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New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Afonso/Mr. Fernandes. (Mozambique)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Gaouaoui
China	Mr. Fu Cong
Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan	Mrs. Shino
Malta	Mrs. Frazier
Republic of Korea	Mr. Sangjin Kim
Russian Federation.	Mr. Nebenzia
Sierra Leone	Mr. Kanu
Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America.	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 4.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Egypt and Israel to participate in this meeting.

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, and Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations and Advocacy, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Wennesland.

Mr. Wennesland: I thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to address the Council on recent developments in Rafah, where the situation is becoming increasingly desperate and dangerous for the already besieged population. Regrettably, we face yet another precipice of further catastrophe in Gaza amid stalled talks between the parties to secure the release of all hostages held in Gaza and a ceasefire to provide much-needed relief to the civilian population. Just two weeks ago, negotiations were ongoing in Cairo with the support of Egypt, Qatar and the United States, but the talks ended on 9 May without agreement.

I urge the parties to redouble all efforts and return to the negotiating table immediately and in good faith. I reiterate the United Nations full support for the tireless efforts by the mediators to achieve that goal. And we stand ready to support the implementation of such a deal. If talks do not resume, I fear for the worst for the beleaguered and terrified civilians in Rafah, for

the hostages held in unimaginable conditions for more than 225 days and for an overstretched humanitarian operation that remains on the brink in the Strip.

My colleague from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will provide a briefing in greater detail on the dire humanitarian situation in and around Rafah momentarily but allow me to highlight some critical observations from the ground.

Since the first week of May, the security situation in Rafah has rapidly worsened as the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) operations and military manoeuvres in and around the city have intensified. On 5 May, Hamas launched mortars and rockets at IDF soldiers massed on the Israeli side of Karem Abu Salem/Kerem Shalom crossing, killing four IDF soldiers and wounding ten. IDF tank shelling and a series of air strikes in Rafah killed at least 19 Palestinians on the same day, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza. The following day, the IDF said that it would prepare to operate with extreme force against Hamas in eastern Rafah and ordered approximately 100,000 Palestinians to immediately evacuate to what it described as an "expanded humanitarian area in Al-Mawasi". Since operations began, more than 800,000 people have been displaced from Rafah to Al-Mawasi, Khan Younis and Deir Al-Balah amid daily IDF air strikes in Rafah, killing dozens of Palestinians. Hamas has continued to fire rockets indiscriminately from Gaza towards Israel.

Those events have had a significant impact on humanitarian operations and access. The so-called expanded humanitarian area in Al-Mawasi lacks adequate shelter, food, water and sewage infrastructure, and crossings for the entry of humanitarian goods have already been directly affected.

In the wake of the Hamas strike on 6 May, Israeli authorities closed Karem Abu Salem/Kerem Shalom crossing for three days. The following day, the IDF said it had established an operational control on the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing and closed the crossing for the movement of goods and people. The Rafah crossing with Egypt remains closed.

In addition, active hostilities and IDF operations continue to render nowhere in Gaza safe, including for humanitarian workers. Just last week, a staff member of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security from India died, and another staff member was seriously injured when the staff member's United Nations vehicle was struck while travelling to the European Hospital

in Rafah governorate. That brings to a total of 193 the number of United Nations staff who have been killed in Gaza since the start of hostilities. Humanitarian movements must be made safer.

I am deeply concerned that the current trajectory, including the possibility of a larger-scale operation, will further undermine efforts to scale up the entry of humanitarian goods and their safe distribution to desperate civilians.

The opening of the Zikim or Erez West crossing in Gaza's north, including for the entry of humanitarian relief items arriving via Ashdod and from Jordan, is a welcome development, as is the entry for the first time of humanitarian supplies through Cyprus via the United States-built floating pier on 18 May. However, I reiterate, that more aid is needed to meet the enormous scale of the needs in Gaza, and there is no substitute for the full and increased operation of existing land crossings. The United Nations continue to engage with all concerned parties, including the Israeli authorities, to address those and other safety concerns, including an improved humanitarian notification system.

The Secretary-General, alongside numerous international partners and concerned neighbours, including Egypt, have voiced serious objections to a military operation in the city of Rafah amid clear indications of its devastating consequences for the civilian population. Saving lives and addressing the critical needs in Rafah and Gaza more broadly must remain our immediate priority, and I reiterate the Secretary-General's call for a humanitarian ceasefire.

At the same time, we must not lose sight of the risks that those immediate threats pose to prospects for a resolution of the conflict and for longer-term peace and stability in the region. I am very concerned that the failure to reach a ceasefire in Gaza and a large-scale military operation in Rafah exacerbates the risk of escalating regional tensions. Since the start of hostilities on 7 October, I have engaged continuously in the region, including in Lebanon, to avert a wider spillover, and I — in support of the Secretary-General — will continue those efforts. I also reiterate that there can be no long-term solution in Gaza that is not fundamentally political.

The new Palestinian Government, with eight ministers from Gaza, represents an important opportunity to support tangible steps towards unifying Gaza and the occupied West Bank politically,

economically and administratively. The international community should provide support to the new Government to address its fiscal challenges, strengthen its governance capacity and prepare it to reassume its responsibilities in Gaza and, ultimately, govern the whole of the occupied Palestinian territory. The Palestinian Authority must also be an integral part of planning for Gaza's recovery and reconstruction.

The devastation and misery of the past seven months have reinforced a simple truth. Palestinians and Israelis can no longer wait to establish a viable political horizon to end the conflict and establish a two-State solution. Day after day we are witnessing the deadly consequences of inaction. Now is the time to lay the foundations for a better future for Palestinians, Israelis and the broader region. The United Nations will continue to support all such efforts.

The President: I thank Mr. Wennesland for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Wosornu.

Ms. Wosornu: I thank Council members for the opportunity to brief them on the humanitarian situation in Gaza, which has only grown more urgent amid ongoing Israeli ground operations in and around Rafah since 6 May.

To be frank, we are running out of words to describe what is happening in Gaza. We have described it as a catastrophe, a nightmare, as hell on Earth. It is all of those and worse. And living conditions continue to deteriorate as a result of heavy fighting, particularly in Jabalia and eastern Rafah, as well as Israeli bombardment from the air, land and sea.

The number of casualties continues to increase by the day. According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, more than 35,000 people have now been killed in the violence, and more than 79,000 injured. Approximately 17,000 children are unaccompanied or remain separated from their families. Let me note here also the Israeli military announcement last week that it had recovered the bodies of four Israeli hostages from Gaza. It is estimated that 128 Israeli and foreign nationals remain captive in Gaza, including fatalities whose bodies are withheld.

And as Council members know, the extreme levels of violence have not spared the United Nations and humanitarian community. The Special Coordinator has just updated the Council on the death of a United

Nations colleague. On 13 May yet another United Nations staff member was killed and another seriously injured when their United Nations vehicle came under attack while en route to the European Gaza Hospital in Khan Younis. We lost a father, a husband and a dedicated colleague with a distinguished career. That brings the number of United Nations staff killed in Gaza since the escalation of hostilities to 193, as was said earlier.

We find it impossible to accept that people endeavouring to save lives are instead losing their lives, particularly as 1.1 million people face catastrophic levels of hunger and Gaza remains on the brink of famine. As of 18 May, just 10 of 16 bakeries being supported by our humanitarian partners are operational. However, it is expected that the bakeries will run out of stock and fuel within days if no additional supplies are received. The other six bakeries, all of which are in southern Gaza, have been forced to cease operations due to either fuel shortages or ongoing hostilities.

The health-care system in Gaza is also under impossible strain. In Rafah, 21 medical points, four primary health-care centres and four hospitals are now inaccessible. In the North, two hospitals, five primary health-care centres and 16 medical points are inaccessible. Those facilities all provided critical medical services, including trauma care, non-communicable disease management, kidney dialysis and maternal and child health care.

An estimated 14,000 critical patients currently require medical evacuation out of Gaza. Prior to the closure of the Rafah crossing, medical evacuations had reached approximately 50 patients per day. That means nearly 700 patients have not been evacuated since the closure of Rafah crossing.

Since October 2023, 75 per cent of the population in Gaza — or 1.7 million people — have been forcibly displaced within Gaza, many of them up to four or five times, including as a result of repeated evacuation instructions issued by the Israel Defense Forces. Some reports have also suggested that many thousands of Gazans may have crossed into Egypt, and more are trying. And in the past two weeks, more than 800,000 people have been displaced from Rafah into other areas of Gaza, in search of safety.

As the conflict persists and lives are threatened, civilians must be allowed to seek protection. I must also emphasize, unequivocally, that persons forcibly displaced within or from Gaza must be guaranteed the right to voluntarily return, as international law demands.

