sum game. This is why we highlight the crucial importance of upholding the ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian militants as critical to safeguarding the gains made through tireless efforts, because such important gains are fragile and easily reversible. Violence can never be conducive to fulfilling dreams; it is just a treacherous road of false promises that are never realized.

Every effort must now therefore be made to bring the parties closer together to meet, talk and seek solutions. This is how the Oslo Accords happened. This is how future accords may and should happen. The country is losing time — time that has been and will always be regretted.

We look forward to the resumption, at the next best opportunity, of dormant peace talks within the legal framework created by the United Nations in order to find a lasting and just solution to the conflict with a democratic, as I mentioned before, and secure Israel and a viable and democratic Palestinian State living at peace with each other, with Jerusalem as a shared capital. Any positive step or measure, even small steps, helps in the process. The growing number of work permits issued to Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to work in Israel contributes to improving the well-being of thousands of families living in poverty. They also help build trust among communities, becoming promoters of better understanding on a much greater scale.

We will never tire in reiterating our categorical rejection and condemnation of every terrorist attack against Israel or anywhere else. We abhor terrorism in all its forms and oppose and denounce it vigorously and unreservedly. We support Israel's right to defend itself, acting proportionately and based on law.

The value of life is the same for Palestinians and Israelis. As my own country was recently victim of an unprovoked massive and large-scale cyberattack that aimed to destroy critical Government infrastructure, sponsored and carried out by groups affiliated with Iran, we better understand the security concerns of other countries, Israel in particular, which is faced with an ongoing threat from a State that calls openly and continuously for its destruction and sponsors proxies in its backyard with the sole aim of harming, killing and destroying.

We have said it many times and deem it important to reiterate: building peace in post-conflict situations requires not only efforts but also genuine goodwill and

especially trust — a lot of trust. This is why, if truly committed, parties should refrain from actions that go against efforts to promote the peace process. In this respect, we will continue to highlight our position that settlements and their expansion go against international law and constitute an obstacle to the two-State solution, the cornerstone of the peace process. They are wrong and must be stopped.

We also urge all sides to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric that escalates tensions and endangers the peace process. We see no other way to move ahead than through peace talks. The negotiation table is the only place where a viable and just solution lies and can and should be found.

Mr. Kiboino (Kenya): I also thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for presenting the Secretary-General's periodic report.

My delegation takes note of the discussions and outcomes of the high-level meetings that took place on the sidelines of the general debate at the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session, including the 21 September Munich format meeting, the 22 September meeting of the Ministerial Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement on Palestine, the 22 September meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, and the 23 September Ministerial meeting hosted by Jordan and Sweden on sustainability of funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. All of that attests to the continued engagement, commitment and focus on the Israel-Palestine issue, and rightfully and urgently so. They also reflect efforts to fill the gap of an elusive genuine Israel-Palestine political peace process underpinned by direct dialogue and a pacific settlement as provided for in the United Nations Charter. Unfortunately, the lack of meaningful progress in the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) contributes to widening this gap

The objectives of resolution 2334 (2016) are comprehensive. They speak to the urgency of stabilizing the situation and reversing the negative trends on the ground, which are undermining the prospects of a two-State solution along the 1967 lines, and the creation of conditions for successful final-status negotiations.

As my delegation stated during the most recent quarterly Council meeting on this agenda item (see S/PV.9077), the uniqueness of resolution 2334 (2016) lies in the fact that it is propositional, not prescriptive. Indeed, beyond rhetoric, its implementation requires

the political will of both the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to operationalize the commitments if it is to succeed. That is the only way to create immediate — not future — political traction on the ground.

More important, while recognizing the importance of direct negotiations and irrespective of the existence or resumption of those negotiations, Kenya, in line with paragraph 11 of resolution 2334 (2016), continues to call for the presentation of clear objectives, timelines and feasible solutions to resolving pending issues in a way that the Council will be better positioned to “examine practical ways and means to secure the full implementation of its relevant resolutions” on this protracted conflict.

In the meantime, Kenya welcomes progress made through practical cooperation between the Israeli and Palestinian authorities in Gaza, in recognition of the positive impact of strengthened economic conditions and the right of Palestinians to humanitarian relief and economic empowerment and integration. Prime Minister Lapid's recognition of two States for two peoples during his 22 September General Assembly address (see A/77/PV.8) is also an important confidence-building measure.

