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DOOR TO TWO-STATE SOLUTION 'MAY BE CLOSING BEFORE OUR EYES', WARNS UNITED NATIONS

POLITICAL CHIEF, URGING RENEWED EFFORTS TO BREAK ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN DEADLOCK

Briefing Security Council, Under-Secretary-General Says Neither Council Nor Parties Can Ignore Urgency of Situation; Political Path Forward Must Be Forged

Given the “warning signs of a fading two-State solution”, the international community must not let the Syrian crisis and other changes in the Middle East divert its attention from a dangerous stagnation of the Israeli-Palestinian situation, the top United Nations political official told the Security Council this morning, ahead of a debate that heard from over 45 speakers.

“Amid the seismic shifts being felt throughout the Middle East, we cannot afford to be complacent to the persisting deadlock between the Israelis and Palestinians,” Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, said in the Council’s monthly Middle East briefing.

Intentions to adhere to the goal of two independent States living side by side in peace, recently restated by leaders of both sides in speeches to the General Assembly, “are not translating into meaningful steps to renewed dialogue on the core issues to be resolved”, he said. Hoping that differences over an upgrade of Palestine’s status in the United Nations could be resolved constructively, and he added: “A negotiated two-State solution, to which both leaders are committed, must remain the highest priority. We fear, however, that the door for such a solution may be closing before our eyes”.

As the peace process languished, he said, the Palestinian Authority continued to experience a “severe financial crisis”. At the same time, violence and other sources of tension on the ground were making it all the more difficult to overcome the political stalemate, he said, noting, among others, continued settler violence, clashes at religious sites in Jerusalem and outside Nablus, attacks on Israelis, Palestinian protests at checkpoints and the barrier, and Israeli military operations in the West Bank. There were also serious outbreaks of violence in the Gaza Strip. He called for a reasonable resolution to the cases of hunger strikers in Israeli jails.

He also described some positive signs, including some development facilitation by Israel in the West Bank and Gaza, continued Palestinian security operations and progress in preparing for 20 October Palestinian elections with significant women’s participation. Elections would take place only in the West

Bank, however; there was no new progress in ending the Palestinian divide. More support by Israel to the development of socio-economic infrastructure in the West Bank was also needed, he said.

Turning to regional concerns, he said, predictions of the “appalling violence” of the Syrian conflict spiralling beyond its borders were coming true, effecting Lebanon and the Golan in addition to the escalation along the Syrian/Turkish border. He affirmed the continued priority of a political solution, stressing that all Governments should desist from supplying arms and military assistance to any party in the conflict. He welcomed Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati’s reaffirmation of “disassociation” from the Syrian conflict. He hoped that Hizbullah would fully respect that policy.

Following Mr. Feltman’s briefing, the Observer from Palestine and the representative of Israel made statements. “In sum, the political, humanitarian and security situation remains grave,” the Palestinian Observer said, calling for an end to paralysis in the international community with regard to ending Israel’s impunity and compelling its compliance with international law. “The instability and steep decline of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, portends an explosive situation that must be prevented at all costs,” he said, maintaining that the Palestinian leadership had continued to uphold all its obligations and hoped for swift action to confer “non-member observer State status” on Palestine during the current General Assembly session.

Israel’s representative, describing the current “high stakes” in the Middle East, as well as Israeli efforts to resume negotiations, said that “instead of sitting with Israel in direct negotiations, the Palestinian leadership is pursuing the path of unilateralism at the United Nations. This is no road to statehood. It is a march of folly.” Peace, he continued, must be negotiated and could not be imposed from the outside. During the Assembly’s general debate, his Prime Minister had reaffirmed Israel’s desire to resume negotiations, while the leader of the Palestinian Authority had demonized Israel. He stressed the need for mutual recognition and for letting go of proposals that he said would mean the destruction of Israel, as well as urgent attention to the massive threat to the region from Iran, Syria and Hizbullah.

In the discussion that followed, speakers agreed on the urgent need for resumed negotiations and affirmed their support for the two-State solution, with most also calling for further assistance to the Palestinian authority as well as the end of Israeli settlement activity. Many also called for an upgraded status for Palestine in the United Nations. Canada’s representative, however, warned that such a unilateral move would have a negative effect on efforts to restart talks. In addition, some countries, including South Africa, called for a critical review of the value of the diplomatic Quartet on the Middle East peace process, while the representative of Bangladesh said that the European Union might want to take more responsibility for Middle East peace after being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Most speakers also expressed strong concern over the mounting death toll in Syria and the crisis’ threat to destabilize the region, with most also supporting the mediating efforts of Joint United Nations-League of Arab States Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi, and many directing strong words at the Syrian authorities. Syria’s representative warned against attempts to change the subject of the debate on the Middle East from the Israeli occupation by discussing the situation in his country, in the manner of those who wanted to undermine Syria.

Also speaking today were the representatives of the United States, China, Russian Federation, Azerbaijan, Colombia, Togo, India, Germany, Portugal, Pakistan, France, Morocco, United Kingdom, Guatemala, Lebanon, Egypt (on behalf of the Arab Group), Brazil, Japan, United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, Jordan, Norway, Kazakhstan (on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation), Malaysia, Ecuador, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Iceland, Viet Nam, Qatar, Kyrgyzstan, Iran (on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement), Australia, Venezuela, Tunisia, Turkey, Maldives and Bahrain.

The representative of Israel took the floor before the end of the meeting.

The Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People also spoke, as did the Head of the Delegation of the European Union.

The meeting began at 10:06 a.m., suspended at 1:55 p.m., resumed at 3:05 p.m. and adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

Briefing

JEFFREY FELTMAN, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, said that “while the world’s gaze of concern points elsewhere in the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict drifts dangerously in a direction that must be avoided,” adding that intentions to adhere to a two-State solution, restated by leaders of both sides at the General Assembly, were not translating into meaningful steps to renewed dialogue on the core issues to be resolved. Noting differences over an upgrade of Palestine’s status in the United Nations, he hoped that the issue could be resolved in a constructive manner and said, “A negotiated two-State solution, to which both leaders are committed, must remain the highest priority. We fear, however, that the door for such a solution may be closing before our eyes.”

Noting that the Palestinian Authority continued to face a “severe financial crisis”, with, as of 11 October, a date not yet set for the payment of Government employees for the month of September and a deficit currently projected to reach \$1.3 billion by the end of the year, he called on those States that “verbally support the Palestinian people” to contribute more. He also echoed the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee in calling upon Israel to take further steps to facilitate the sustainable growth of the Palestinian economy, including planning and socio-economic infrastructure, such as support to the agricultural sector in Area C. Welcoming recent approval for 15 schools and health centres in that area, he hoped to see similar action in the processing of the 32 master plans submitted.

The West Bank saw 29 incidents of settler violence in the reporting period, he said, including graffiti painted on the Dormition Abbey, and continued destruction, harvesting or damage to Palestinian olive trees, pushing the total such trees thus affected to 7,000 since the beginning of the year. He urged the Israeli Government to curtail such acts and hold accountable those responsible. He also reiterated the call to end settlement activity. He said that on five occasions during the reporting period, what he called Israeli extremists entered the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif compound, “including to perform religious rituals”. Clashes followed, with 5 Palestinians injured and a number of Israelis and Palestinians arrested. On 4 October, over 1,000 Israeli’s entered Joseph’s Tomb near Nablus to perform religious rituals; despite prior coordination, clashes with Palestinians ensued. He strongly urged all sides to safeguard the sanctity of religious sites.