Today the once overcrowded camps and emergency shelters in Rafah have now largely emptied, with the majority of the displaced seeking refuge in Khan Younis and Deir Al-Balah. But the situation that people are finding on their arrival at new sites in those areas is horrendous. There is exceedingly limited existing infrastructure; they lack adequate latrines, water points, drainage and shelter.

Civilians' essential needs must be met. For evacuated civilians, that means ensuring, to the greatest practicable extent, proper shelter and satisfactory minimum conditions of hygiene, health, safety and nutrition, and that members of the same family are not separated. The appalling conditions leave serious doubt as to compliance with those basic obligations.

The Rafah ground incursion is magnifying impediments to an already fragile and beleaguered aid operation, as was said earlier. As of 17 May, the Rafah crossing remains closed and inaccessible for humanitarian cargo, fuel and personnel movement. That has prevented the entry of 82,000 metric tons of supplies, including critical food items and medicines. Around 654,000 litres of fuel have entered the Strip since the Rafah operation began on 6 May. That means that, on average, we are receiving just one quarter of the fuel allocations that we had prior to the operation, further impacting the functioning of bakeries, hospitals, water wells and other critical infrastructure.

The crossing at Kerem Shalom, which has been the main entry point for critical aid, remains open, in principle, but extremely difficult for aid organizations to access from the Gaza side due to hostilities, challenging logistical conditions and complex coordination procedures. Among the northern land routes, Erez crossing, opened from 1 to 9 May, has been closed since. The newly opened Erez West, also known as As-Siafa or Zikim, is now being used for limited quantities of aid, but now areas in the vicinity of that crossing are also under evacuation orders.

We welcome the first aid shipment delivered on 17 May via the floating dock set up by the United States. The maritime corridor hosted by Cyprus, in line with resolution 2720 (2023) and with support from other Member States, is an important adjunct to a comprehensive humanitarian operation in Gaza. But as we have stressed, land routes remain the most viable and effective way to deliver the scale of aid needed.

The United Nations and our partners are committed to staying and delivering in Gaza wherever civilians are in need, and we are reconfiguring our operations in response to recent population movements. The United Nations Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza is actively engaged with the relevant parties in order to accelerate the provision of humanitarian relief consignments to Gaza through all possible routes. However, due to the current closure of the Rafah crossing and limited access via Kerem Shalom and other crossings, we currently lack the supplies and fuel to provide any meaningful level of support.

I can take Council members through the list of things that we need. They have heard them before.

First, the toll of death, injury and destruction in Gaza is utterly unconscionable. We demand that civilians, their housing, and the vital infrastructure they depend on be protected, as international humanitarian law requires. All feasible precautions must be taken to avoid and minimize civilian harm.

Secondly, we need the facilitation of rapid, unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief into and within Gaza, also as a matter of international humanitarian law. All available access points must be open and kept open for a sustained period in order to allow aid to enter at scale.

Thirdly, we also need to be assured of the protection of humanitarian and United Nations staff, all of whom are working under extreme conditions in Gaza. That requires the parties to take constant care throughout military operations, which the agreed humanitarian notification system aims to maximize. It also requires enabling a stable communications network.

Fourthly, we need adequate funding, particularly for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which is the central pillar of our aid operation. As of 20 May, the 2024 flash appeal is only 25 per cent funded. We urge donors to step forward with the funding we need. We are grateful for the funding already received.

But in all honesty and as has been said, at this stage, only a humanitarian ceasefire and a halt in the ground incursion in Rafah will fully protect civilians, create the conditions for humanitarians to provide assistance at the required scale and curb the endlessly deepening toll of this travesty in Gaza.

Our principal call today is therefore for all parties, as a matter of urgency, to make genuine progress towards a ceasefire and the release of all remaining hostages and for the Security Council and all Member States to use their influence to bring this humanitarian catastrophe to an end.

The President: I thank Ms. Wosornu for her important briefing.

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

Mr. Gaouaoui (Algeria): I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the convening of this crucial meeting. My thanks also go to Mr. Wennesland and Ms. Wosornu for their insightful briefings.

Our deliberations today come at a critical juncture, with 1.5 million Palestinians in Rafah facing a looming death. Rafah is the last remaining area in Gaza that has not been completely destroyed. It is the sole region where humanitarian actors can still operate and the final refuge for Gazans displaced from their homes. Rafah is the only place capable of hosting those who have been rendered homeless, because everywhere else lies in ruins. Rafah also hosts three of the last partially functioning hospitals in Gaza. Rafah is a city of children, where more than 600,000 have found refuge and are now facing unimaginable suffering and horror. It is also adjacent to one of the main lifelines for the transit of aid to Gaza.

By planning and launching its military operation in Rafah, the Israeli occupying Power is executing a strategy of ethnic cleansing, killing Gaza's children and extinguishing hopes for a better life. The Israeli military operations have already started. Those operations have already uprooted more than 800,000 people, nearly all of whom have been displaced multiple times in barely more than a week. This is the darkest moment in the seven-month nightmare, as the United Nations has said. This operation will have grave consequences for the peace and stability of the entire region. We urge the Council to act. This is not a time for mere discourse but for decisive action. Such a genocidal operation could lead to further breaches of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. It could entail further atrocity crimes, for which those responsible must be held accountable. We call for an end to forced relocation and for protecting the vital infrastructure that those children rely on.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is beyond catastrophic. I would like to share the testimony of Yasmina Guerda, who recently returned to Gaza for a second deployment with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

“We would need to invent brand-new words to adequately describe the situation that Palestinians in Gaza find themselves in today. No matter where you look, no matter where you go, there is destruction, there is devastation, there is loss. There is a lack of everything. There is pain. There is just incredible suffering. People are living on top of the rubble and the waste that used to be their lives. They are hungry. Everything has become absolutely unaffordable.... Access to clean water is a daily battle. Many have not been able to change clothes in seven months because they just had to flee with whatever they were wearing. They were given 10 minutes’ notice and they had to run away. Many have been displaced six, seven, eight times or more”.

The occupying Power now controls all crossing points, including the Rafah crossing, pushing the population to unprecedented levels of deprivation. Today literally no humanitarian aid is entering Gaza. There is almost nothing left to distribute in Gaza. Despite the mechanism for humanitarian aid established by resolution 2720 (2023) being declared finally operational through the Jordanian and maritime corridors, the situation has not changed. The aid convoy coming from Jordan, which was supposed to be protected by the occupying forces, has been attacked by Israeli settlers, its contents unloaded, burned and destroyed with total impunity and under the protection of the occupying forces. According to OCHA, only 33 trucks succeeded in entering Gaza between 10 and 17 May. We salute the efforts to explore different routes to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches the civilian population in Gaza. However, land routes are indispensable. All crossing points should be reopened without further delay.

What we are witnessing in Gaza is not a war, it is a genocide — barbaric behaviour born when someone feels totally immune to any consequences. Given the prevailing climate of impunity, it is high time for the international community, indeed for this Council, to halt the hostilities and establish an international inquiry mission to establish the facts and ensure accountability. The children, the women, the people of Gaza deserve

justice and the support of the international community. Inaction means abandoning them. Abandoning them means abdicating our humanity.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): The first evacuation order was issued in Gaza on 13 October. We saw haunting photos and videos of people packing up their lives and leaving the north in long lines of cars, buses, carts drawn by animals or even just on foot, supposedly to safe areas. That was followed by a number of other evacuation orders to new safe areas, over and over again. People — 1.7 million of them — fled to Deir Al-Balah, to Khan Younis, to Al-Mawasi and to Rafah. Many fled multiple times — four or five, we heard today — in search of safety and security. Thousands never reached safe areas. We condemn that loss of civilian lives.

Some of us have been calling for a ceasefire for months. On 25 March we finally collectively adopted resolution 2728 (2024), demanding a ceasefire. Neither Hamas nor Israel has respected the resolution. For the past few weeks, we have all been united in our rejection of the prospect of a military operation in Rafah. Our calls are being ignored. Briefing after briefing, we are told that there is no safe way to conduct a military operation in Rafah without killing civilians and causing huge human suffering. We are therefore deeply disturbed that calls by all Security Council members, on top of calls from the global public and an order of the International Court of Justice, are being ignored by Israeli leaders. And now we are being confronted with new evacuation orders and Israel’s announcement of its intensification of the operation in the remaining place of last resort in Gaza. Slovenia condemned the start of the operation, and we continue to believe that it should cease immediately. We are alarmed by the situation that Gazan civilians are finding themselves in again, particularly women, children, persons with disabilities and older people.

We reiterate that there is no military solution that can assure Israel’s security. We are concerned about the daily exacerbation of the already catastrophic humanitarian situation and the full-blown famine moving from the north to the south. Obstructions of humanitarian access persist, as does the highly dangerous operational environment for humanitarian actors, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the backbone and central pillar of humanitarian response in Gaza. That also includes closures and operational constraints at vital crossings and attacks on them. We reject and condemn forced displacement. We repeat our call for full respect for

international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. The provisional orders of the International Court of Justice and the resolutions of the Security Council must be respected. We underline that evacuation orders do not absolve people of obligations under international humanitarian law. Any war crimes or crimes against humanity committed on the territory of Israel and Palestine starting 7 October 2023 must be prosecuted independently and impartially, regardless of the perpetrators. Accountability is crucial to preventing atrocities and guaranteeing peace.