This morning we listened to the report on the evolving situation on the ground, including the deteriorating security situation, the escalation of violence in the Holy Esplanade and around the Old City and the loss of life in the West Bank, including the clashes in Nablus, in the past couple of weeks. We urge leaders on all sides to help calm the situation to prevent further escalation and affirm the need for the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem to be upheld and respected.

Settlements, demolitions and evictions continue to increase in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, in violation of international law.

Today we also heard about disturbing statistics from violent incidents and fatalities involving children and youth, as well as acts of violence against civilians that have tragically claimed both Israeli and Palestinian lives.

This is a normalization that should not be acceptable. It is a normalization that continues to distance us from the important vision embodied by resolution 2334 (2016), of

“a region where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders” (resolution 2334 (2016), ninth preambular paragraph).

In line with resolution 2334 (2016), Kenya continues to condemn and call for accountability and strengthened efforts to combat terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas, Palestinian Jihad and other militant groups in Israel.

Kenya also reiterates the need for all the parties concerned, including communal, political and religious leaders, to practically and consistently support the daily dividends of constructive grass-roots efforts to mitigate against cycles of conflict, in the interest of the promotion of peace and security.

In conclusion, Kenya once again urges both parties to exert collective efforts and demonstrate political commitment to the desirable and obtainable objectives of resolution 2334 (2016).

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing and for presenting the Secretary-General’s most recent report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), which paints a bleak picture of the current situation on the ground.

The Middle East region urgently needs a fundamental positive transformation that will spare its people from the hardships of conflicts and crises. That would make it contribute effectively to supporting development and addressing global shared challenges, thereby in turn contributing to the maintenance of regional and international peace and security.

Achieving total regional stability is not possible without reaching a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, in accordance with the legitimate international terms of reference, so that an independent Palestinian State is established based on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace, security and mutual recognition. In that spirit, the United Arab Emirates will continue to support all peaceful initiatives aimed at realizing those aspirations. We also welcome the reference made by the Prime Minister of Israel, during his statement at the high-level week of the General Assembly, regarding his support for the vision of the two-State solution (see A/77/PV.8).

We look forward to seeing intensified efforts to create a suitable political environment that paves the way for the resumption of serious political negotiations between the two parties on final-status issues.

We also emphasize the need for the parties to act urgently, prioritize dialogue and engage in good faith in order to prevent the situation from spiralling out of control. Today’s meeting provides an opportunity for the Council to send a critical message about the need for self-restraint and the importance of refraining from unilateral measures that may inflame the precarious situation, especially in the Holy City of Jerusalem.

Recent reports refer to Israel’s announcement of a plan to build 560 new settlement units in the southern part of East Jerusalem, specifically on lands considered by UNESCO to be an archaeological area. We reiterate here our firm position that settlement activity undermines the two-State solution and constitutes a flagrant violation of both international law and the relevant resolutions of the Council. We also stress the need to stop attacks carried out by settlers against Palestinian communities. That includes attacks on agricultural crops, which many families depend on as a primary source of income. We take particular note of the approach of the olive harvest season — a period that witnessed an unprecedented upsurge in attacks last year.

As students return to school this month, we stress the right of Palestinian children to access education without obstacles or intimidation. In conflict settings, educational institutions are particularly important for empowering generations to effectively contribute to building and advancing their communities. The maintenance of educational facilities is equally important on occupied Palestinian territory. According to reports by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as of August there were 56 pending demolition orders for schools in the West Bank and East Jerusalem that provide educational services to more than 6,000 children.

We also stress the need to continue responding to the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people, and we welcome last week’s meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, chaired by Norway, in that regard.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates reaffirms its firm commitment to support the brotherly Palestinian people. We will continue to provide education and

health assistance, and we hope that future Palestinian generations will enjoy long-awaited security and peace.

Mrs. Espeschit Maia (Brazil): As we just heard from the detailed briefing presented by the Special Coordinator, tensions keep escalating on the ground, especially in the West Bank. The agreed ceasefire is at continuous risk, and the situation can easily deteriorate if calm is not restored.