Palestinian attacks against Israelis rose during the period, he said, with four Israelis injured along with material damage. Incidents included the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails at vehicles and a stabbing. Israel conducted 226 military operations in the West Bank as of 9 October, resulting in 87 Palestinians injured and 182 arrested and a weapons cache uncovered near Hebron on 25 September. Clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians also took place almost daily at checkpoints and at the barrier, mostly during demonstrations. He reiterated that the right to peaceful protest must be upheld and all protests should be kept strictly non-violent, and that a reasonable resolution to cases of hunger strikers in Israeli jails must be found, with the use of administrative detention used only exceptionally and in short duration.

Palestinian security forces continued their law and order efforts in the West Bank, he said, arresting, on 18 and 19 September, 57 militants affiliated with Hamas, leading to the discovery of a Hamas underground bunker in a village near Nablus. With Palestinian elections scheduled for 20 October, some 4,700 candidates had been nominated, nearly a fourth of them women, and campaigning had commenced. Elections would take place only in the West Bank, as the de facto authorities in Gaza had not allowed the election commission to proceed with preparations. Regrettably, he added, there was no new

progress to report in ending the Palestinian divide. In Israel, meanwhile, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently announced that he will be presenting a bill to dissolve the Knesset in preparation for early elections.

In Gaza, meanwhile, sporadic eruptions of violence continued, with an escalation after 7 October when an Israeli air strike killed an alleged militant and injured another, as well as eight civilians, following which some 50 rockets and mortars were fired into Israel. On 13 October, an airstrike killed a Salafi leader and his assistant, injuring two civilians, and two Israeli airstrikes yesterday resulted in three militants killed and three injured. A total of 72 rockets and mortars were fired into Israel during the period, resulting in some material damage. Israeli forces conducted three incursions resulting in the deaths of eight alleged militants, as well as injuries to five Palestinian militants and 17 civilians, including four children. He reiterated condemnation of projectile attacks and urged Israel to show maximum restraint.

He welcomed the recent transfers of furniture and date bars from Gaza to the West Bank (the latter as part of a World Food Programme initiative), but said that more lifting of restrictions was needed, including those on the entry of aggregate, iron bar and cement, adding that the steady flow of approvals for works involving so-called dual-use material should be maintained, welcoming approval of an additional \$38 million worth of project work, including for schools, shelters and solid waste treatment infrastructure.

Turning to regional concerns, he noted the attack of terrorists on an Israeli position on the Sinai border on 21 September and the shooting down of a drone that penetrated Israeli airspace on 6 October, for which Hizbullah claimed responsibility. Turning to Syria, he said that as the violence there reached “new and appalling heights of brutality and violence”, predictions of the conflict spiralling beyond its borders were coming true, affecting Lebanon and the Golan, in addition to the escalation along the Syrian/Turkish border, over which the Secretary-General had expressed heightened alarm. He reiterated the United Nations priority for a political solution, stressing that all Governments should desist from supplying arms and military assistance to any party in the conflict. He also called for more generous contributions to address the growing needs of over 2.5 million people in Syria and over 330,000 refugees in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq.

There were several security incidents in the area of operations of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) during the reporting period, he said, as well as exchanges of weapons and isolated clashes of armed elements. On 9 October, he said, Syrian armed forces fired shots at two members of Observer Group Golan in a clearly marked United Nations vehicle in the northern part of the area of limitation. Syrian authorities were investigating the incident and the Syrian Government had sent a letter complaining about several incidents, including the injury of children by a landmine explosion. Areas of Lebanon bordering Syria remained volatile, with regular cross-border shelling and reports of cross-border smuggling continue. Of great concern were fresh reports suggesting involvement by Lebanese political forces in support of the parties in Syria, as well as an explosion of an arms depot in the Bekaa valley, which killed Hizbullah militants. He welcomed Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati’s reaffirmation of “disassociation” from the Syrian conflict; he hoped that Hizbullah would fully respect that policy and called for all Lebanese parties to continue to exercise restraint and work cooperatively in preparation for the 2013 parliamentary elections. The area of operation of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) remained relatively calm, despite continued violations of the Blue Line.

In conclusion, he reiterated that “amid the seismic shifts being felt throughout the Middle East, we cannot afford to be complacent to the persisting deadlock between the Israelis and Palestinians,” adding that “despite their apprehensions, understandable in part, the parties cannot be impervious to the warning signs of a fading two-State solution”. There being no alternative to that solution, all stakeholders must continue to make every effort to work toward that fundamental goal. “We now, collectively, need to rediscover with the parties the determination to forge a credible political path forward. We must not let the urgency elude us”.

Statements

RIYAD MANSOUR, Permanent Observer of Palestine, said no positive developments could be reported given the deadlocked political process and the worsening situation on the ground. Israel's flagrant flouting of the law obstructed the resumption of peace negotiations, intensified hardships for the people, thwarted the leadership's efforts to strengthen national institutions and diminished hopes in the peace process and in the prospects for achieving a two-State solution. "Extremist" Israeli settlers had wreaked terror and destruction, military attacks and raids had caused civilian casualties and destroyed property, thousands remained in deplorable conditions in Israeli jails and Israel continued its illegal colonization of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Despite appeals and demands from the international community, by Security Council resolutions and by the Quartet, to halt settlement activities, Israel had only intensified its activities, he said. Rising instability and pressure in Occupied East Jerusalem included attacks on Muslim and Christian holy places and an attempted takeover of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, containing Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, and rampages throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the torching of hundreds of olive trees, destroying the livelihoods of thousands of families.

The potential for the escalation of settler terror remained "dangerously high", he said, highlighting that the recent period had also witnessed a series of military assaults, missile airstrikes and artillery bombardments of civilian areas, and demanding the lifting of this "inhuman" Israeli siege.

"In sum, the political, humanitarian and security situation remains grave," he said. "Serious efforts must be made to overcome the paralysis in the international community, including in the Security Council, especially with regard to ending Israel's impunity and compelling its compliance with international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, and with the relevant United Nations resolutions. The instability and steep decline of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, portends an explosive situation that must be prevented at all costs."

Yet, he said, the Palestinian leadership had continued to serve its people, uphold its legal obligations, and to act in good will for the sake of peace and adherence to the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders despite Israeli actions that debilitated economic activity and development. Early last month, President Mahmoud Abbas had met with Arab foreign ministers in Cairo to consult on a way forward. That meeting had resulted in the Arab endorsement of efforts to secure "non-member observer State status" for Palestine during the current General Assembly session as an interim step, in light of the obstacles between its application for full membership due to the situation in the Security Council, he said, hoping for swift action by the General Assembly.

He called on the international community, including the Council, to do its part to uphold the Charter, international law and United Nations resolutions, as well as its collective responsibility to Palestine. "The Palestinian people continue to await justice and to seek their independence and freedom, the fulfilment of their inalienable human rights, and peace and security, the same desires shared by all peoples of our region and the world," he said.

RON PROSOR (Israel) said the Middle East was at a critical moment that called for leadership. "I am here today to issue a warning to the world," he said. "At this time of turmoil and transition for our region, the stakes are very high. The decisions that you make in these halls in the coming weeks could echo for years to come, well beyond the Middle East. Today, there is a clear choice between constructive solutions and destructive resolutions." Referring to Israel's proposal made in Amman last April, he said the Palestinians had "walked away and the world said nothing. Instead of sitting with Israel in direct negotiations, the Palestinian leadership is pursuing the path of unilateralism at the United Nations. This is no road to statehood. It is a march of folly."

