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Provisional

President: Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
China	Mr. Fu Cong
Ecuador	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
France	Mr. De Rivière
Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan	Mr. Yamazaki
Malta	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Sierra Leone	Mr. Sowa
Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

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

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

I give the floor to Mr. Wennesland.

Mr. Wennesland: Before turning to my regular briefing, allow me to express my serious concerns about the risk of escalation in the region, particularly between Israel and Hizbullah along the Blue Line. I reiterate the Secretary-General's concern that further military escalation will only guarantee more suffering, more devastation to communities in Lebanon and Israel and more potentially catastrophic consequences for the region. In complement to the efforts of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, I am encouraging all sides to immediately take urgent steps to de-escalate the situation.

The ongoing hostilities in Gaza are further fuelling regional instability. There must be an immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and an immediate humanitarian ceasefire — there is a deal on the table, and it should be agreed, and fast. I welcome the efforts, including by Egypt, Qatar and the United States, to reach such a deal. The United Nations stands ready to support its implementation.

I will now turn to my regular briefing on the situation in the Middle East devoted to the thirtieth report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) (S/2024/480). The Secretary-General's written report covers the period between 19 March and 10 June 2024.

Since the submission of the written report, intensive hostilities between Hamas and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in Gaza have continued, resulting in hundreds of fatalities. The devastating impact of the hostilities on the civilian population in Gaza and the unprecedented humanitarian crisis remain deeply alarming. I myself have witnessed the deterioration of the security situation on each of my visits. Ongoing military operations and a near-total breakdown of civil order have resulted in multiple reported incidents of theft of relief supplies and shootings that posed significant risks to the population and humanitarian workers. A shooting incident on 15 June, resulting in the killing of two Palestinians while an aid convoy was on the road, prompted the cancellation of convoys to the Kerem Shalom crossing between 16 and 18 June to mitigate risks.

Effective mechanisms for humanitarian notification, safe conditions for humanitarian operations and sufficient access to humanitarian needs remain sorely lacking and must be put in place without delay. Following another series of serious security incidents this past weekend affecting humanitarian actors in Gaza, the United Nations welcomes the opportunity for clarification with the IDF on how the current situation can be clearly improved.

Hunger and food insecurity persist. While projections of imminent famine in the northern governorates have been averted through an increase in food deliveries, food insecurity has worsened in the south. Nearly all of Gaza's population continues to face high levels of food insecurity, with nearly half a million people facing catastrophic insecurity. I welcome the high-level conference convened in Jordan on 11 June by Jordan, Egypt and the United Nations, which urged all parties to do their part to ensure that we can fully address the urgent needs of the population in Gaza.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority's fiscal situation remains very precarious amid broader economic and security concerns across the occupied West Bank. Announcements by Israel's Finance Minister that he intends to continue blocking the transfer of all

clearance revenues to the Palestinian Authority and to take measures that would end corresponding banking relations between Israeli and Palestinian banks at the end of this month threaten to plunge the Palestinian fiscal situation into an even greater crisis, potentially upending the entire Palestinian financial system.

I take note of the recent appointment by the Head of the Israeli military's Civil Administration of a civilian deputy and the delegation of authority to that position for oversight of many areas of land management and development, planning and day-to-day life in Area C of the occupied West Bank. That the appointment and delegation of authority is expected to expedite Israeli settlement expansion, and regularization under Israeli law of illegal outposts is concerning and undermines prospects for a two-State solution.

Allow me to reiterate several observations of the Secretary-General regarding the implementation of the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016) during the reporting period.

I once again strongly condemn the horrific armed attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups in Israel on 7 October 2023 and the continued holding of hostages in Gaza. Nothing can justify those acts of terror. All remaining hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally. The use of human shields and the indiscriminate firing of rockets towards Israeli population centres are violations of international humanitarian law and must cease completely.

The scope of death and destruction in Gaza has been catastrophic and horrifying. Israel's use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas has destroyed entire neighbourhoods and damaged hospitals and other civilian infrastructure, schools, mosques and United Nations premises. I unequivocally condemn the killing and maiming of civilians in Gaza, including women and children. The protection of civilians is paramount in any armed conflict. International humanitarian law applies to all parties to a conflict at all times.