Last week, the General Assembly formally opened for the seventy-seventh time. The question we are addressing here today has been on the agenda of the United Nations since 1947, year of the second session of the General Assembly, when the two-State solution was first put to paper. We therefore wonder — what efforts are we making today, as representatives on the Security Council, to re-establish the path to a much-awaited solution to this long-lasting conflict?

Seventy-six years have passed, and Brazil remains convinced that a two-State solution, within the framework of international law and the resolutions of the Council, is still the only way to meet the aspirations of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples and to ensure security for all. We welcome the words expressed last week by the Israeli leadership to the General Assembly (see A/77/PV.8), and we hope that will encourage a resumption of negotiations on the establishment of two States for two peoples. In that regard, we agree with the Special Coordinator that unless fundamental issues are addressed, the cycle of acute crises followed by short-term fixes will persist. Concerted efforts are needed to restore a political horizon and resume meaningful negotiations.

Brazil urges the parties, first of all, to maintain their ceasefire and exercise maximum restraint. Unilateral actions, including extremist rhetoric, only add fuel to the fire. Confidence between the parties must be restored for negotiations to flourish. All the parties must comply with international humanitarian law. Investigations should be conducted to clarify all the alleged violations and hold those responsible accountable. The safety and security of religious sites, an essential component of freedom of religion or belief, should also be preserved — and that means preserving the status quo of holy sites.

The Special Coordinator recently presented a report on measures that could contribute to strengthening the Palestinian economy and addressing the challenge of Palestinian governance. We should not underestimate

the roles that poverty, food insecurity and hopelessness play in preparing the ground for extremist forces to flourish. Some promising measures have been taken over the past year, particularly an easing of restrictions on the movement of people and goods into and out of the Gaza Strip. Economic growth may also contribute to intra-Palestinian reconciliation, which is another step needed to promote stabilization and a resumption of genuine dialogue. We encourage continued cooperation between the Palestinian Authority and Israeli officials. Collaboration on all matters, including the security sector, can happen only in the presence of strengthened Palestinian institutions and a viable Palestinian economy, which would in turn help reinvigorate the efforts to realize a two-State solution.

The Secretary-General stated during his opening speech to the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session (see A/77/PV.4) last week that the funding gap for the global humanitarian appeal is the largest ever recorded. That does not come as a surprise. We know that global price increases for key commodities have strained the resources of humanitarian agencies. However, Palestinian refugees must not be forgotten amid the many ongoing humanitarian crises. For as long as it has existed, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has played an important role in providing relief and assistance to millions in many countries. In that regard, Brazil echoes the calls for renewed efforts to restore UNRWA's capabilities, since its chronic underfunding continues to risk leaving people unassisted.

In conclusion, Brazil would like to once more affirm its support for the work of the Special Coordinator. We thank Mr. Wennesland for being open and frank with the Security Council and for his engagement with all the parties. We also commend the efforts of the countries, especially those in the region, that have been working ceaselessly to bring some calm and de-escalate the situation on the ground.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his helpful but sobering briefing.

Let me start by welcoming both Prime Minister Lapid and President Abbas's support for a two-State solution during their speeches to the General Assembly last week (see A/77/PV.8 and A/77/PV.10, respectively). The United Kingdom firmly believes

that a two-State solution, based on the 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as a shared capital, and a just solution for refugees, is the best way to deliver long-term peace. However, the challenges facing a two-State solution remain significant. We share deep concerns about the deteriorating security situation in the West Bank. We urge all the parties to reduce tensions and refrain from taking destabilizing unilateral actions.

We urge Israel not to proceed with demolitions at Masafer Yatta, which would cause unnecessary suffering and are against international law in all but the most exceptional circumstances. We unequivocally condemn the execution of five Gazans by Hamas this month. The United Kingdom opposes the death penalty in all circumstances. In the West Bank in 2022 alone, more Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces than the total recorded since the United Nations began documenting fatalities in 2005. The United Kingdom remains fully supportive of Israel's right to self-defence, but where there are accusations of excessive use of force, we advocate swift, transparent investigations. We are also appalled by the terrorist attacks on Israeli citizens, which cannot be justified.