Peace must be negotiated and cannot be imposed from the outside, he continued, emphasizing that there were no short cuts, quick fixes or instant solutions. The Palestinian's unilateral actions were a breach of every agreement they had signed with Israel, including the Oslo Accords, the Interim Agreement and the Paris Protocol. Every Member State that had lent a hand to support Palestinian unilateralism at the United Nations would "be responsible for the grave consequences that follow."

"A General Assembly resolution will not pave the road to peace. It will encourage the Palestinians to drive recklessly towards conflict, with both feet on the gas, no hands on the wheel and no eyes on the road. You will not be planting the seeds of peace, but fanning the flames of conflict. Let me be clear: today the Palestinians are a long way from meeting the basic criteria for statehood," he said.

He went on to note that the Palestinian Authority had "absolutely zero authority" in the Gaza Strip, President Abbas continued to extend his term in office, and elections had not been held since 2006. The Palestinian Authority had sought unity with Hamas, a terrorist organization that had, in the last week alone, fired 40 rockets into Israel, and had lavished international aid on terrorists, he said. Before the General Assembly, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had reaffirmed Israel's desire to resume direct negotiations while President Abbas used the platform to demonize the State of Israel.

"Mutual recognition is the key to securing lasting peace," he said, pointing out that during this debate, "you will never hear a Palestinian leader say 'two States for two peoples' because today the Palestinian leadership is calling for an independent Palestinian State, but wants millions of its people to flood the Jewish State." That would mean the destruction of Israel. "No one who believed in peace could ever accept it. It is a non-starter. You have a duty to stand up and say that the so-called 'claim of return' is a non-starter," he said, adding that many who were so vocal in telling Israel what it needed to do for peace, "stutter, mumble and lose their voices when it comes time to tell the Palestinians this basic truth."

There was now a clear choice between complacency and leadership. Over the past 30 years, the Hizbullah terrorist organization had killed tens of thousands of people in attacks in dozens of countries and five continents, with Iran providing funds, training and advanced weapons to "hijack" the Lebanese State. Those continued provocations could have devastating consequences for the region, he said. Hizbullah's army was also now in Syria, and its leader, Hassan Nasrallah, along with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, formed the "trio of terror", he said. He called Iran's speeches, given on behalf of the Non-aligned Movement, a "sham", and said the international community must stop that country from acquiring nuclear weapons. For Israel, the lessons of history were very clear, he said. "Your choices are very clear," he said. "You can choose to support direct talks at the negotiating table or to undermine them with unilateral resolutions at the United Nations. The fate of the Middle East hangs in a balance. The time to act is now."

SUSAN RICE (United States) said that as violence and atrocities mounted in Syria and threatened regional security, the United States and its allies were supporting humanitarian relief and the Joint Special Envoy's political efforts. It was clear that the Assad regime must come to an end, she stressed, adding that her country was assisting the unarmed opposition in their efforts to make the transition through non-military aid. She commended Syria's neighbours for their assistance to refugees, describing her country's support in that area and calling for other countries to contribute. Pointing to support by Hizbullah to the Assad Government, she called on the international community to counter the group's activities and reiterated her commitment to a stable and sovereign Lebanon.

Reiterating as well her country's support to a two-State solution of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict through negotiations without preconditions, she said that unilateral actions, such as using international forums to prejudge final status issues, would be counterproductive to that effort and to the welfare of Palestinians. Acknowledging the need for financial support to the Palestinian authority, she called for more contributions to it, as well as to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). She also called for an end to incitement and rocket attacks on the part of Palestinians, as well as prosecution by Israel of those who commit hate crimes, desecrate holy sites or

attack olive groves, and reiterated opposition to continued settlement activity. She said her country continued to be committed to helping the parties reach peace through a negotiated solution.

LI BAODONG (China) expressed concern over the longstanding stalemate in the Israeli/Palestinian peace talks, as well as the humanitarian situation of Palestinians. Regional troubles should not distract international attention from the need for a resolution to the conflict. He reiterated his country's support to a negotiated two-State solution and called for a removal of obstacles to talks, with Israel taking responsibility for creating conducive conditions by ending settlement activity and the blockade of Gaza and similar actions. The international community, including members of the Quartet and the Council, should work actively to bring the parties back to the negotiating table. He supported Palestine's membership in the United Nations.

On Syria, he reiterated support for the Joint Special Representative's efforts and a political settlement, cautioning against any intervention by outside forces. He called upon all parties to support the Representative's efforts. He also called on all countries in the region to cooperate to maintain peace and stability, respecting each other's sovereignty.

VITALY CHURKIN (Russian Federation) expressed concern over the absence of progress towards an Israeli/Palestinian settlement, as well as continued violent incidents by settlers, condemning their attacks, as well as rocket fire from Gaza and retaliatory actions by Israel. He called for renewal of international efforts to restart negotiations and to help bring about Palestinian unity. The initiative to recognize Palestine statehood in international forums would assist such efforts, he maintained. He described extensive assistance by his country to Palestinians in education and food aid. Calling violence in Syria increasingly brutal, he pointed to terrorist attacks, illegal shipments of arms from abroad, and the presence of fighters from abroad linked to Al-Qaida as particularly worrisome. "Violence, whatever its source, must cease," he said, adding that the Syrians had voiced support for the Geneva agreement and that he hoped that the opposition would follow. Ending the bloodletting must be a common and priority objective, he said.

AGSHIN MEHDIYEV (Azerbaijan) said it was clear there was no alternative to peace and negotiation on the question of Palestine, but the current situation "was moving nowhere". The stalemate, or possible failure, of the process was the responsibility not only of the stakeholders, but the entire international community. Among deep concerns were Israel's continued settlement activities, which required urgent international action.

In assuming its primary responsibility to maintain peace and security, the Council should move to put an end to the violent situation and urgent measures should be taken to address the needs of the population. Dialogue and reconciliation must be encouraged, he said. He supported Palestine's application for membership. Efforts and initiatives in the region could also include the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, he said, noting that work in that area should be strongly supported.

Néstor Osorio (Colombia) said while significant progress had been made in the region, violence and repression in some countries urgently required dialogue and action. In Syria, a disturbingly high level of violence and destruction and the constant flow of arms to all parties made it clear that the militarization of the conflict had worsened the already deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria and neighbouring countries. Despite calls from the international community, Syrian forces continued to attack densely populated civilian areas with heavy weapons, tanks and air assets while the opposition displayed actions that deepened hostilities. A political solution was needed, he said, calling upon the Syrian Government and opposition to declare a cease-fire and allow dialogue.

Turning to the question of Palestine, the fragility of the situation was hampered by rockets launched from Gaza into Israel, and he called for an end to those attacks and insisted that all settlement activity violated international law. The viability of a future Palestinian State required continued

international support to help the Palestinian Authority strengthen its institutions and improve its grave financial situation. Efforts would increasingly lack credibility if the international community failed to take the decisions necessary to enable an environment conducive to serious engagement, he said. Referring to the tension in Lebanon, he said action was urgently needed to address Syrian-Lebanese border raids, arms trafficking and the presence of elements associated with Hizbullah in Syria. On recent violence in Iraq, he urged all Iraqis to commit themselves to finding effective solutions.

KODJO MENAN (Togo) said given that the grave situation concerning the question of Palestine was seen as a failure of this Council, he supported the effective implementation of the Quartet's Road Map and urged both parties to demonstrate their political will to engage in negotiations needed to find lasting peace. He applauded and encouraged the beginnings of that required engagement, and supported Israel's recent proposal to dismantle dozens of settlements in the West Bank. He said negotiations should include all groups, calling on Hamas and associated groups to renounce violence.

