

Speech by Isabella Lövin at the Security Council Open Debate on the Middle East Peace Process

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Mr. President,

Let me begin by welcoming today's adoption of the Presidential Statement on Yemen by this Council. The UN-led peace talks that have been resumed today in Kuwait will hopefully take us closer to a political solution in Yemen.

Sweden welcomes the Cessation of Hostilities in place since 10 April and we urge all parties to respect it

The massive humanitarian needs must be met. Sweden is among the largest humanitarian donors to Yemen, with contributions over 50 million US dollars since the conflict began.

Mr. President,

Making the Syria talks in Geneva a success is an enormous challenge, but the world cannot afford to fail. Five years of horrific warfare must be brought to an end. A political transition must be realised. The Syrian people deserve to live in peace and democracy.

For the talks to succeed, all parties must fully implement the Resolutions of this Council.

While the Cessation of Hostilities seems to be broadly holding, I am gravely concerned by the slowing down in humanitarian access.

In particular, I am appalled by reports that medicines and medical equipment are being removed from humanitarian convoys, costing innocent lives. This is unacceptable!

Sweden supports the work of Special Envoy de Mistura, not least by funding Syrian women's participation.

Sweden is assisting the Syrian people in three ways:

First, we are stepping up resilience funding through our new Syria Crisis Strategy of 200 million US dollars. Secondly, we are increasing our humanitarian aid, amounting to over 300 million US dollars. Thirdly, we have received over 120 000 refugees that have fled Syria, one of the highest in Europe.

Sweden recognises that neighbouring countries, especially Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, are under immense pressure. That is why our Syria crisis strategy includes support in these countries as well.

Mr. President,

Next year marks 50 years of occupation of Palestine. 50 years!

All of us are aware of the urgency of the situation on the ground and the absence of a political horizon. The two-state solution is fading away before our eyes.

We are seeing continued violence, we are seeing a rapid continuation of the settlements, and we are seeing unprecedented numbers of demolitions of Palestinian homes and infrastructure.

The settlements are illegal and an obstacle to peace. Settlement activity in East Jerusalem seriously jeopardizes the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both states.

A fundamental change of the settlement policy is needed, particularly in East Jerusalem and Area C.

Such a change would increase economic opportunities, it would empower Palestinian institutions and it would enhance stability and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Sweden stands firmly against terrorism. All acts of violence against civilians are despicable, and must be condemned by all.

Yet, security measures alone will not end the violence. The underlying causes of the conflict must be addressed.

Only then will the violence come to an end.

Only then will peace and stability prevail.

Only then will the citizens in Israel and Palestine be able to live their lives in dignity.

The situation in Gaza remains critical. Recent rocket attacks from Gaza and the Israeli air strike-retaliation show the urgency of the situation. These are reminders of the risk of further violent escalation. In a couple of years, the lack of potable water is irreversible.

Therefore the isolation of Gaza must end and the reconstruction must be fast-tracked.

The European Union and Sweden have called on all parties to guarantee unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza for humanitarian organisations and other international actors including state representatives, as foreseen by international humanitarian law.

Mr. President,

To save the prospects of a two-state solution, and to counter the growing hopelessness among the youth, the international community must move from words to action.

We must help the parties to move forward by creating new dynamics and a momentum for a meaningful peace process to end the occupation.

Sweden therefore fully supports the French initiative on an international peace conference, as a way for the parties and the world to recommit to the two-state solution. Sweden is encouraged by the increased Quartet activity, and is looking forward to the publication of the announced Quartet report.

The Security Council has a central role to play, and must shoulder its responsibility to uphold its resolutions and the UN Charter.

If we, the international community, are serious about our commitment to the two-state solution, we have important work to do in the months ahead.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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