We wonder what the future of this conflict will be. Young voices across the region and beyond are enraged and full of frustration. We are at risk of building an angry generation, and the result will be a loss of moderate voices in the region. Their dreams are being replaced by nightmares of violence and loss. We have been on the Security Council for five months. If there is one lesson that we have learned, it is that it is a very powerful organ, but only if it is united. For the sake of the Palestinian civilians in Gaza and the Israeli civilians taken hostage, the Council should return to its quest for unity in order to stop the war, return the hostages and feed starving Palestinians so that they can all finally wake up from this human-made nightmare.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): I too thank Special Coordinator Wennesland and Director Wosornu of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their sobering briefings.

For several months now the members of the Security Council have collectively warned against any ground operations in Rafah, which 1.4 million people have been packed into in a state of panic, devastation, hunger and instability. In spite of those repeated strong voices, Israel is now expanding its operation into Rafah. As a country that is friendly to Israel, the Republic of Korea calls on it to immediately suspend its deadly operations in Rafah, which are pushing innocent Palestinian civilians to the verge of further devastation and displacement. They may also be putting the Israeli hostages held by Hamas and other groups in additional danger. Noting the disturbing reports of mass graves at the ruins of Nasser and Al-Shifa hospitals and the pending evacuation orders for the remaining functional hospitals in Rafah, we are deeply concerned about the possible fate of those hospitals and their patients, who are now arriving in even greater numbers owing to the hostilities.

The Republic of Korea has repeatedly condemned the terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October and reiterated that Israel has a right and duty to protect its citizens. However, in a conflict that has now lasted for more than six months, more than 35,000 Palestinian civilians have been killed, many of them women and children, and the entire world has been appealing for an end to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the conflict. The resolutions adopted by the Council underscore the importance of the protection of civilians in accordance with international law. Unfortunately, however, the parties have not adequately heeded those demands. The current operations in Rafah by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) are even more alarming, as there are no substantial operational plans in place to protect civilians. Nearly 800,000 civilians have been forced to flee Rafah since 6 May alone, without any adequate protection or plan. Many are returning north to completely destroyed areas that have no water or sanitation facilities and are also subject to bombardment, further underscoring that nowhere is safe in Gaza. Israel says that the IDF's final goal is to eliminate Hamas. However, the bloody offensive in Rafah will only fan the flames of additional extremism, endanger the safe release of hostages, further jeopardize Israel's long-term security in the region and undercut the prospects for lasting peace. That vicious cycle must end as soon as possible.

The Republic of Korea once again demands an immediate ceasefire throughout Gaza, including in Rafah, the release of all remaining hostages held by Hamas and other groups and the provision of humanitarian assistance at scale. With the United Nations saying that famine is imminent in Gaza, we are particularly concerned about the fact that both Israel's operations in Rafah, including the complete closing of the Rafah crossing, and Hamas's attacks on the IDF are seriously hindering the delivery of life-saving assistance into the Gaza Strip. All the available crossings into Gaza must be immediately reopened and fully operated to save lives. We welcome the operationalization of the humanitarian mechanism under resolution 2720 (2023) and hope it will help to expand humanitarian aid throughout Gaza.

We once again urge the parties to the conflict to prioritize the suffering of innocent civilians and hostages over other considerations and accept the terms of the negotiations on the table to achieve the release of the hostages and a desperately needed ceasefire.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I too thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland and Director Edem Wosornu of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their briefings.

I want to begin by reiterating Malta's condemnation of the terrorist attacks on 7 October and Hamas's continued holding of hostages. We reiterate our call for their immediate and unconditional release.

Malta is gravely concerned about Israel's expanding military offensive into Rafah. In line with the concerns raised by the international community, including United Nations bodies and humanitarian agencies, we categorically reject that ongoing offensive. For months Rafah has housed 1.5 million internally displaced Palestinians, many of whom are vulnerable women and children. More than 600,000 civilians have been forced to flee Rafah — forcibly displaced once more owing to the escalated attacks in the past few days. They are civilians who have endured the worst forms of suffering, physically and psychologically exhausted, malnourished and on the verge of famine. They are entirely desperate. The protection of civilians remains paramount. A continued and expanded offensive into Rafah will only compound the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza.

The efforts to address the humanitarian crisis also continue to be hampered. The Rafah crossing is one of the main entry points for aid into Gaza. Its seizure and closure by Israel have severely compromised the provision and distribution of aid and the maintenance of essential infrastructure and services, including hospitals, bakeries and water and sanitation facilities. The denial of food, fuel, medicine and life-saving essentials to a besieged population has been ongoing since the beginning of the war and is completely unconscionable. Israel has an obligation to facilitate unimpeded aid through all the available routes and border crossings into and throughout the Gaza Strip, in line with international humanitarian law. The Rafah crossing must be reopened immediately, and the necessary measures taken to ensure scaled-up, unimpeded humanitarian access into and throughout Gaza.

The completion of the floating dock off Gaza's shore is an encouraging development, and we commend the efforts of the United States in that regard. Nonetheless, we underline the importance of land routes, which remain the most viable and effective

modes for delivering aid. Furthermore, last week's killing of a United Nations Development Programme staff member following a strike on their United Nations-marked vehicle further illustrates the need to ensure the necessary protections for United Nations, medical and humanitarian workers. Abiding by deconfliction mechanisms is key. We condemn all such attacks and call for thorough, independent and urgent investigations into all cases.

Malta remains deeply concerned about the conflicting parties' complete disregard for the relevant Security Council resolutions, and we call for their full implementation. Moreover, the provisional orders of the International Court of Justice of 26 January and 28 March must be fully complied with. Accountability for any violation of international law is equally imperative. Amid the escalations in Rafah and renewed and intensified fighting in the north of Gaza, Malta reiterates its call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire to end this conflict. The immediate priorities must be de-escalation, diplomacy and the prioritization of civilian lives. Peace cannot be optional, and the quest for it must be guided by a recognition of our common humanity. That will also create the space to enable us to bolster all our efforts to attain a renewed and holistic political horizon. That must include the realization of a two-State solution along the pre-1967 borders, addressing the legitimate aspirations of both sides, with Jerusalem as the future capital of two States, living side by side in peace and security, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the internationally agreed parameters.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me start by thanking Special Coordinator Wennesland and Ms. Wosornu for their briefings today, and I would like to once again express our deepest condolences for the loss of the United Nations staff who have been killed in this conflict. I will make three broad points.

First, it has now been more than seven months since the dreadful terror attacks of 7 October. Hostages are still being held, and our thoughts are with them and their families, who continue to suffer without knowledge of the safety and well-being of their loved ones. The situation in Gaza is desperate, and the toll on civilians continues to grow. Too many Palestinian civilians have been killed, and there is an urgent need to get more aid to the people of Gaza to prevent a famine. The United Kingdom has made it clear that it will not support an expanded operation in Rafah unless there is a very clear

plan for how to protect people and save lives. We have not seen that plan, and therefore in the circumstances we will not support an expanded operation in Rafah.

Secondly, we welcome the news that the Cyprus maritime aid corridor to Gaza is operational. Aid from the United Kingdom and other nations is now making its way via that route to the Gazan people. But that is not enough. We urge Israel to let humanitarian aid enter Gaza through all crossings, including by reopening Rafah. And Israel must fulfil its commitments to increase aid and guarantee deconfliction for aid convoys and other humanitarian work. We have seen appalling attacks on aid convoys and United Nations offices by Israeli extremists, in addition to the tragic deaths of United Nations and other humanitarian personnel in Gaza. We condemn all attacks on aid workers and support the call by the United Nations for an independent investigation.

Finally, the fastest way to end this conflict is to secure a deal that gets the hostages out and allows for a pause in the fighting. We must then work to turn that pause into a sustainable, permanent ceasefire. We must remove Hamas's capacity to launch attacks on Israel and end its control of Gaza in order to ensure lasting peace. We must also provide steadfast support to the new Palestinian Government as it implements much-needed reforms, and in order to secure a political horizon for the Palestinian people with a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-State solution.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Tor Wennesland and Ms. Wosornu for their briefings.

France is deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in Rafah, which continues to worsen. I have three points to make today.