Turning to Syria, given the scale of the war, the Council should use all means to implement Kofi Annan's plan, he said, calling on all parties to put an end to violence. He was grateful to assistance given to the refugees and displaced persons, whose numbers continued to increase daily. On Lebanon, he said the ongoing tensions along the Blue Line justified the mission there. Lebanon's internal tensions had been exacerbated by the war in Syria, including the flow of Syrian refugees, which posed further challenges. He congratulated the Lebanese authorities for quelling tensions among groups in Tripoli and for addressing the refugee influx.

HARDEEP SINGH PURI (India) expressed concern that the Israeli-Palestinian situation was being sidelined, risking further destabilizing in the region. An end to settlement activity was the most pressing issue to be dealt with, as well as ending restrictions that hampered economic development in the West Bank. Israel should also lift the Gaza blockade, he said. Recognizing positive steps taken by Israel recently that supported Palestinian economic development, he added, however, that they were not sufficient and should be augmented. He also called for renewed efforts toward Palestinian unity, as well as further support to the Palestinian Authority.

His country had supported Palestinian state-building in a variety of areas, and was providing more financial support to the Authority. Reiterating his country's support for the two-State solution, he also supported Palestinian efforts to obtain upgraded status at the United Nations. Turning to Syria, he called on all parties to disassociate themselves from terrorist groups, reiterating his support for the efforts of Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi to facilitate a negotiated solution. Stating in conclusion that there were other Arab lands under Israeli occupation, other than Palestinian, he reaffirmed India's readiness to support efforts for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region.

BASO SANGQU (South Africa), noting the lack of progress toward a resumption of talks in the Middle East, questioned the continuing value of the Quartet in that light, and called for a review of it, its mandate and its accountability. Palestinians expected a lot from the United Nations and must not be disappointed. Attacks on and from Gaza must be condemned, as well as collective punishment of the people in Gaza. It was urgent to lift the Israeli blockade there, he said, noting that his country had increased its donations to UNRWA. He called for an end for settlement activities, as well as to the destruction of Palestinian homes and agricultural infrastructure, maintaining that the Israeli Government seems unwilling to hold settlers accountable for their violence.

In addition, he said that it was time to bring international pressure on Israel, including in regard to Palestinian prisoners. He finally called for Palestinian unity and membership in the United Nations, reiterating support for the two-State solution, and calling for all restrictions to be lifted in the West Bank. On Syria, he reiterated support to the Joint Special Envoy called for all parties to end attacks on civilians. New intervention strategies needed to be developed to move the Israeli-Palestinian situation forward, he added.

PETER WITTIG (Germany) said that the call for greater cooperation with the League of Arab States on regional peace and security in the Middle East, advocated in the presidential statement last month, should be followed up on. On Syria, he said “the deadly actions of the Government speak for themselves,” and that some actions of the opposition forces were also of concern, though not on the same scale. Accountability for the grave abuses of human rights must be ensured, and the humanitarian plight must be relieved.

Turning to the Israeli-Palestinian issue, he seconded Mr. Feltman’s concern over the lack of progress. He also expressed concern over risks to the achievements of the Palestinian Authority, pledging German continuation of its assistance and calling for more financial assistance from the international community. The Authority’s further progress, however, required a political perspective, with its increased control over the West Bank and a retraction of Israeli-imposed restrictions. Negotiations were the only way to get the peace process back on track. Israelis and Palestinians must prove their will to shape their national destinies, he said.

JOSÉ FILIPE MORAES CABRAL (Portugal) said that as the Syrian conflict continued, the death toll rose daily. The situation was unacceptable. All crimes against humanity must be investigated and perpetrators brought to justice, he said, emphasizing that the Syrian Government must cease violent attacks and respect the borders of its neighbours. Further militarization would lead nowhere, he said. Only a political solution should be pursued. The violence must stop for a political process to be created and the Security Council must maintain pressure for action in that regard.

Turning to the question of Palestine, he said peace could not be achieved in the Middle East without Palestine’s achievement of statehood. However, settler violence and other incidents were exacerbating tensions and undermining confidence in a peaceful process for negotiations. The international community could not remain inactive, and the Council should support direct talks, to be completed within a time frame. Palestinian achievements towards statehood were now at risk, and more must be done. The priority should be to ensure that the achievements accomplished by the Palestinians did not backslide. Attacks from and into Israel must stop, he said, noting that there was no alternative but a political solution.

MASOOD KHAN (Pakistan) supported the Palestinian peoples’ rights, an independent State, and admission of Palestine as a full United Nations member. Meantime, he endorsed the Palestinian Authority’s initiative to become a “Non-member observer State” and he respected the Palestinian Authority’s decision about the initiative’s timing. The Secretary-General’s report pursuant to Assembly resolution 66/17 noted little progress in the past year. That was disappointing. He was also of the view that the lack of progress was undermining the two-State solution and there was evidence that Israel’s settlements policy was the biggest road block to the resumption of peace talks. In Gaza, the illegal blockade of the territory and the collective punishment of the Gaza population must cease. The Council should take note of the growing threat caused by the lack of political perspective for Palestinian youth and the continuing settler attacks on Muslim and Christian holy sites that were fuelling violence. The Council must ensure and monitor implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) and other relevant texts. The Secretariat should give the Council a matrix of the status of implementing Council resolutions on the matter.

The Palestinian Authority’s state-building efforts had been widely applauded, he continued. Its steps to build robust state institutions and revive the economy had brought security and economic improvements. Palestine’s admission to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a member last year was yet another recognition of the success of those efforts. Core issues and questions must be addressed for a lasting peace. He called for a solution in line with relevant Council resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative, the Madrid Principles and the Quartet Road Map. Resolution of final status issues should lead to an independent, viable Palestinian State based on pre-1967 borders. Israel should withdraw from all occupied lands, including those in Lebanon and the Syrian

Golan. The international community must not allow the Palestinian issue to be eclipsed or sidelined by other important regional developments. Palestinian statehood was long overdue. To achieve it, the international community, led by the Quartet, should re-engage and refocus on the Palestinian question; direct, meaningful negotiations should resume and the cycle of violence must stop. In addition, he called for bolstered efforts to address the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and for the Council to monitor and implement its own resolutions, in order to maintain peace and security in the sensitive region.

GÉRARD ARAUD (France) said that given the intensified violence in Syria against civilian populations, those responsible for crimes against humanity must be brought to justice. Condemning Syria's military violations in Turkey, he hailed the restraint of Turkey and neighbouring countries. France also encouraged all political actors in Lebanon in the ongoing national dialogue. He supported the Syrian opposition forces efforts to unite and move towards responding to the daily needs of the population, saying that France would recognize a transitional government if it truly represented the people. In the meantime, international humanitarian responses needed to be bolstered and relevant funding should be provided. It was intolerable that medical personnel had been targeted, he added.

Turning to the Quartet, he reminded the Council that the December 2012 deadline of the peace process would never be met given the current situation. Israel's settlement policy had threatened Palestine's functioning, he said. While France had provided additional funds, it could not shoulder the burden of the international community. He condemned violence on both sides. Emphasizing that it had a long time for both parties to recognize the two-State solution, he said that now a framework of parameters must be established, aimed at ensuring the parties made commitments. The Quartet had failed, and inaction was not an option, he said. President Abbas had told the General Assembly this was the last chance, he recalled, noting that this Council should contribute to those efforts.