We appreciate Norway's leadership in convening the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee this month. We welcome the progress on economic measures, including the electronic payment of Palestinian workers in Israel, and the work on ensuring the continued success of the e-VAT portal. However, bolder and faster action is needed to deliver real economic change in the occupied Palestinian territories. The United Kingdom is committed to supporting another meeting of the Joint Economic Committee as soon as possible.

We also thank Jordan and Sweden for hosting a ministerial meeting in support of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The United Kingdom is a long-standing financial and political supporter of UNRWA and welcomes its continued support to Palestinian refugees across the region. We encourage further dialogue among partners to ensure that UNRWA can deliver on its mandate.

In conclusion, peace will be achieved only through meaningful dialogue between the parties that tackles the drivers of instability and violence in the immediate term. We encourage further and deeper engagement towards that goal.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his very extensive briefing.

I would like to begin today by wishing our Jewish friends and colleagues *chag sameach* — a very happy new year. The briefing we just heard once again demonstrates the very limited progress that has been made in the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). Unfortunately, the reality is one of reversals and setbacks, three of which I will focus on today.

The first is settlement expansion, which undermines the viability of a two-State solution. The construction and expansion of settlements and all that entails, such as the transfer of settlers, the confiscation and demolition of properties and the displacement of the Palestinian population, as is happening in Masafer Yatta and Sheikh Jarrah, among other places, constitute violations of international law and a number of United Nations resolutions. Mexico therefore calls once again for all activities related to settlement expansion to cease.

The second is the constantly increasing violence. We are very concerned about the increasing frequency of violent incidents and deplore the attack that occurred a few days ago in Holon in which an Israeli woman died. As the Special Coordinator noted, the fragile situation in East Jerusalem is also alarming. The provocations that have taken place in the courtyards of the Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Al-Aqsa Mosque are unacceptable, given the fact that as we have seen on other occasions, they can have disastrous consequences. We call for restraint and for avoiding any measure that undermines the historical, demographic, religious or cultural character of the city.

We also note that the security situation in the West Bank continues to deteriorate. According to statistics from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, this year has been the deadliest since 2005. Frequent raids and operations by the Israel Defense Forces have resulted in the deaths of more than 80 Palestinian civilians, and nearly 7,500 injured to date in 2022. Israel's law-enforcement agencies must observe the principles of necessity, proportionality and distinction.

Thirdly, with regard to the political process, we acknowledge confidence-building measures such as permits for Palestinian workers and easing the movement of people and goods in Gaza. However, such efforts should also come with an inclusive and

far-reaching political process in which Israel and Palestine engage constructively, with the shared goal of addressing the structural causes of the conflict. In that regard, we welcome meetings such as that of the Munich Group, discussions on the Arab Peace Initiative and the ministerial meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, which was held during the high-level week of the General Assembly, the purpose of all of which is to encourage measures to rebuild trust and promote a two-State solution.

The support of the international community and particularly the commitment of both President Abbas and Prime Minister Lapid to a two-State solution deserve special recognition. That is the way forward. It is time to resume the political process under the auspices of the international community, and hopefully under more active leadership by the Security Council.

Mrs. Kamboj (India): I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016).

India is concerned about the unfortunate loss of civilian lives and reiterates its call for a complete cessation of violence and attacks on civilians, especially women and children. Likewise, we are concerned about the recent acts of terror and incidents of violence in Israel and the West Bank. We are also aware of the tensions around Jerusalem's holy sites owing to provocative action and rhetoric. The historical and legal status quo at Jerusalem's holy places must be respected and upheld. Actions that the Special Coordinator identified in his briefing are also continuing. They need to stop.

Palestinians continue to face severe economic and humanitarian hardships. The unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian civilian population must be prioritized. For its part, India continues to support the Palestinian people through its bilateral development partnership, which covers wide-ranging sectors such as health, education, women's empowerment, entrepreneurship and information technology. Palestinian students and officials of the Palestine Authority are provided with scholarships every year for education and training in premier educational institutions. The scholarships are also open to Palestinian refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and we are supporting grass-roots Palestinian institutions in their development

initiatives. Our support also extends to UNRWA for its humanitarian services. In recognition of the current financial situation of UNRWA, we have advanced the disbursement of our 2022 contribution of \$5 million to the Agency.