As President Emmanuel Macron of France has conveyed to Prime Minister Netanyahu on several occasions, France is firmly opposed to the Israeli offensive in Rafah. It will only worsen an already catastrophic situation in Gaza and increase the risk of escalation. France would like to remind the Council that the forced transfer of populations constitutes a war crime under international law and that the future of Gaza can be determined only within the framework of a future Palestinian State and under the responsibility of the Palestinian Authority. On 16 May, together with 12 other countries, France reiterated its

“opposition to a full-scale military operation in Rafah that would have catastrophic consequences for the civilian population, which has already been displaced several times. There is no safe area for civilians in Gaza today”.

On Monday, in violation of international humanitarian law, the Israeli operation killed a United Nations official who was travelling in a vehicle bearing the Organization's emblem. The closure of the Rafah crossing is having a serious impact on the civilian population, while the amounts of aid entering Gaza since the start of the conflict have been extremely inadequate. The humanitarian and health situation is unbearable, and France urges Israel to reopen the Rafah crossing into Egypt, which is vital both for ensuring that humanitarian aid can reach the civilian population and for enabling the most vulnerable people to leave the Gaza Strip. More broadly, we call for reopening all necessary crossing points. France once again urges Israel to do its utmost to ensure the protection of civilians and humanitarian personnel and to guarantee access to humanitarian aid, in accordance with international law and the requests of the International Court of Justice.

Finally, on the political front, France will continue to work for a rapid end to the crisis based on a two-State solution. Israel must be given security guarantees. France reiterates its solidarity with Israel in the wake of the barbaric terrorist attacks committed by Hamas and other terrorist groups on 7 October, which France condemns in the strongest terms. We must work to build a State for Palestinians. The Palestinian Authority has a central role to play in that process, both in the West Bank and in Gaza, which is of course destined to become part of that Palestinian State. For that a political framework is needed, and the United Nations will have an essential role to play.

France has proposed a draft resolution to the Security Council that will enable progress to be made towards that aim. France will continue its consultations on the matter with the Council and its partners in the region. Among other things, the draft resolution calls for a halt to the offensive at Rafah, an objective that I believe is shared by our entire Council and is the focus of our discussion today. We therefore call on all members to support it, since its elements on both the humanitarian situation and the political track can create a consensus.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I too extend my warm thanks to Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland and Director Edem Wosornu of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their briefings, in which they repeatedly highlighted the urgency of the situation.

Switzerland reiterates its call for an immediate ceasefire and a halt to the military operation currently under way in Rafah, which we oppose. The consequences of that operation for a civilian population that has been prey to bombardments, repeated displacements and famine for more than seven months are unacceptable. That population now needs assistance, not further suffering.

Since the adoption of resolution 1265 (1999), 25 years ago, the Council has adopted many resolutions to condemn and put an end to deliberate attacks against civilians, including acts of terror, hostage-taking and sexual and gender-based violence.

The acts of terror and hostage-taking perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October in Israel, which Switzerland strongly condemned, violated all those resolutions. The accounts of the survivors of these attacks, including the hostages and their families, bear witness to the violence to which they were subjected. Those acts have left behind an indelible mark. Switzerland continues to call for the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages.

Since 7 October, Switzerland has actively contributed to the adoption of three resolutions — 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024) — all calling for the protection of civilians, notably through a firm rejection of deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects protected under international law; a call for the release of the hostages; a reminder of the obligation to provide humanitarian organizations with full, safe, rapid and unimpeded access to civilians, including displaced persons; and a reiteration of the duty to ensure the safety, protection and freedom of movement of the personnel of humanitarian organizations, in particular the United Nations.

It is clear that those demands have not been implemented. Switzerland condemns the fact that not all hostages have yet been released and that hostilities continue to claim numerous civilian victims and to forcibly displace hundreds of thousands of civilians, including many children, in appalling conditions of distress.

Switzerland welcomes the efforts that have led to the establishment of an option to deliver humanitarian aid by sea. However, as Ms. Edem Wosornu reiterated today, humanitarian aid entering Gaza remains largely insufficient. All parties, including third-party States, must fulfil their obligations to provide humanitarian access throughout the Gaza Strip and by all possible means. The recent death of yet another United Nations representative reminds us that humanitarian personnel must enjoy the protection and freedom of movement necessary to carry out their tasks. Obstacles to their work are a recurring problem in armed conflicts, and Switzerland is counting on the support of Council members for the draft resolution it has prepared in that regard. I convey our heartfelt condolences to the family of the deceased.

This tragedy has gone on far too long. Switzerland calls for the implementation, without further delay, of the relevant Council, including resolutions 2334 (2016), 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and, above all, 2728 (2024), which are binding, and demands respect for international law, including international humanitarian and international human rights law. Switzerland is concerned about possible war crimes, recalls the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, takes note that the Court is seeking arrest warrants against certain individuals, fully supports the Court and stresses the importance of respecting its independence.

May this special week dedicated to the protection of civilians mark a decisive step towards de-escalation and a first step towards the establishment of a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. We reiterate our firm support for the negotiated two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine, of which Gaza is an integral part, living side by side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Algeria and Slovenia for initiating today's meeting. I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland and Director Wosornu for their briefings.

Over 220 days into the Gaza conflict, we have witnessed civilian casualties, destruction of infrastructure and a humanitarian catastrophe — all at an unprecedented scale. Despite the repeated calls from the international community for an immediate ceasefire and the clear demands expressed in Security Council resolutions, Israel has chosen to turn a deaf ear. Facing strong opposition from the international

community, Israel is still pushing ahead with its large-scale offensive on Rafah, once again displacing hundreds of thousands of Gazans.

China expresses its grave concerns and strong opposition in that regard. Nothing can justify the perpetuation of conflict. The collective punishment of civilians does not create conditions conducive to the rescue of hostages. Israel must immediately cease its military operation in Rafah. China supports further Council action to ensure the implementation of resolution 2728 (2024). We also hope that the United States, as a country with major influence on Israel, can maintain impartiality and effectively facilitate a ceasefire and cessation of hostilities.

The current humanitarian disaster in Gaza is inconceivable. The occupation of the Rafah border crossing has seriously hindered access for humanitarian aid. Humanitarian supplies from Jordan to Gaza have been blocked and sabotaged. Humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel have confronted multiple obstacles and even mortal danger. That is unacceptable. Land transportation is key to large-scale access to humanitarian goods. There is no substitute for it. Israel should effectively comply with its obligations under international law and international humanitarian law by immediately opening up all land crossings and ensuring the supply of food, medicine, fuel and other basic necessities. Facilities belonging to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in the West Bank were attacked. That is alarming. We call upon the occupying Power to conduct a thorough investigation into the incident and ensure accountability.

The two-State solution is the only viable way to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli issue. China supports the establishment of an independent State of Palestine and its early admission as a full member of the United Nations. Gaza is an inalienable part of Palestine. Any proposal on post-war governance of Gaza should respect the will of the Palestinian people and the legitimate concerns of the countries of the region and should not deviate from the general direction of the two-State solution.

On 15 May, we mark the seventy-sixth anniversary of the Nakba. For decades, generations of Palestinians have struggled arduously for their legitimate rights. China will continue to work tirelessly, alongside the international community, to promote an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, alleviate the humanitarian disaster

and implement the two-State solution so that the Nakba stays in the past, Palestine and Israel can live side by side in peace and the Middle East can enjoy lasting peace and stability.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting, requested by Algeria and Slovenia.

We thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland and Director Edem Wosornu for their briefings, which emphasized the gravity of the situation in the Gaza Strip and the entire Occupied territory.

The conflict in the Gaza Strip continues to be increasingly catastrophic and deadly, with civilians paying the highest cost. We continue to be regularly updated by humanitarian workers, experts and witnesses on the destructive nature of the conflict and the long-lasting impact it will have on survivors, especially children and young people, who are predisposed to anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and other adverse mental health conditions.

Since the 7 October 2023 attacks, which we continue to condemn, and with the recent escalation in the north of the Gaza Strip and in Rafah, the Gaza Strip has faced constant bombardment, destruction of civilian property and infrastructure, loss of lives and shortages of essential goods and services. The deplorable sanitary and hygiene conditions are of great concern, especially given that women and children are exposed to such conditions. Multiple forced displacements have also been a common theme since October. Humanitarian activities have become almost impossible as resources have dwindled, and access remains limited. That devastation could have been avoided, and it is still avoidable if the parties to the conflict respect their obligations under international law, particularly regarding the protection of civilians, and if they respect and implement the resolutions of the Security Council and the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice, which are binding on the parties.

It is deeply worrisome that all the efforts to bring about a cessation of hostilities and a peaceful settlement of the conflict have so far proved futile. However, we must persist and persevere in pursuing a cessation of hostilities, securing the release of hostages and getting unhindered humanitarian aid into Gaza. We must not relent, especially at this point, with more than 35,400 Palestinians killed, 79,400 wounded and 1.7 million

displaced — a majority of them displaced multiple times — and more than 100 Israeli civilians still being held hostage. Despite the challenges there are to getting both parties to reach a compromise, the demands of the Council and the international community remain consistent. In that regard, we emphasize the following three imperatives.