MOHAMMED LOULICHKI (Morocco) said that while the world watched changes in the Arab region — paving the way for democratic living — the Israeli-Palestinian peace process was locked in “an unprecedented and dangerous stalemate”. Expanded Israeli settlement activities “bombarded” a vision of two States, he said, adding that Al-Aqsa Mosque incidents further hampered progress. All efforts acknowledged Palestine's right to a State based on pre-1967 borders. The Palestinian side had made many concessions, yet not enough for Israel to reciprocate with a view to progress in the peace process. He supported Palestine's efforts to establish an independent State with Al-Quds as its capital and to enhance its status within the United Nations.

However, untold suffering had befallen Palestinian people as a result of the Gaza blockade, and the Council had a responsibility to lift the blockade. Israeli occupation continued, and there was an inability of the international “family” to find an acceptable solution. As there was not much time left to achieve a two-State solution, efforts should be increased over the coming two months to help the Palestinians achieve statehood. The “non-solution” of the Palestinian question would only fuel tensions in the region, he said.

PHILIP PARHAM (United Kingdom) recalled that months ago it was said that if the Council did not act on Syria, the bloodshed would spill over the borders. Now, that was indeed happening, he said, and condemned Syrian shelling into Turkey. With the winter approaching, he was deeply concerned about the Syrian population's needs for shelter and warmth. While he said the United Kingdom had provided humanitarian support and he appealed to Member States to do likewise, he stressed that delivering assistance was dangerous, with evidence of atrocities tied to both the Syrian authorities and the opposition. The Council had indeed achieved a lot on tense situations in Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan, but in all cases, commitments were made by both parties. That approach needed to be applied in Syria, he said, and the Council needed to provide firm and consistent pressure, which had been lacking, to ensure the Syrian Government's compliance.

Turning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he said a fair solution with a negotiated end to occupation was needed. Efforts must be made towards work on direct negotiations, he said, lamenting that illegal settlement construction by Israel was undermining any idea of a two-State solution. He was also concerned by settler violence and impunity. The Palestinian Authority's financial crisis needed to be stabilized and put on more solid footing, he said, pledging his country's support to build institutions and help boost the economy. He also called on Israel to simplify building procedures, among other things. While keeping Israel's security needs in mind, he said that for any peace deal to be sustainable, there must be economic security among Palestinians.

GERT ROSENTHAL (Guatemala), speaking in his national capacity, expressed concern over recent World Bank reports on the economic outlook of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as well as about the ongoing protests there over the economic situation. It was vital to phase out dependence on humanitarian aid. To do that, the Paris Protocol must be applied correctly. Free trade, a necessary tool for the development of peoples, would open the door for building trust and peace between Israel and Palestine. For that to happen, the relevant parties must see the importance of mutual cooperation for their socioeconomic development. The security situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was a corollary of the economic situation. While the Palestinian people were experiencing the dire consequences of poverty, it would be difficult to achieve a lasting peace.

Temporary aid served only to maintain the status quo. "We must focus on helping the Palestinian people work freely to enjoy the fruits of their work, without limits or interference," he said. It was a positive sign that last week, for the first time since the adoption of resolution 2043 (2012) in April, the Council adopted two press statements on Syria. That suggested that there was hope that with greater unity, the Council could provide much more robust, efficient responses to the widespread violence engulfing Syria. He was struck that the cannons on the Syrian-Turkish border continued to launch mortars in both directions, but neither party had appeared before the Council since last Friday. That showed that the Council seemed to have "little relevance," failing to act with one voice. To achieve lasting peace in the region, there must be an agreement between Israel and Palestine to create a Palestinian State. Few still believed in the viability of the two-State solution. That was a paradox, when in fact it was the only solution to lasting stability. The parties must demonstrate interest in seeking a solution, commit to negotiating an agreement, show their good faith during negotiations and implement confidence-building measures to advance the process.

NAWAF SALAM (Lebanon), reaffirming commitment to resolution 1701 (2006), called for pressure on Israel to stop its violations of his country's sovereignty in that regard. Israel continued to challenge the legitimacy of international law by flouting many international decisions, continuing to build settlements, erecting the wall, transferring populations and otherwise violating human rights, "exercising a kind of exceptionalism". He called for an end to that attitude so that Israel was held to its international obligations. The Security Council had failed to act in response to the obstruction of humanitarian assistance or the negative impact of the repressive occupation on women and children, on which it had taken action in many other situations. Accusing Israel of torturing women and children in prisons, he said that the time for ending all forms of Israeli "exceptionalism" was long overdue, as was the time for full membership of Palestine in the United Nations.

MOOTAZ AHMADEIN KHALIL (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group and associating himself with statements to be made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, deplored continuous violations of Israelis against Palestinians, including blockades, aerial bombardments, extrajudicial killings, desecration of Christian and Muslim shrines and threats of a full military operation against Gaza. The peace process had not made progress because of such practices. Given the lack of action or results by the Quartet in that regard, its value should be reconsidered.

He called on the Security Council to adopt a resolution that clearly indicated the parameters of a lasting solution to the conflict, calling on all Member States to recognize the State of Palestine on the

borders of 1967, as well as to adopt a resolution during the current session to upgrade the status of Palestine to become a “non-member observer State” as a first step. Condemning atrocities in Syria, he said the situation there should not be used as a pretext to “turn a blind eye” to the continued Israeli occupation of the Golan, reaffirming the need for Israel to withdraw from that area.

MARIA LUIZA RIBEIRO VIOTTI ([Brazil](#)) said that unfortunately, the situation in the Middle East had continued to deteriorate in the months since the Council’s last open meeting on the region. “We are witness, on a daily basis, to the unfolding crisis [with] the most serious consequences for the Syrian people,” she said, also condemning in the strongest terms the shelling of Akcakale, in Turkey, and called for restraint as the dangers of a regional conflict grew. The escalation of conflict served the interests of no one, particularly not the innocent civilians on both sides of the border. Brazil called for an immediate ceasefire and an end to all violence. Regarding the worrisome situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, she said the peace process was at a dangerous stalemate. The Council should not abdicate its primary responsibilities under the United Nations Charter and Brazil repeated its call to the Quartet to establish regular reporting procedures to the Council on its activities. “Peace in the Middle East concerns the whole of the United Nations and cannot be outsourced,” she said.

BASHAR JA’AFARI ([Syria](#)) said six decades of Israeli settlement policies had created 5 million refugees and had been supported by members of the Council. Some still posed naïve questions to the international community through which they attempted to determine the parameters of the Palestinian conflict, he said, asking how many more decades of Israeli occupation of Arab lands it would take before someone decided that the tragedy needed to end. He asked if all the reports by dozens of investigation committees submitted over the decades to the Council and specialized United Nations agencies constituted enough proof of human rights violations to put an end of the occupation of Arab lands.

A number of representatives had supported Israel this morning, explaining their countries’ commitment to human rights. However, the bitter truth was that part of the Syrian Golan had been under occupation for 45 years, he said, and the Security Council must live up to its responsibility to implement its resolutions. He condemned the ongoing construction of settlements, construction of a separation wall and refusal of providing maps to locate unexploded cluster munitions in the Golan. He noted that Israel possessed nuclear weapons, and continued its refusal to participate in the coming conference on the nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

He warned against “frenzied attempts” by a number of delegations who backed the continued Israeli occupation of Arab lands and who attempted to introduce other topics that aimed to move the Security Council away from its work on the issue of occupation. He said countries had been undermining Syria by providing arms and facilitating the transfer of terrorists into the country. He pointed out that the Council had faced the situation in Mali in an appropriate way. However, some Council members had decided to tackle the very same terrorism in Syria in a different way. That was, in fact, a policy of double standards, he concluded.