The impact of the ongoing hostilities on the humanitarian situation in Gaza is deeply concerning. The life-threatening conditions facing the more than 1.7 million internally displaced people in Gaza, where nowhere is safe, must be addressed immediately.

The amount of essential goods, including humanitarian assistance, that has been allowed into Gaza continues to fall short of meeting the needs of the

population. While it is positive that Israel has opened additional entry points for humanitarian aid, others have been closed, and it is imperative that all necessary access points be opened and made operational and for humanitarian access to be sustained. All parties must protect humanitarian workers at all times. Attacks on humanitarian aid workers and facilities are unacceptable, must cease immediately and should all be investigated. Donors' financial contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East are welcome, and further financial support is needed to meet needs in Gaza and throughout the region. However, attacks on the Agency's facilities and activities are deeply concerning.

I remain deeply troubled by Israel's continued settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. I reiterate that all Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have no legal validity and are in flagrant violation of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. I urge the Government of Israel to cease all settlement activity immediately. The escalating violence and tensions in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are deeply worrisome. Intensified armed exchanges between Palestinians and the Israeli security forces, alongside lethal attacks by Palestinians against Israelis and by Israeli settlers against Palestinians, have also exacerbated tensions and led to exceedingly high levels of casualties and detentions. All perpetrators of violence must be held accountable and swiftly brought to justice. I urge Israel to ensure the safety and security of the Palestinian population. I reiterate that security forces in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, must exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable to protect life. I am encouraged by the Palestinian Authority's reform plan. The United Nations will continue to support the Palestinian Authority in implementing critical reforms and urges the international community to provide immediate support to address the Palestinian Authority's financial challenges, strengthen its governance capacity and prepare it to reassume its responsibilities in Gaza.

Palestinians and Israelis can no longer wait to establish a viable political horizon. Efforts to address security-related and humanitarian challenges that ignore or sidestep fundamental political questions are doomed to fail. All stakeholders must urgently take steps that will lead to a two-State reality. The United

Nations will continue to support all such efforts. The United Nations remains committed to supporting steps towards ending the occupation and resolving the conflict, in line with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and bilateral agreements in pursuit of the vision of two States — Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestinian State — living side by side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

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

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

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing today and for his most recent report.

The world's eyes are rightfully on Gaza, but we cannot ignore the situation in the West Bank. Last year saw the highest number of Palestinians killed in the West Bank since the United Nations began collecting data in 2005. Six months into 2024, the number of Palestinians having been killed in the West Bank remains deeply alarming. We are concerned about the significant uptick in deadly violence against Palestinian civilians by settlers in the West Bank and condemn it in the strongest terms. We urge Israel to prevent those attacks, working in coordination with the Palestinian authorities.

We reiterate our position that advancing Israeli settlements in the West Bank is an obstacle to the achievement of a two-State solution — the end state that we all want to see, as we seek to bring the fighting in Gaza to a close. Furthermore, we reiterate our belief that Israel's programme of support for the expansion of settlements is inconsistent with international law and serves only to weaken Israeli security.

In addition, we remain deeply concerned about the violence committed by extremist settlers in the West Bank. As members know, the United States has sanctioned a number of extremist settlers and their organizations for their involvement in acts of violence. We have also sanctioned the violent extremist Israeli group Tzav 9, which has repeatedly sought to thwart the delivery of aid to Gaza, including aid transiting the West Bank. And earlier this month, the United States

designated a militant Palestinian group — Lions' Den — for violent activity in the West Bank. Those sanctions, implemented under an executive order that aims to promote peace, security and security in the West Bank, make clear that we will act in response to acts of violence in the West Bank, whomever the perpetrators may be. And we will use the tools at our disposal to expose and promote accountability for those who threaten peace, security and stability there. To that end, we commend the Palestinian security forces and the Palestinian Authority for their efforts in maintaining peace and security in the West Bank.