First, we repeat our call for a permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and across the occupied Palestinian territory, Israel and the Blue Line. The incidents of crossfire via air, land and sea have caused deaths and increasing suffering, destruction and fear. We cannot be paralysed witnesses to calamitous death, destruction and suffering. We must compel the parties to the conflict to respect international law, comply with their obligations and implement the fundamental principles of the law of war and the important provisions of resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024).

Secondly, we call on the parties to the conflict, especially Israel, to create conditions that will enable an effective humanitarian operation in the Gaza Strip. We note that despite the escalating humanitarian needs, challenges such as achieving unimpeded access via critical land routes through Kerem Shalom and Rafah, logistical hurdles and a lack of seamless coordination with humanitarian agencies continue to disrupt operations.

Thirdly, we condemn the ongoing military operations in Rafah and the north of Gaza that have led to the displacement of more than 800,000 civilians from Rafah. Attacks on United Nations premises, residential infrastructure and refugee camps are deeply regrettable and unacceptable. We continue to reiterate the need and legal obligation for the immediate release of all hostages.

In a statement today, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Mr. Karim Khan, has announced applications for arrest warrants before the Court's Pre-Trial Chamber I on the situation in the State of Palestine following "an independent and impartial investigation" by his Office. In our continued support for accountability for violations of crimes of serious concern to the international community and for an end to impunity for atrocity crimes, as well as being a State party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, we take note of the statement on the applications by Prosecutor Khan and acknowledge that a judicial determination is to be made on the applications.

Let me conclude by stressing the need for Member States with influence to urge the parties to the conflict to pursue actions that will support ongoing diplomatic negotiations and to choose peace over war. Sierra Leone reiterates its commitment to this cause of peace until a just and lasting solution is achieved.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Tor Wennesland and Edem Wosornu for their survey of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. We are also grateful to the delegations of Algeria and Slovenia for convening this meeting on the situation in the Gaza Strip, where the operation by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) — which has already claimed more than 35,500 lives, a monstrous statistic that has no parallel in recent history — has entered its eighth month.

And even though the state of affairs and humanitarian situation in the zone of confrontation is unprecedented in terms of suffering for the civilian population, it is actually worsening by the day. We are all extremely disturbed by West Jerusalem's plans to cleanse the town of Rafah in the south of the Gaza Strip, where some 1.5 million Palestinian civilians are concentrated. According to Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 800,000 Palestinians have been displaced since the beginning of armed action in Rafah, and the Israeli leadership's claim that the population of Rafah can move to a safe humanitarian zone has no relationship to reality. There are simply no such areas in Gaza. People are dying in the city every day. The reported discovery of seven mass graves in Gaza City and Khan Younis with more than 520 Palestinian bodies has had major reverberations. We await the results of the independent investigation that the Security Council demanded in a press statement (SC/15692) in that regard. We demand that Israel strictly abide by the provisions of international humanitarian law. We condemn the attacks on United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers on the ground and support the Secretary-General's call for an international independent investigation into all deaths of those who are helping Palestinians survive.

Gaza lacks stable channels for humanitarian assistance. In the past two weeks, the IDF has blocked 3,000 trucks carrying humanitarian aid to residents from entering through the Rafah and Kerem Shalom checkpoints. As a result, a significant part of the population of Gaza is on the verge of starvation, according to the assessment of United Nations specialized

agencies, specifically the World Food Programme. At the same time, Israel is launching air strikes against targets in the southern and central Gaza Strip. The siege of the Al-Awda Hospital in the Jabaliya refugee camp continues, preventing the wounded and sick from receiving proper care. Against the backdrop of the hostilities in Gaza, life is becoming ever more intolerable for civilians in the West Bank as the clashes between Israeli security forces and settlers and local residents continue unabated.

What is going on in Gaza confirms that at this stage the prospects for shifting the conflict into the political and diplomatic arena and establishing a ceasefire, which Russia has been advocating for since the first day of the escalation, continue to look elusive. We can see that the current Israeli leadership is determined to continue military action, despite the fact that it is becoming increasingly obvious that achieving all of the operation's declared objectives will be impossible. Unfortunately, that obstinacy is also a threat to the lives of the Israeli hostages. The chances of their families ever seeing their loved ones alive again are shrinking by the day. At the same time, the numerous rounds of negotiations between Israel and Hamas through mediators on the exchange of Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners have had no results.

In the circumstances, the international community has to continue to put pressure on both West Jerusalem and its main ally, the Government in Washington, D.C., where on 24 April another bill was signed to enable more arms shipments around the world, including \$26.4 billion worth of military aid to Israel, which is almost eight times the amount that the Americans allocate for that country annually. That will bring Israel new bombs and missiles to kill Palestinian civilians, which is how much the United States actually cares about peace in the Middle East. That move, coupled with the suspension of UNRWA funding, is causing growing resentment and outrage even within the United States, where anti-Israel demonstrations have swept across the campuses of major universities. The outrage of young people is understandable. Washington's position on UNRWA seems particularly cynical and disconnected from reality, given that the independent review group led by Catherine Colonna not only confirmed UNRWA's compliance with the principle of neutrality and its key role in providing aid to the Palestinians, but also concluded that Israel has not been able to prove its suspicions.

The blind support of the United States for its ally in the region has become a destabilizing factor in itself. The Security Council is paralysed. In the

context, the United States veto of draft resolution S/2024/312, which recommended that the General Assembly admit Palestine as a full Member State of the United Nations, was predictable. In doing so, it not only blocked an attempt to correct a historic injustice against the Palestinians and their fundamental right to self-determination, but it also revealed its true attitude towards the possibility of a two-State solution, which underpins all Security Council and General Assembly decisions on Palestine and the related peace initiatives.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): We too thank Special Coordinator Wennesland and Director Wosornu of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for their sobering updates.

More than seven months of devastation, hostilities and suffering have passed since Hamas's heinous terror attack. Japan reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of the attack and its call for the immediate release of the hostages. As we meet, the situation on the ground in Rafah is worsening rapidly, owing to continued and intensifying attacks and the destruction of buildings and infrastructure. We are also appalled to hear that since the military operation in Rafah began, more than 800,000 Palestinians have been forcibly displaced yet again despite the international community's opposition. Most have fled to Deir Al-Balah or Khan Younis, overcrowded areas with dire humanitarian conditions and little access to basic necessities, as we heard from the OCHA briefer. What is more, the closure of the Rafah border crossing has led to a stand-off that has prevented desperately needed aid from reaching the population. A full-blown famine has already gripped the north and is now imminent in the south as well. The crossing must be reopened at once.

Japan welcomes the fact that the maritime corridor through the pier built by the United States is now operational, but that cannot substitute for humanitarian aid arriving through land routes. We are also pleased that the United Nations mechanism established in accordance with resolution 2720 (2023) began its operations on 7 May. We urge all parties, particularly Israel, to continue engaging constructively with Ms. Sigrid Kaag on accelerating the delivery of humanitarian relief consignments to Gaza. For its part, Japan contributed to the recent opening of an International Committee of the Red Cross field hospital in Rafah to help address the overwhelming medical needs. We will continue to do everything possible to save innocent lives.

As the conflict has dragged on, we have seen an increase in the tragic loss of civilian lives, including brave aid workers. We mourn the fact that more than 190 United Nations staff members have now been killed since 7 October, including an international member of the Department of Safety and Security who was recently shot in Rafah. United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers are there to help the people. They must be protected and allowed to safely carry out their duties.

Countless lives, including those of the hostages who remain in captivity, are at stake, and every hour worsens the plight of the people of Gaza. Now is the time to end the attacks and achieve an immediate ceasefire. Japan reiterates its opposition to the Israeli military ground operation in Rafah, which involves heavy civilian casualties. We sincerely hope that the parties will swiftly return to the negotiations facilitated by the United States, Egypt and Qatar in order to reach a substantive cessation of hostilities that will enable a massive influx of aid at scale and the release of the hostages.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to start by thanking the delegations of Algeria and Slovenia for convening today's meeting, as well as Special Coordinator Wennesland and Director Wosornu of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their briefings. I reiterate my country's support for their essential work.

It has been just over a week since the Security Council's most recent meeting on this issue, and the situation is unfortunately becoming more difficult by the day. The agreements that seemed close and that would have enabled both a cessation of hostilities and the release of the hostages who are still being held by Hamas have not been finalized. Military operations have expanded in the southern Gaza Strip, in particular in eastern Rafah. The number of people who have been killed or injured is growing, while more than 640,000 have fled the city and are facing increasingly precarious situations. The Rafah crossing has been closed, and although the Kerem Shalom crossing is operational, the logistical and security conditions have made the delivery of large-scale humanitarian aid impossible. That has of course aggravated an already desperate situation.