KAZUO KODAMA ([Japan](#)) said that his delegation was deeply concerned about the “serious and aggravating” situation in Syria, and he reiterated his Government’s call on all parties there to halt all violence and human rights abuses. He also welcomed the Council’s 4 October press statement and condemned in the strongest terms such an act of transboundary violence. Noting that Japan had implemented significant economic sanctions and would host the next Working Group on sanctions, he said it was extremely regrettable that the Council had not united and spoken with one voice regarding such international efforts. Japan had provided a \$13 million emergency grant and had worked with international agencies to improve the humanitarian situation in Syria. He commended the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and stressed the importance of giving relief workers full and unimpeded access to people needing assistance. Finally, he called the Middle East peace process “a linchpin” to the region’s peace and stability and said Japan firmly supported a two-State solution, which could only be achieved through sincere direct negotiations between the parties concerned.

ABDOU SALAM DIALLO (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said the dramatic turn of events in recent days in and around Gaza was a sobering reminder that Council resolution 1860 (2009) had still not been fully implemented. He condemned any and all attacks on civilians. Indiscriminate rocket fire, targeted assassinations and military strikes must cease, as must provocations, threats and incitement. The policy of brinkmanship employed by the parties was irresponsible and dangerous. Any major incident could unleash a spiral of violence and provoke deadly conflict. At its high-level meeting on 22 September on preventing armed conflict, the Council resolved to strengthen efforts in that regard. Today, the Council received ample early warning. He applauded Egypt's efforts to restore calm. Still, the Council had the Charter responsibility and the tools to act to stabilize the situation, protect civilians, prevent new hostilities, and fully implement resolution 1860 (2009) before it was too late. In the past few years, the Palestinian Authority had built strong State institutions, reformed its finances and restored law and order, turning it into a major force of stability and security in the area. But, the financial crisis that triggered social unrest was unravelling those gains.

He strongly urged donors to maintain and bolster urgently needed aid, and not politicize the situation in the process. Donor-driven development was unsustainable in the long-term, he said. The Palestinians needed a healthy economy to underpin a viable State. At its August meeting, the Committee had heard a briefing by UNRWA, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Norwegian Refugee Council on the devastating humanitarian toll of Israeli restrictions and settler violence on Palestinians in Area C, which was under full Israeli control and covered 60 per cent of the West Bank. That area was also strategic for a viable Palestinian economy. He called for speedily transferring more sections of the West Bank to Palestinian control, a process which had been frozen after 2000. He expressed worries over the assessment in the Secretary-General's latest report that a two-State solution must be urgently implemented to avoid a one-State reality being a done deal.

"An upgrade of the United Nations status of Palestine can open up new opportunities to revitalize the political process, rescuing the two-State solution, before it is too late," he said. Settlements were illegal and an obstacle to peace. At its 8 October meeting, the Committee heard a briefing by jury members of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine and was struck by their assessment that the United Nations failure to take action proportionate to the duration and severity of Israeli violations testified to the international community's failure. The Committee would continue to promote accountability and contribute constructively to the shared goal of two States living in peace and security.

THOMAS MAYR-HARTING, Head of the Delegation of the European Union, stressed that parties whose presence would undermine the political transition in Syria should be excluded, and President Assad, in this regard, had no place in Syria's future. The European Union remained deeply concerned by the impact of the Syrian crisis on the security and stability of neighbouring countries. He strongly condemned the Syrian forces' shelling of Turkish territory, particularly the 3 October bombing of the border town of Akcakale, and he called on all parties to prevent escalation of the violence.

The European Union again threw its full support behind the work of Lakhdar Brahimi as Joint Special Representative, he said. The delegation called on all parties to the conflict to respect their legal and moral obligations to protect civilians. It was appalled by the widespread and systemic violations of human rights, international humanitarian law and fundamental freedoms by Syrian authorities. The European Union welcomed the extension of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria and the nomination of two new members. Today, the bloc had approved additional restrictive measures against Syria and would continue its policy of imposing additional measures to target the regime, not the civilian population.

Turning to the Middle East peace process, he said that the European Union considered that progress in that sphere would contribute to the region's stability and would offer new opportunities for everyone. The European Union and its Member States reaffirmed their commitment to the security of Israel, and a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the conflict would guarantee security and

prosperity for both Israel and a future Palestinian State. Direct negotiations between the parties were necessary to achieve a resolution, he said. The best way forward was within the framework of a credible set of parameters, including those set in the Quartet's 23 September 2011 statement. The European Union would continue to contribute, including within the Quartet, towards that solution. Regarding other relevant issues, he said that settlement expansion violated international law and must cease. He also called for intra-Palestinian reconciliation behind President Abbas in line with the principles set out in his 4 May 2011 speech.

AHMED AL-JARMAN (United Arab Emirates) condemned Israel's repeated and recurring violations of human rights against Palestinians, which had hampered the peace process. He supported the establishment of a Palestinian State and its admittance to the United Nations as a member. He called on Israel to stop attacks and raids on the Gaza Strip and to end the siege against the area, in compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions. He also called for the immediate release of Palestinians in Israeli prisons and detention centres. Turning to Syria, he said the international community must act to end the blatant violence. He strongly supported the establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free zone, and called on Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and place its facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) monitoring. He also encouraged the demonstration of Iran's nuclear programme to ensure its peaceful nature.

YUSRA KHAN (Indonesia) said his delegation was a fervent supporter of the two-State solution. Yet, Israeli policies, especially its illegal settlement activity, created an obstacle to that solution and violated international law. "Settlements may be good for Israeli ego, but they indicate no commitment towards meeting the Palestinians in fair and realistic negotiations," he said, adding that Israel had also defied the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice by continuing its illegal construction of the separation wall in the West Bank. Indonesia fully supported Palestine's application for full membership in the United Nations, submitted last year by President Abbas, as well as the Palestinian leader's ongoing efforts to have the Assembly adopt a resolution, during the current session, by which it would consider the State of Palestine a "non-member observer State".

Regarding the situation in Syria, he repeated the remarks of his country's President to the Assembly during the general debate, in which he called for an immediate end to the violence. The President had also urged the Security Council to unite and act decisively, as mandated by the United Nations Charter, to bring the situation under control.

ZEID RA'AD ZEID AL-HUSSEIN (Jordan) said his country's priority was a two-State solution and he urged Israel to halt settlement expansion. What was required now was that all countries used their collective weight, he said, expressing the hope that following presidential elections in the United States, a rare opportunity would present itself to achieve the collective desired goal. Highlighting the significance of Al-Haram Mosque as one of the holiest sites to Muslims, he said any disrespect to the site should be condemned. Turning to Syria, he said that as winter approached, Syrians would face tougher hardships amid growing violence and increasing numbers of displaced persons fleeing the fighting. Jordan would continue to provide assistance despite the dangerous and bloody circumstances, he said. However, if Jordan's security was breached, it would appeal to every available legal mechanism.

GEIR PEDERSEN (Norway) said both Syria and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict required political solutions. The conflict in Syria was a genuine call by the Syrian people, not an external manipulation nor a pretext for foreign intervention. All violence there must stop, and crimes against humanity must not go unpunished. A credible political transition must be established that was inclusive and peaceful and preserved the unity of the State. Turning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he said there seemed to be no political solution on the horizon to ease the deadlock. The assessment that the Palestinian Authority was ready for statehood still stood, and the current political stalemate was untenable, with Israeli occupation severely hampering Palestinian economic development. Norway, as Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, urged donors to honour outstanding commitments and continue assistance to help build a viable Palestinian economy. "If the present fiscal crisis in the Palestinian Territory is not resolved, there is

a risk of growing social and political unrest that could spiral into chaos,” he cautioned, calling on both parties to resume negotiations on the final status issues.