In conclusion, I want to say that the developments in Palestine only confirm the urgent need for political dialogue between Israel and Palestine through a resumption of direct negotiations aimed at establishing a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel. We believe there is no alternative to a negotiated two-State solution, and in that context, we welcome the statement by Israel's Prime Minister at the General Assembly last week (see A/77/PV.8) supporting such a solution. India stands ready to support all diplomatic efforts to strengthen the international community's collective commitment to resuming the negotiations and facilitating the peace process for achieving a two-State solution.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his informative briefing.

From day one, the Biden Administration has been unequivocal in its support for a two-State solution. That has not changed. As President Biden made clear to the General Assembly last week,

[A] negotiated two-State solution remains [...] the best way to ensure Israel's security and prosperity for the future and give the Palestinians the State to which they are entitled" (see A/77/PV.6).

We are not alone in pushing for such a peace. In fact, the Hall of the General Assembly was filled with calls for a two-State solution during the high-level week. Prime Minister Lapid made a courageous and impassioned speech (see A/77/PV.8) that articulated his vision of two States for two peoples. The significance of his appeal for peace between Israelis and Palestinians should not be underestimated. I also want to acknowledge President Abbas's statement (see A/77/PV.10) and his stated commitment to non-violence and affirmation of his support for a two-State solution. Now it is time to turn those words into action and to make real, sustained progress. It is incumbent on both the parties to work in good faith to arrive at two States for two peoples. There are no shortcuts to statehood.

In that regard, we strongly oppose unilateral actions that exacerbate tensions and move us further away from a two-State solution, which in turn moves us further away from peace. That includes terrorist attacks and incitement to violence against Israelis. It includes the plans to develop Har Gilo West, which would further fragment the West Bank, and the possible demolitions in Masafer Yatta. It also includes the violence inflicted on Palestinians in their neighbourhoods by Israeli settlers, who in some cases are escorted by Israeli security forces. I will also note that the United States is concerned about increasing tensions and violence in the West Bank among Palestinians, including the recent clashes in Jenin and Nablus. We are troubled by the overall trend of growing violence.

Instability in the West Bank is in the interests neither of Israel nor the Palestinian people. We call on both sides to work for peace without delay. The United States is doing its part to help. In July, while he was in the region, President Biden announced a number of measures to improve conditions for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza, including additional funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. We are now working to expand fourth-generation digital connectivity to Gaza and the West Bank and improve accessibility to the Allenby Bridge. We encourage the Government of Israel to move those projects forward quickly. But we cannot do it alone. We strongly urge countries that espouse support for the Palestinian people to translate that conviction into concrete improvements on the ground. We call on the Palestinian Authority to ensure respect for human rights and refrain from making payments to those who harm Israelis. A strong and legitimate Palestinian Authority is in the interest of the entire region.

Before I conclude, I would like to take note of the historic visit to Israel earlier this month made by the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates. The United States will continue working with Israel and its neighbours to expand relationships across the region, and we will strive to ensure that those new relationships also benefit the Palestinians.

Even if the current circumstances do not lend themselves to negotiation, we must not retreat into

cynicism. The international community can and must take steps to achieve conditions conducive to negotiating the two-State solution. That will be a real challenge, but it is a challenge that we must take on together. The United States will not hesitate to work with its partners to build a brighter and more peaceful future.

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

I thank Mr. Wennesland for his briefing and reiterate that he has France's full support.

Ending unilateral measures remains the priority. Colonization, which is at variance with international law, undermines any possibility for the resumption of the peace process and beyond that for a two-State solution. France therefore requests Israel to end the current process of expanding or establishing new settlements. The demolitions and evictions must stop. We also recall the importance of respecting the status quo of holy sites.

Inaction is no longer a solution. A political horizon must be re-established. France is determined to work to that end and will support all initiatives aimed at bringing the parties to the negotiating table. Direct negotiations must be resumed as a matter of urgency. Only a solution involving two States living side by side in peace and security, with Jerusalem as the capital of both, will bring just and lasting peace to Israelis and Palestinians and the entire region. We welcome the open-mindedness demonstrated by the Israeli Prime Minister at the recent general debate of the General Assembly (see A/77/PV.8). Indeed, we hope that his words will be translated into action.

France calls on the Security Council to take steps towards resuming peace negotiations as soon as possible.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.