A week ago, the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, reported on the activation of the mechanism mandated

by resolution 2720 (2023), while a few days ago we saw that the installation of a temporary dock to allow aid into Gaza by sea had been completed. All those valuable efforts are unfortunately inadequate in the absence of the conditions and agreements that could enable a massive increase in aid. Ecuador would like to remind everyone that it is mandatory and essential to implement all the Council's resolutions and the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice if humanitarian aid is to reach all who need it in a safe, sufficient and timely manner. An immediate ceasefire, as demanded by the Council in resolution 2728 (2024), is unavoidable. All hostages taken during the terrorist acts perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October, which we once again condemn, must also be immediately and unconditionally released.

Ecuador is grateful to the countries that have continued to make efforts to mediate between the parties and reach the long-awaited agreement that will lead to a ceasefire, the entry of aid and the release of hostages, and we encourage the continuation of such efforts despite the difficulties.

Finally, my country reiterates its belief that the only way to end the conflict is through a peaceful, negotiated, definitive and just solution for the parties, based on the coexistence of two States, Palestine and Israel, the 1967 borders and the relevant resolutions.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): Let me begin by expressing our appreciation to Special Coordinator Wennesland and Director Wosornu for their briefings on the ongoing developments in the Gaza Strip, including Rafah.

One might have thought that the catastrophe in Gaza could get no worse, but the occupying Power continues to devise and execute increasingly horrendous punishments for innocent civilians in Gaza. All of that is taking place while the Strip is besieged, land routes are locked off, and Israel rains bombs and bullets on innocent, defenceless people, including women and children. The humanitarian situation is beyond catastrophic, as we have heard from our briefers. With the key Rafah and Kerem Abu Salem crossings blocked or ineffective because of the security situation, humanitarian operations are being crippled. Guyana calls on Israel to adhere to its legal obligations as an occupying Power to ensure that the needs of the population are met and that supplies essential to its survival are provided. The International Court of Justice has clearly underlined Israel's obligation in that regard, but Israel continues to turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to the rule of law.

After decimating Gaza, Israel is retracing its steps, with fresh bombings from north to south. Quite cynically, it has urged civilians to evacuate to safe zones, but the question is repeatedly asked: which place in Gaza is safe? The answer is zero — none. An estimated 800,000 persons have been displaced from Rafah in a continuous cycle of bombing and displacement. The death toll is rising and is nearly 36,000. The number of injured persons is reaching 80,000. Guyana calls for an end to the Israeli operation in Gaza and for the hostilities to cease. We demand an immediate ceasefire.

Alarm bells are sounding incessantly in Gaza, and the Council must intervene now to stop the carnage. In that context, I wish to underscore three critical points.

First, civilians in Gaza must be provided with the goods and services essential to their survival. Guyana has taken note of the projection by Under-Secretary-General Griffiths that aid shortages could have apocalyptic consequences for Gaza. For months, the Council has been apprised of the various hindrances to aid delivery into Gaza and of what is needed to prevent famine and disease. Three resolutions have been adopted, all emphasizing the need for the immediate, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people. The humanitarian situation has, however, worsened, owing both to the unbearable security situation and to the inadequacy of the humanitarian response. While acknowledging the efforts of those who have attempted to address that issue by other means, Guyana stresses that there is no substitute for land routes. We therefore call on the Government of Israel to comply with its obligations under international law to ensure that the civilian population is not deprived of essential goods and services.

Secondly, Guyana calls on the Security Council to make impactful decisions to end the war. Pursuant to Article 24 of the Charter, the States Members of the United Nations conferred on the Security Council the mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security in order “to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations”. We must therefore consider all options available to the Council to bring the war to a swift end. Let us starve the war of its fuel.

Thirdly, we must end the impunity with which those acts against the Palestinian people are being committed. One effect of the ongoing impunity has been that other actors have decided to use the ongoing

hostilities in Gaza as a pretext to launch or intensify their own hostilities. The Council cannot afford to allow justice to be outsourced and must act decisively to ensure that it is served.

I conclude by emphasizing the most urgent need to address all the dimensions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the current manifestation of the conflict that began on 7 October 2023. In the short term, we must secure a ceasefire, the release of all hostages and the rapid delivery to the Palestinian people of humanitarian assistance at scale. Simultaneously, we must work to ensure that Palestinians exercise their right to self-determination, including through the creation of their own independent State based on the pre-1967 borders.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland and Director Wosornu for their briefings today.

The United States commitment to Israel’s security is ironclad — and I want to repeat: ironclad. We want to see Hamas defeated, Sinwar and other Hamas leaders brought to justice and the hostages released. We have been very clear that we oppose Hamas’s control of Gaza.

At the same time, we also do not support, and will not support, an Israeli reoccupation of Gaza, and we have long maintained our objection to any large-scale military operation in Rafah that risks mass civilian harm. The United States has been clear about those positions in private with our Israeli partners, just as we have articulated them publicly time and again.

We heard today that the United Nations estimates that roughly 810,000 civilians have been displaced from Rafah in recent days. Many of those people have been displaced multiple times since 7 October 2023. It is, therefore, evident — notwithstanding the clear and consistent warnings of the United States and of the broader international community — that Israel’s preparations to meet the needs of those displaced people are insufficient. Palestinians who are in Rafah or who have fled from it now face life-threatening conditions, including the threat of mass contagion from raw sewage.

Israel should take immediate and decisive actions to remedy the situation and ensure the protection of civilians. There must be no delay. Lives depend on it. We are also gravely concerned that the Rafah crossing remains closed and that Kerem Shalom is

only sporadically accessible to humanitarians. Those crossings are vital lifelines, and those closures reverse the gains in humanitarian access achieved in recent weeks. Therefore, let me be clear: the Rafah crossing must be reopened — now. There can be no further delay. Again, lives depend on it.

Of course, humanitarian aid cannot reach civilians if humanitarian workers are not protected. The United States is deeply troubled by the incident of 13 May, in which an international United Nations staff member was killed and another was seriously injured. Our thoughts remain with the victims' families and loved ones. We take note of the statement made by the United Nations that the vehicle involved in that incident was targeted with a tank round, during a movement the United Nations stated was appropriately reported through deconfliction procedures.

We need not wait for the results of an investigation to know what more Israel can and must do to fix the broken deconfliction process in Gaza. United States National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan emphasized to Israeli leaders yesterday the specific steps necessary to build a more effective deconfliction mechanism. Those steps include ensuring 24/7 access to Israel Defense Forces decision makers with clear information-sharing at all times and avoiding unnecessary delays for assistance convoys through the establishment of fixed corridors inside Gaza.

We reiterate our calls to establish mechanisms to facilitate visa issuances and the entry and exit of humanitarian and medical personnel. We also underscore the difficulties that humanitarian workers face, which impair their ability to provide life-saving assistance to Gazans, including frequent closures of crossing gates and paralyzing delays at checkpoints. We condemn the recent attacks on humanitarian convoys traversing the West Bank. Israel is responsible for the security of these convoys. It must stop the attacks and hold the perpetrators accountable.

The growing humanitarian crisis in Rafah comes amid some signs of progress in the centre and north. Late last week, the first shipments of humanitarian assistance arrived on the shores of Gaza through the multinational humanitarian pier. The tireless work of the United States and several critical partners created the conditions to enable that additive avenue for aid into Gaza.

When at full operating capacity, the humanitarian maritime corridor can provide assistance for as many as 500,000 people in one month. More aid from the United States and other countries continues to arrive in Cyprus, where it will be loaded onto ships for delivery to the pier. But in the effort to mitigate famine, aid by sea is not a substitute for aid provided by land. The United States therefore continues to work to further increase the amount of aid getting into Gaza by land crossings. In recent weeks and months, the United States has proposed alternatives to a major ground offensive in Rafah that we believe will better advance Israel's goal of an enduring defeat of Hamas and ensure the protection of civilians. We continue to urge Israel to connect its military operations to a political strategy that can ensure the lasting defeat of Hamas, the release of all the hostages and a better future for Gaza.

Just as the United States has been clear with Israel's leadership about our views regarding the best course of action in Rafah, the Council must be clear with Hamas on the need to reach a deal to bring about a ceasefire with the release of hostages. We heard from Hamas's victims at the Arria Formula meeting convened by the United States last week. They spoke with a moral clarity and demonstrated a basic decency that some members of the Council, sadly, lack in their refusal to condemn Hamas for its terrorism and atrocities. Over the weekend, Israel announced it had recovered the bodies of four hostages killed by Hamas. Our condolences go out to the families of those individuals. Their deaths are a further reminder of the suffering caused by Hamas since 7 October.

As President Biden emphasized yesterday, we need an immediate ceasefire in order to stop the fighting and bring the hostages home. Hamas must comply with the Security Council's resolutions and release the hostages. That is how to bring the fighting to an end.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Mozambique.