BYRGANYM AITIMOVA (Kazakhstan), addressing the Council on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, said that Israel’s illegal policies had increased regional tension through expelling Palestinians, expanding settlements and building the “apartheid wall”. Such practices not only flagrantly violated international law and the Geneva Conventions, but undermined the stability, prosperity and security of the region’s countries. The Israeli occupation was the main challenge to sustainable development, progress and prosperity in Palestine. Full Israeli control of Area C, which comprised 60 per cent of the West Bank and was the location of the settlements, imposed an enormous “price tag” on Palestine.

By cutting into the area’s territorial integrity, Israel was stifling Palestinian economic development and limiting the Palestinian’s capacity to use much of their land and most of their natural resources, she said. Economic losses directly resulting from the ongoing Israeli occupation were estimated at \$7 billion annually. It was evident that the building of State institutions in Palestine would definitely enhance regional peace, security and stability. Kazakhstan emphasized the need to continue international efforts to end the Israeli occupation and support the Palestinian people’s national aspirations.

HUSSEIN HANIFF (Malaysia) said there was a “diminishing possibility” for a return to the negotiating table in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, especially given Israel’s illegal settlement activities. The world could not sit idly as the situations in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank continued to deteriorate. Malaysia believed the international community must uphold the principles for establishing a Palestinian State under the pre-1967 borders. Turning to the situation in Syria, he welcomed the appointment of the Joint United Nations-Arab League envoy. Appalled at the continuing deaths of thousands and thousands of displaced persons, he called on all parties in Syria to end hostilities immediately. He urged the main players in the Middle East to show political leadership and impartiality to improve the deteriorating situation in the region.

JENNY LALAMA (Ecuador) said most Member States had agreed on the need to establish a state of Palestine, yet that had not happened. The United Nations Charter stressed the rights of people, and not States, and the Security Council should take action against Israel, which had lived in a state of immunity and impunity. To implement the rule of law on an international level meant that laws applied to all equally. She called for the Council to drop its impassive attitude regarding Israeli abuses, since such a stance had yielded no positive results. She supported President Abbas’ request to be recognized as a State, since that was the only way peace and security could be achieved in the Middle East.

ABDALLAH Y. AL-MOUALLIMI (Saudi Arabia), supporting statements made respectively on behalf of the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Non-Aligned Movement, said his delegation was deeply concerned with Israeli’s continued assaults on Jerusalem, particularly on Al-Haram Al-Sharif and continuous attempts to undermine, burn and destroy Al-Haram. The illegal expansion of settlements was a clear violation of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Saudi Arabia called on all Member States to support the enhancement of Palestinian status to a “non-member observer State” and looked forward to the Helsinki Conference to help make the Middle East a zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

The Syrian regime’s “arrogant practices and aggression” that had crossed its borders threatened the whole region’s security while depending on the military and political assistance of some major Powers, he said. While supporting the efforts of the Joint Special Representative, Saudi Arabia believed the success of that mission required focus on a peaceful transition of power and concrete steps towards building a new, modern and civil Syrian state. He demanded an investigation on the Syrian regime’s crimes against humanity and to promptly bring all those involved in such heinous acts to justice. Saudi Arabia was deeply concerned about the continuation of Iran’s nuclear programme outside international control, an issue seriously threatening the security of the entire Arabian Gulf region.

ABULKALAM ABDUL MOMEN (Bangladesh) said that achieving a lasting solution in the Middle East required a complete and unconditional withdrawal by Israel from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially given the illegal Israeli practices that resulted in a dire humanitarian situation for Palestinians. Due consideration was also warranted, in that light, for the Palestinian request for “non-member observer State” status in the Organization. Expressing sadness at the continued impasse in negotiations, he suggested that the European Union should respond to its recent receipt of the Nobel Prize by taking a lead role in realizing peace in the Middle East. He reiterated his support for a two-State solution, based on relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, the Quartet-backed Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

PALITHA T. B. KOHONA (Sri Lanka), associating himself with the statement to be made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was at the heart of Middle East tensions and the impasse must end. For that reason, provocative activities by all parties must end, particularly ongoing Israeli settlement activity. The humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory must also be alleviated, including by ending what he called the large-scale detention and imprisonment of Palestinian civilians and the blockade of Gaza. Ending attacks on Israel was also necessary. Both parties must actively pursue every possibility for peace. Welcoming progress made by the Palestinian Authority in institution-building, he hoped that Member States would continue to support the Palestinian people’s pursuit of United Nations membership, and reaffirmed his country’s commitment to the attainment of Palestinian rights.

GRÉTA GUNNARSDÓTTIR (Iceland) said that the escalating bloodshed in Syria must be stopped, quoting her Foreign Minister to the effect that the Security Council had become an obstacle to international efforts to address that situation and the Palestinian question. She called on the Council to recommend Palestine’s application for membership in the United Nations, vowing that her country would also support its application for Permanent Observer status as a non-member-State, should the Palestinians decide to pursue that path. Criticizing the Council for not visiting Palestinian areas, she said that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was at the core of restoring stability to the region, while the occupation led to violations of international law. The priority should be to end the occupation altogether. Stating that Israeli settlement activities and the wall were great obstacles to that end, she pointed out that they were reversible “like everything man made”.

LE HOAI TRUNG (Viet Nam) said dialogue and cooperation must be promoted to minimize the adverse effects of changes in the Middle East. There had been little change in the question of Palestine, however, he stressed, affirming his country’s support for Palestinian rights over the past 60 years. He called for an immediate end on restrictions in occupied Palestinian areas and the resumption of negotiations as soon as possible towards a just and lasting solution. Mutual trust, peace and coexistence must be promoted. An important opportunity for that activity would be the upcoming conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

SHEIKH MESHAL HAMAD AL-THANI (Qatar) said the Council had fallen short of the major trust bestowed upon it by Member States, and the Palestinian question was the main political issue in the international arena. However, the world lacked the political will to push the peace process forward. The “ball” was in the Israeli camp, he said, highlighting that Israeli policies, including illegal settlements and the separation wall, showed a lack of good faith. He said the solution to the crisis in the Middle East hinged on the end of Israel’s occupation of Arab lands. Turning to Syria, he was appalled that the Government had used advanced weapons and cluster munitions against its own people. He had cautioned against sectarian conflicts from the beginning of the crisis, and now as the situation worsened, thousands of Syrians were fleeing. He called on the Security Council to provide all possible support to protect and help the Syrian people. Qatar had supported all diplomatic efforts to achieve a solution. At the same time, he called for pressure to be put on the Syrian regime to translate words into action.

TALAIBEK KYDYROV ([Kyrgyzstan](#)) said the international community urgently needed to help to create conditions for the beginning of national dialogue between the political forces and the continuation of political, social, and economic reforms in the interest of all Syrians. He fully supported Mr. Brahimi's efforts to explore a peaceful, political solution to the conflict. But the Syrian crisis should not detract from efforts to resume direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, he said, calling for lifting the blockade and for rendering financial and humanitarian assistance to create favourable conditions for development. The Quartet had a strong mandate of trust and should without delay set up all necessary conditions for enabling the two parties to find a mutually acceptable solution. It was also time to decide on the issue of accession of Palestine as a United Nations member or granting it status as a non-member observer State.