It is also essential for the Palestinian Authority to have the resources it needs to pay the salaries of those security forces and, more broadly, to govern effectively. The Government of the United States will continue to engage the Government of Israel to release the full clearance revenues owed to the Palestinian Authority on time, every month, including the transfers that Israel has not sent since 5 April. We encourage all members here today to provide support as needed in the interim to mitigate against a potential financial collapse of the Palestinian Authority. Of course, Israel and Palestinians should have faith in the Palestinian Authority's ability to govern as a non-corrupt, faithful actor working in the interest of the Palestinian people. It is essential, therefore, that the Palestinian Authority work to reform itself and that it do so as quickly as possible.

Regarding Gaza, a few weeks ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 2735 (2024), which urged Hamas to accept a deal put forward by Israel and called on all parties to implement the three phases of that deal. Unfortunately, Hamas has eschewed the calls from the Council and has ignored voices from across the international community. In fact, rather than accepting the deal, Hamas has added even more conditions. But we have not given up. We are working closely with Egypt and Qatar to see if there are ways to bridge the gaps and achieve an immediate ceasefire with the release of hostages. The reality is that, as Hamas continues to ignore the Council and the readiness of Israel to move forward on a deal, the world is not standing still. People are suffering every single day. Palestinian children, women and men are suffering every single day. From our perspective, it is time to end the intransigence of Hamas, start a ceasefire and release the hostages. We will continue to do the hard work on the ground, with

Egypt, Qatar and Israel, to make that a reality, and we encourage all Security Council members to support those efforts.

As we have said since 7 October 2023, ensuring the sustained delivery of aid to people in need, both into and within Gaza, is a top priority. That is a message we have delivered consistently and will continue to reiterate going forward. As the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report makes alarmingly clear, humanitarian needs inside Gaza are catastrophic, and humanitarian assistance must be scaled up and reach all in need across all of Gaza. With much of Gaza's population facing catastrophic levels of hunger, the situation is at risk of worsening rapidly, especially with sustained disruptions in aid flows.

We also consider the security of United Nations personnel and aid actors on the ground to be a top priority, and we continue to press Israel to create better conditions for facilitating aid delivery inside Gaza. In order for humanitarian organizations to be able to safely continue their life-saving work, the Israel Defense Forces must implement concrete actions to protect humanitarians and improve the overall security environment inside Gaza.

The lack of an effective deconfliction mechanism nearly nine months into the conflict is unacceptable and continues to put humanitarian actors at tremendous risk. But again, we cannot ignore that Hamas is standing in the way of the deal that the Council endorsed and continues to put Palestinian civilians at risk. From our perspective, it is time to end the intransigence from Hamas, start a ceasefire and release the hostages. We will continue to do the hard work of diplomacy on the ground, with Egypt, Qatar and Israel, to make that a reality. And we appreciate the support of all Council members to maintain and strengthen their support for those vital efforts.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): We wish to express our sincere gratitude to Mr. Tor Wennesland, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his important briefing.

Mozambique welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) (S/2024/480), which covers the critical period from March to June 2024. That milestone resolution, adopted with 14 votes in favour, could not be clearer in its scope and content. Inter alia, it emphasizes the following.

First, it emphasizes the demand that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as those activities are illegal and constitute a flagrant violation of international law as well as a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a lasting peace.

Secondly, it emphasizes that all parties must take steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction.

Thirdly, it emphasizes that both parties must act in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law, and that they are under the obligation to fulfil their previous agreements and engagements to de-escalate tensions and build trust and confidence.

Fourthly, it emphasizes calls for the intensification and acceleration of international and regional diplomatic efforts for credible negotiations in the Middle East peace process based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and other related instruments.

Unfortunately, reports from the ground, as expounded by the Special Coordinator, indicate that the current situation in the Middle East contradicts the tenets of the resolution. That is a matter of great concern for us, as it is for the entire Council.

We note with concern that, in addition to the catastrophic situation in Gaza, where there is complete disregard for human dignity and international legal instruments on conflicts, illegal settlement in the occupied territory continues. We are deeply concerned about the continued demolitions of local structures, leaving many people unprotected, with implications that undermine the efforts for peace in the region and the implementation of the two-State solution.