I wish to thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, and Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations and Advocacy at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their comprehensive briefings on the situation in Gaza.

Rafah has rightly become the focus of international attention and great concern due to the potential for catastrophe, with civilians suffering from the growing

large-scale Israeli military offensive, as repeatedly warned by Israeli authorities themselves. In the past seven months, the Gaza Strip, tragically, has become one of the most dangerous places on Earth for civilians caught in the crossfire, facing death, horror and displacement on a massive scale. Even humanitarian workers are not spared of the killings. We must recognize this and act urgently in order to alleviate this immense and unacceptable suffering.

Reports of forced civilian displacement in Rafah and the denial of vital humanitarian aid are alarming violations of international law that cannot be tolerated. We reiterate our call for immediate action to address this deepening humanitarian crisis.

While we acknowledge the ongoing diplomatic efforts towards a ceasefire, we believe that a major Israeli military operation in Rafah would be disastrous, with catastrophic and unimaginable consequences for civilians. We echo the repeated calls from leaders, United Nations officials and non-governmental organizations for Israel to fully comply with its obligations under international law, including allowing increased humanitarian access and prioritizing civilian protection in Gaza.

Given the scale of the potential humanitarian catastrophe, humanitarian assistance must take precedence over any obstacle or pretext. Every effort must be made to ensure that aid reaches those in desperate need swiftly and without hindrance.

The Council has approved binding resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024) in order to address the situation in Gaza in accordance with international law. We strongly encourage engagement with all parties in order to ensure their full and urgent implementation. It is critical to cease hostilities immediately, strengthen diplomatic pressure for just peace and uphold the human rights and dignity of the long-suffering Palestinian people.

While we recognize the complexity of the situation, we urge Israel to carefully weigh its State military objectives against the interconnected factors of civilian safety and stability in the entire region. We recognize that the situation in Rafah is very complex, with military objectives, civilian safety and international relations all at play. Israel's determination to topple Hamas's remaining battalions in Rafah must also be carefully weighed against those interconnected factors.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): Gaza will haunt the conscience of the world long after this genocide stops, and stop it must — now. We have spoken too many times and our people are still being murdered every single day. Let me therefore just say the following today.

Two million people have lost loved ones in the past seven months — lost family members, friends, limbs, their homes and their communities. Schools, universities and hospitals have been destroyed. People are being starved to death. Refugees from the 1948 Nakba, who were waiting for the day the Nakba ends, are now forced to relive it, with even more cruelty and devastation than 76 years ago.

This is happening despite the decisions of every relevant international body on Earth and calls by nearly every State in the world. There is only one conclusion to be drawn from these facts — Israel is deliberately destroying life in Gaza, and it will not be deterred by the rules of international law or positions adopted by States or international bodies. It will be deterred only by resolute action holding it accountable for its decisions and forcing it to change course.

The whole world opposed Israel's assault on Rafah, yet Israel is proceeding. All of the Security Council opposed Israel going into Rafah, yet the Israeli Government is proceeding. Israel has pushed an entire population to the southern border of Gaza, to Rafah, through mass killing and destruction. People have been forcibly displaced time and time again in horrific conditions. They are being displaced yet again by the hundreds of thousands — with nowhere to go, nowhere to stay, nowhere to be safe, dragging what remains of their lives, confronted with death all around them and abandoned to this terrifying fate.

In parallel, Israel has escalated its massacres in northern Gaza, notably in Jabaliya. Instead of opening crossing points for humanitarian aid, Israel decided to seize the Rafah crossing by force, while providing cover for the destruction of humanitarian aid by Israeli settlers and extremists in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. At a time when the international community was calling to flood Gaza with humanitarian aid to stop the famine under way and the human suffering resulting from that horrible siege, Israel imposed on our people a

drought of humanitarian aid, a deliberate and undeniable use of starvation as method of war. Israel must pull out from the Rafah crossing, open all crossings and allow the unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid and must withdraw its occupation forces from the Gaza Strip.

Israel has determined who its enemies are: the Palestinian people as a whole, the United Nations, its agencies, the Secretary-General, the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the world courts, non-governmental organizations — Palestinian, Israeli and international — and every State on earth that dares to denounce its crimes.

With what audacity does Israel kill, maim, forcibly displace, arbitrarily arrest, torture and starve an entire civilian population? With what audacity does it occupy and annex our land? With what audacity does it give itself the right of life and death over every single Palestinian, and proclaim it has a right to veto our national rights, including to self-determination and to the independence of our State — with the audacity, or should I say arrogance, that impunity provides.

We speak often in this Chamber of the international law-based order. Israel is asking the Council to destroy the international law-based order with its own hands so it can continue killing our people and annexing our land in full impunity. It will not listen to reason or to members' protests, calls or demands. The Council has tried every other way possible, and Israel has gone further and further in its breach of the Charter of the United Nations and the law. It expects everything from Council members — blind political support, weapons and full economic and trade privileges — and rejects any commitment in return to abide by the rule of international law, to end its occupation and to advance just and lasting peace.

Israel insults and humiliates its closest friends and allies. It expects them to align their policies with its crimes, to sacrifice everything they stand for and to stand not with Israel but with Israel's colonial, supremacist and inhumane policies towards the Palestinian people. That is becoming increasingly impossible for many of them. And we believe that very soon we will reach a tipping point at which countries will stand up to defend freedom, justice and peace, and there are already important signs to that effect. Indeed, people around the world are making themselves heard. Governments are more and more outspoken. But please remember that every day without reaching that tipping

point means lives destroyed. I urge members to use every tool at their disposal, and members have many tools, to stop the massacres, as Council members and as States.

An entire nation is fighting for its survival before the very eyes of Council members. The future of our region, the future of our world, the future of this international law-based order, will depend on what the Council does next.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Erdan (Israel): This morning, in an act of outrageous absurdity and moral bankruptcy, the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) announced that he will seek arrest warrants for Israeli leaders and Hamas leaders. This is a despicable and unforgettable day on which an immoral equivalence is being made between a terror organization and the leaders of a vibrant democracy. This is a dark day for the international community and a dark day for international institutions.

Israel suffered the most brutal massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. Men, women and children were targeted and murdered. Babies were burned alive, and rape and sexual violence were widespread. And from 7 October 2023 until today, Israel has been fighting against that evil to bring our hostages home and to prevent such atrocities from ever happening again. Israel is fighting for her future justly, morally and in accordance with international law. Yet for the ICC Prosecutor, the genocidal terrorists hold the same moral standing as the leaders of the law-abiding State of Israel. It is unfathomable. It is an immoral distortion of epic proportions. It is a blood libel, a witch-hunt driven by pure Jew-hatred and political interests, but even more than that, it is a clear sign of what international organizations have become.

Those international institutions, be it the ICC, the Human Rights Council, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East or other bodies, were established with the best of intentions, but now those organizations have lost their way. The ICC is now a weapon of criminals and terrorists. Their moral compass has broken.

Today the forces of evil have physical weapons. They have missiles, rockets, drones and guns, as Council members have seen. But beyond those tools of

war, they also have diplomatic and legal weapons, an arsenal of evil that includes the weaponization of this Organization and its bodies. All have become tools in the hands of monsters, and Council members continue playing along, playing directly into their hands. They must wake up and look at the world burning around them.

Just this morning, the Council observed a moment of silence to commemorate the mass murdering President of Iran. A month ago, Raisi — as the Iranian people call him, the butcher of Tehran — launched an unprecedented missile and drone strike on Israel to murder thousands of innocent Israelis deliberately. The blood of thousands of innocent Iranians is on his hands — women, members of the LGBTQ community, peaceful protesters and many, many others. He is responsible for butchering thousands around the globe. That is to whom the Security Council dedicates a moment of silence — a terrorist, a man who murdered, oppressed and imprisoned so many? How can it be that the Council's list of moral priorities is so distorted? This Council, which has done nothing to advance the release of our hostages, commemorates the man responsible for their suffering. What is next? Will the Council hold a moment of silence for Bin Laden? Will there be a vigil for Hitler? We would not be surprised. This is a dark day for the ICC, this is a dark day for the Security Council, and this is a dark day for all the international bodies that have become weapons in the hands of murderers.

Merely four days have passed since the Council heard the chilling testimonies of released Israeli hostages and the heart-wrenching story of a mother whose son's body is being held in Gaza by terrorists. The Council waited more than seven months before hearing a single word from the released Israeli hostages, but it took only four days to forget their gut-churning stories and hold a discussion on how to prevent their release, because that is what members are doing here today. Here we are, this time in a formal Council meeting, continuing to do nothing productive to advance the release of the hostages. Instead of working to bring them home, the Council is convening to find ways to keep them in Rafah.