MOHAMMAD KHAZAEI ([Iran](#)), speaking as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, said he fully supported Palestine's application for United Nations membership. Concerning the peace process, he regretted that all efforts to date by international and regional parties had been unable to achieve any progress owing to the deliberate obstruction by Israel. The Movement remained concerned about Israel's ongoing and intensifying acts of violence, terrorism and "racist hate crimes", and was also gravely concerned over continued Israeli illegal colonial settlement activities and the deteriorating situation and deplorable conditions of thousands of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, calling for their immediate release.

Attacks and the obstruction of the freedom of movement of persons and of the reconstruction efforts in the Gaza Strip must end, as they undermined the resumption of credible negotiations and obstructed the achievement of a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he said. Reiterating the Movement's call for the Security Council to act, he also demanded that Israel immediately cease all violations of international law and fully abide by its legal obligations. He also expressed support for Palestinian reconciliation efforts. Turning to Lebanon, the Movement condemned Israel's ongoing violations of the country's sovereignty and called on all parties concerned to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006). Concerning the occupied Syrian Golan, the Movement reaffirmed that all measures taken there by Israel to alter the legal, physical and demographic status were void.

Speaking in his national capacity, he said the region now faced more threats than ever before from terrorism, extremism, and growing militarization and a presence of nuclear weapons by the "Zionist regime", alongside the situation in Syria. Any foreign military involvement in Syria would only worsen the situation, he said, suggesting the strengthening of a political process under international guidance that should begin with a cessation of hostilities and be followed by peaceful talks. He said Iran had assured Mr. Brahimi of its full support for his efforts. Peace and national dialogue was the only alternative and "we have to work together", he concluded.

GARY QUINLAN ([Australia](#)) said the prospects for a negotiated peace based on a two-State solution were disappearing, and it was more important than ever for direct negotiations between parties to resume as a matter of urgency. Amid stalled negotiations, one cause for optimism had been the success which President Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad had had in building institutions necessary for a Palestinian State. However, that achievement was under threat due to the serious financial crisis facing the Palestinian Authority, he said, calling on donors to live up to their commitments. Turning to the "appalling human tragedy" in Syria, he remained deeply concerned that the Council had been unable to adopt a Chapter VII resolution to ensure that there were real consequences for President Assad's non-compliance with resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012). He called on Syria to respect the sovereignty of its neighbours. While the outlook in Syria was "very bleak", it was imperative that the international community redouble its efforts to help alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people, he said, noting that Australia was committed to providing humanitarian assistance.

JORGE VALERO BRICEÑO ([Venezuela](#)), associating himself with the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, expressed deep frustration over the Council's inaction in the face of Israel's expansionist policies. Those policies continued because of the veto power of the countries that had

promoted intervention in Libya and urged action on Syria yet remained silent on Israel. In Syria, terrorist actions were being financed from abroad and were an attempt to put in power a Government that was compliant to the wishes of outsiders, since imperialists used terrorism and State terrorism to defeat those who did not act according to their wishes. The greatest threat to the region was Israel's nuclear arsenal, inspection of which had been denied, as well as its expansionist, colonialist policies. The country's illegal practices must be investigated and the perpetrators brought to account. His country supported dialogue and negotiation as the only means to bring peace in the region.

RIADH BEN SLIMAN ([Tunisia](#)) expressed concern over the impasse in the Middle East, the worsening plight of the Palestinian people, and the inaction of the Security Council in that regard. He said that the acquiescence of the international community encouraged Israel to continue its flagrant violations of international instruments and law, creating a situation that would cause violence across the globe. Already calls for "jihad" were being heard as the primary method to end the long-term suffering of the Palestinian people. The Council had not lived up to obligations; it had engaged in mere "conflict management". He called for new strategies to be considered to achieve the two-State solution. He hoped that the United Nations organs would pave a way for a new path to peace by allowing Palestine to upgrade its status at the Organization so it could begin to progress as an independent, peace-loving State.

ERTUĞRUL APAKAN ([Turkey](#)) said he appreciated the position the Security Council took after the killing of five Turkish citizens on 3 October. While more than 100,000 Syrian refugees had fled to Turkey, his Government had extended assistance to them. Turning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he said that regarding the negotiations, unfortunately, nothing had changed. In the meantime, escalating violence was a concern. In the past three months, Israeli attacks had claimed Palestinian lives and the illegal settlements were seriously endangering the possibility of a two-State solution. The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee's recent meeting in New York had addressed the dire circumstances of the Palestinian Authority, with the main obstacle being the Israeli blockade and occupation. He supported Palestine's membership bid in 2011 and would continue to support any efforts to further that end. United Nations membership was not a declaration of statehood, as the Palestinian Authority had already declared, he pointed out, noting that by its bid, the Palestinian Authority wished to join the international community. While Turkey would continue to support United Nations efforts towards a peace initiative, he stressed that the Organization had yet to fulfil its promise, made in 1947, which foresaw the existence of Israel and a Palestinian States.

GUILLERMO RISHCHYNSKI ([Canada](#)), stressing the urgent need for the Council to act on Syria, called for an immediate ceasefire paving the way for a Syrian-led political transition. Given that President Assad would not voluntarily cease the "brutal campaign of slaughter", all nations must pressure him to step down. Canada reiterated calls for binding sanctions and an arms embargo, and commended Turkey on successfully stopping one harmful shipment to Syria. He also expressed deep concern over Iranian activities on many fronts, maintaining that that country was one the greatest threats to global peace and security in the region. In particular, he urged Iraqi officials to resist Iranian influence and called for the Council to stop Iranian support to the Assad regime. Affirming continued support of the Quartet's efforts to encourage the resumption of direct peace negotiations without delay or preconditions, he said Canada would, however, oppose any unilateral resolutions in the General Assembly. Canada welcomed a Palestinian State if it resulted from negotiations with Israel; a two-State solution must be negotiated and mutually agreed upon, he said.

AHMED SAREER ([Maldives](#)), warning that the Syrian conflict threatened to engulf the entire Middle East, said that in a region plagued by one crisis after another, a renewed commitment to peace was needed from all stakeholders in the region. Describing his country as a democratic Muslim nation with a wide political spectrum and applauding recent Presidential elections in Egypt, he said he understood the "growing pains" associated to the implementation of democratic norms but could not condone any political transformation sought through violence. Affirming support for the two-State solution, he stated that Palestine must be recognized as a legitimate State, a development that would not hinder peace talks but

make more viable a tangible solution. The Security Council had an obligation to push that situation forward.

JAMAL FARES ALROWAIEI (Bahrain) said the problem of the Middle East had become a serious concern beyond that region. At the Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Mecca in August, Bahrain's King reiterated the importance of establishing the State of Palestine. He went to reiterate the need for the Security Council to end the blockade on Gaza. A settlement to the conflict could only occur when Israel withdrew from all occupied territories, he said. It was important to bring about a solution to repatriating Palestinian refugees, and he called for full implementation of all resolutions to end Israeli infractions. The two-State solution was the only lasting solution. He feared the current deadlock was to due Israeli policies, and called therefore on the Security Council and other mechanisms, such as the Quartet, to end the stalemate in the interest of international peace and security.

Taking the floor a second time, the representative of Israel said the Council's debate on the situation in the Middle East was "no stranger to falsehoods, distortions and the theatre of the absurd". With that in mind, he said that the Lebanese representative had forgotten to mention in his speech the Security Council meeting this month on Hizbullah. With Iranian funding, training and arms, Hizbullah had hijacked the Lebanese State and turned it into an Iranian outpost, he said.

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