The continuing tensions and violence in the Gaza Strip must come to an end. This protracted conflict threatens to expand to other countries in the region, which could worsen the humanitarian crisis among refugees and displaced people.

We call for the immediate de-escalation of the conflict and for the parties to exercise maximum restraint and abide by Council resolutions, including resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023), 2728 (2024) and 2735 (2024).

Mozambique supports all diplomatic initiatives by the international community, the countries of the region and the United Nations, along with the active and tireless involvement of the Council, to find the best ways to bring about a lasting peace to the region. As we have stated time and again, the only alternative to the conflict between Israel and Palestine lies in the solution of two independent and sovereign States, living side by side. We reiterate Mozambique's strong support for all initiatives aimed at bringing lasting peace and security to Palestine and Israel.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing.

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories remains dire. It is extremely troubling that since 7 October over 500 Palestinians, including over 100 children, have been killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, many of them during intensified operations by Israeli forces. Several casualties have resulted from settler violence. We stress that Israel, as the occupying Power, must exercise maximum restraint. It must abide by its obligations under international law and protect the Palestinian population against all acts or threats of violence.

Israeli illegal settlement expansion, the demolition of Palestinian property and forced evictions must cease. Settlements are illegal under international law. They constitute an obstacle to peace, threaten the viability of a two-State solution and are pushing the West Bank to the precipice.

Malta is also concerned at the numbers of grave violations reported in the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2024/384). We hope that Israel will engage with the Secretary-General and with the wider United Nations to address the concerns referred to in the report. They include the verified detention of hundreds of Palestinian children from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. We echo the Secretary-General's call on Israel to resort to the use of detention only as a last resort, for the shortest period, and to prevent any violence or ill-treatment of the detainees, in line with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We also share his extreme concern regarding the escalating tensions between Israel and Hizbullah, which could provoke further devastation and human suffering in the region.

Malta reiterates its strong call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. We also underline our repeated calls for the immediate and unconditional release of

all hostages held since the heinous 7 October terror attacks. The ground offensive into Rafah has only exacerbated the dire humanitarian conditions and led to the further displacement of over 1 million civilians. The recently published reports by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel (A/HRC/56/26) raise deeply alarming conclusions regarding the alleged commission of crimes under international law, including war crimes and crimes against humanity. All parties to the conflict have an obligation to respect the principles of international law, including international humanitarian law and its principles of necessity, distinction, proportionality and humanity.

Furthermore, the provision of humanitarian aid cannot be dependent on a ceasefire agreement or tactical pauses. Parties must ensure the unimpeded, safe delivery of humanitarian aid at scale into and across Gaza. The implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the full, immediate and effective implementation of the orders of the International Court of Justice remains essential.

De-escalation and the revival of a political horizon must remain a core priority. Key to that are efforts focusing on fiscally and politically reinforcing the Palestinian Authority for effective governance over both the West Bank and Gaza and its inclusion in discussions of a recovery plan for Gaza. Regional and international backing to ensure the Palestinian Authority's stability and credibility is crucial. Recent Israeli actions, which threaten to undermine the Palestinian Authority's fiscal stability, undermine that and must be reversed.

The international community must rally behind the credible and irreversible realization of the two-State solution. Pivotal to that are the fulfilment of Palestinian aspirations for statehood and assurances for Israel's security.

In conclusion, Malta reaffirms its unwavering commitment to a political solution based on 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 all relevant Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I too would like to thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing.

Since the terrorist attack of Hamas on 7 October and the taking of hostages, which Slovenia continues to condemn, the Council has spent hours and days debating the situation in Gaza. At every meeting, members of the Council called for a ceasefire, for a release of hostages and for the distribution of humanitarian aid. We also called for full respect for international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. We were united in arguing against a military operation in Rafah. We unanimously voiced our concerns in several press elements and statements. Despite all the differences and challenges, we have adopted four resolutions demanding a ceasefire, the release of hostages and humanitarian aid.

Yet again, as we meet here today, we continue hearing the same accounts of the situation in Gaza — accounts of desperation, destruction, hunger and danger, with women and especially children suffering the most. There is not even a glimmer of hope, but rather more dead, more maimed and more traumatized Gazans. And hostages are still being kept in the tunnels of Hamas without contact with their families or the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). It seems that both Hamas and Israel continue to use civilians — Gazans and hostages — as an instrument to bring pressure to bear on the other side. But they are human beings and are being exposed to inhumane treatment and suffering for a long nine months.