The Council does not function based on logic or morality. Sadly, it is simply a political tool exploited by some members to advance skewed agendas, because they can ask for additional Council meetings time and again. What started this war was not the humanitarian situation in Gaza or an impending operation in Rafah. What started this war was the sheer evil perpetrated by Hamas, and the way to end this war is not by discussing

Israel's operation in Rafah but by finally holding the murderous terrorists accountable. Israel entered Gaza to bring our hostages home and to ensure that Hamas cannot pose a threat to Israelis. It is that simple. We did not want to be in Gaza, we do not want to be in Gaza, we have no intention of staying in Gaza. It is only about saving lives and defending our future from a terror organization. And what is the focus here today? Again, it is to give the terrorists immunity.

Do members honestly think that Israel wants to operate in Rafah? Let me clarify. No country seeks to avoid an operation in Rafah more than Israel, because it is our best and brightest who are making the ultimate sacrifice there, not anyone else's. But there are still thousands of Hamas terrorists in Rafah, and members ignore them. Hostages are being held there, and members ignore them. Hamas leaders are hiding in Rafah, and members ignore them. We have already uncovered 50 terror tunnels in Rafah, and that is just the tip of the iceberg. What do members expect Israel to do? What would their countries do about everything that I just mentioned? Is there an alternative? Should we pray to God that Hamas just disappears? Is there a magic spell that we should cast to ensure that 7 October 2023 is never repeated? Every day we learn of more hostages being murdered by Hamas. The clock is ticking, and we must take every step to bring them home. That is why a counter-terrorism operation in Rafah must take place. There is no other choice. One cannot extinguish a fire simply by putting most of it out — it will spread again, and members know it. The fire of terror is burning in Rafah.

Sadly, there is no alternative, but if the Council wants to take steps that could truly advance an end to the war, then I have a proposition for it: designate Hamas as a terror organization, impose sanctions on their leaders, demand that they release the hostages and put down their arms, show them that the Council no longer follows their script. The war can end today, tomorrow. It is up to the Council. If Hamas returns the hostages and surrenders, not one more shot needs to be fired. Why are members not echoing that message to the world? It is Hamas that murdered and brutalized Israelis, it is Hamas that is holding 128 hostages, and it is Hamas that has sworn to commit the atrocities of 7 October again and again until Israel is destroyed. Call out the terrorists and tell the Gazans who it is that is truly responsible for their suffering.

When it comes to the evacuation of civilians from Rafah, my heart truly goes out to them. It is truly terrible that they have to be evacuated, many of them not for the first time, I agree. But the removal of civilians from an active war zone is not an act that should be condemned here, it is an act that should be supported, especially by a Council mandated to help to uphold security and protect life. Close to 1 million civilians have already left Rafah, and more are leaving every day. They have moved to a designated humanitarian zone that is being filled with aid, and our hope is for many more civilians to leave Rafah and move out of harm's way, because temporary evacuation is reversible, but the loss of life is not. Israel is advancing its operation in Gaza slowly and carefully, even though any military expert would say that wars are won by taking swift and overwhelming action. We are trying to mitigate as many civilian casualties as possible. What are we expected to do? Should we grant immunity to the terrorists still in Rafah? Have members considered the message that that would send to terrorists worldwide? What is the message here? Hide behind civilians and receive immunity from the Security Council.

Today the Council chose to continue to sit idly by. What it should be doing is taking action against Hamas terrorists, action against Iran and action against all those who seek to deliberately murder, rape and destroy. Utilize the Council's power and pressure the terrorists. Help to bring this war to an end, with Hamas eliminated and our hostages returned. Help us to bring about a brighter future for all.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for holding this meeting at the request of Algeria and Slovenia. We thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland and Ms. Edem Wosornu for their thorough briefings.

Since October 2023, the Gaza Strip has been witnessing a man-made horrific humanitarian disaster as a result of the illegal war waged by Israel against the Strip. That war has claimed the lives of more than 34,000 martyrs, most of whom are women and children. It has also injured 78,000 people and destroyed 60 per cent of the residential buildings there, and 24 of the 32 hospitals are now completely out of service. The infrastructure is almost completely destroyed. That reflects Israel's approach of deliberately making the Strip uninhabitable.

Despite all international calls on Israel to stop the bloodshed and the continued killing of civilians, despite the continued mediation efforts by Egypt, Qatar and the United States, and despite multiple Security Council resolutions, the response was another military operation in Rafah and its surroundings. Rafah hosts more than a million civilians who were forcibly displaced many times, over months, without personal effects, medication or enough food, which has led to an unprecedented humanitarian disaster.

That humanitarian crime in Rafah is unfolding before Council members, and we hold the entire international community responsible for its repercussions. We cite the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Mr. Philippe Lazzarini, who said that Israel's claims that civilians can move to safe places lack credibility. Mr. Lazzarini has also said that the humanitarian situation is deteriorating. More than 800,000 Palestinian citizens have been displaced from Rafah, which means almost half of the Palestinians who were previously forced to flee there. He has also confirmed that the minimum conditions for the provision of humanitarian aid in areas to which people have been directed to go do not exist, and that humanitarian aid is running out while it is impossible to distribute the rest due to the closure of border crossings and insecurity.

In that context, Egypt would like to present to Council members and the world at large some undisputed facts.

First, as the occupying Power, Israel is bound by all Security Council resolutions and International Court of Justice decisions issued since the beginning of the crisis. It is also bound by international law, international humanitarian law and the rules of war. We stress that the implementation of those resolutions and decisions must not be a matter of choice and selectively. They are binding and mandatory. International law is not a mantle to be donned by countries whenever they wish and depending on their whims.

Secondly, we must not accept flimsy justifications for the military operation in Rafah, or empty claims repeated by the occupation authority regarding measures that have been taken to alleviate the impact of the humanitarian repercussions. It has been repeatedly proven that those claims are not credible given that, as indicated in United Nations reports, famine is imminent in Gaza.

Thirdly, we confirm that the flow of humanitarian aid through the Rafah border crossing has stopped as a

direct result of the continued — and condemned — Israeli military operation in Palestinian Rafah, which the entire international community warned against and rejected. That is a manifestation of Israeli persistence in imposing collective punishment on Palestinians. Israel aims to tighten the siege on civilians by militarily controlling the border and creating conditions on the ground that make any humanitarian effort nearly impossible.

Deliberate Israeli actions have led to clashes and a security situation that has become a direct threat to the lives of humanitarian workers, some of whom have already lost their lives. Engaging in humanitarian work by agencies operating from the Palestinian side to ensure the flow of aid is now tantamount to undertaking a suicide mission. In that context, I would like to recall that, in the Israeli war on Gaza, it is Israeli army fire that has killed or injured many humanitarian workers, including more than 190 United Nations workers and other staff of international non-governmental organizations. The current situation is no coincidence; Israel is fully aware of the impact of its operations on the ground, and all members are aware that, since the beginning of the war, Israel has aimed at turning the Gaza Strip into an uninhabitable place through deliberate actions that fully violate international law and international humanitarian law.

Fourthly, it is possible to resume humanitarian efforts if Israel shoulders its responsibilities, immediately withdraws from the Rafah border crossing, opens all six border crossings into Gaza from the Israeli side and ensures the flow of humanitarian aid. In that context, we are surprised and reject that some disregard the fact that the border crossings exist, as they go along with the narrative that implies that aid can be delivered only through the Rafah crossing for reasons known to everyone. That narrative aims at distorting the facts and holding Egypt and the United Nations responsible for the aid not being delivered, despite the efforts made to ensure the flow of aid to our Palestinian brethren and the burdens we are bearing as a result of the obstacles that the occupation authorities have been putting in our way for the past seven months.

Fifthly, Egypt seeks to ensure the end of the war, the provision of humanitarian aid and the release of hostages and prisoners on both sides. That is based on our firm commitment to international law and international humanitarian law. It is the same commitment that prompted us to join the case filed by South Africa at the International Court of Justice. We did so because we believe in the role of the Court in achieving justice, as Egypt has played a pioneering role in achieving peace in the region, and because we are fully committed to the rights of the Palestinians. That commitment is based on principles, and we do not accept bargaining with them.

In conclusion, we reject the continued military operation in Rafah and warn of its disastrous humanitarian repercussions. We call upon the Security Council and the international community to compel Israel to shoulder responsibilities that are clearly and unequivocally stipulated in international humanitarian law. The Council must exert pressure to stop all military operations in the Gaza Strip. It must create a safe environment to resume humanitarian action, in line with Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 2720 (2023), the decisions of the International Court of Justice and the provisions of international humanitarian law. Egypt will continue to work tirelessly to find ways to ensure the urgent and safe provision of humanitarian aid in line with our humanitarian duty towards our Palestinian brethren. We will continue to support Palestinians and their resilience, on their land, against any attempts to forcibly displace them and against the use of siege and starvation to push the people out of the Gaza Strip.

I call on Council members to stop the flagrant daily violations of international humanitarian law, to stop the crimes perpetrated against the Palestinian people and to stop the war.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.