Extreme hunger is still present in Gaza. Slovenia is deeply troubled by the obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian aid and basic services. We underline the prime responsibilities of Israel as the occupying Power, in line with the Fourth Geneva Convention, to ensure food and medical supplies for the population, not merely allowing its passage. Only the cessation of hostilities in conjunction with sustained humanitarian access can reduce the risk of a famine.

We are deeply concerned by persistent attacks on civilian and United Nations infrastructure, as well as on safe zones and humanitarian personnel. The attack near the ICRC Office on Saturday and the strike on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) aid distribution facility on Sunday prove yet again that the Council's arguments, concerns, demands and decisions remain ignored. We were promised improvements in the deconfliction mechanism. We were told that safe zones would protect civilians. We were guaranteed investigations into incidents leading to massive

casualties among civilians and humanitarian workers. We have seen little to nothing done to fulfil all those promises. I believe that my delegation is not the only one deeply disturbed and frustrated. We expect resolution 2735 (2024), our most recent resolution, to be implemented by both sides. But a follow-up to its non-compliance will be needed soon. The Council must find a way to ensure that it is done.

Slovenia is alarmed by the situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, including by the events that unfolded during the flag march, the continuing movement restrictions in the West Bank, the increase in the disproportionate use of force by Israeli security forces and the number of raids. The abuses, such as the one in Jenin on Saturday, are unacceptable, and we note that the Israel Defense Forces itself marked it as a violation of orders and standard operating procedures.

We remain concerned over the advancement of settlement plans, demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures before our very eyes. We are deeply concerned about the impunity for persistent settler violence, affecting the population in the West Bank and aid delivery to Gaza.

Assaults on the United Nations, its representatives and entities are an attack on what its membership created through decades of multilateral cooperation. We are concerned by the increasing challenges UNRWA is facing. In that regard, we would like to invite Member States to join the shared commitments on UNRWA as an expression of support to the Agency and its mandate.

Slovenia expresses its support to the Government of the State of Palestine as it undertakes much-needed and anticipated reforms in order to regain the trust of the Palestinians. We regret that the deteriorating fiscal situation of the Palestinian Authority is putting severe limitations on those endeavours. And we are deeply concerned about the decision of Israel to seize the Palestinian Authority's tax revenues.

On 4 June, Slovenia officially recognized the State of Palestine. Our recognition was a demonstration of our commitment to a two-State solution. We see it as the only guarantee of lasting peace and security for the State of Israel and the region, for Israelis and Palestinians. The road there leads only through negotiations between two equal and sovereign entities.

In recent months, we have often spoken about the danger of regional escalation, including in the Red Sea and between Israel and Iran. With war drums beating louder along the Blue Line, our fear of miscalculation is growing by the day. We call on both parties to show restraint, commit to full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and use the liaison and coordination mechanisms of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. We welcome the efforts of France and the United States in offering their good offices. The Council should unanimously urge both parties to engage in those discussions and de-escalate.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Tor Wennesland, for the detailed briefing on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the Gaza Strip and the West Bank of the Jordan River.

For nine months now, Israel's operation in Gaza has been ongoing. During that time, more than 37,500 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed; the number of wounded has surpassed 86,000 people; and tens of thousands are missing. More than 1,500 Israelis and foreigners have also died, and 120 people are still being held hostage. In the Strip, civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, schools and housing, has been almost completely destroyed.

The figures on the West Bank are appalling — approximately 600 Palestinians, including approximately 130 children, have been killed, and more than 5,000 have been wounded. Raids by Israeli security forces have resulted in the detention of at least 20 Palestinians over the past 24 hours. According to data from the Palestinian Ministry of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, 9,345 people have been arrested in the West Bank since 7 October 2023.

In parallel, Israelis continue building settlements on occupied Palestinian land, while forcing local residents out of their homes under the pretext that no permits have been issued by the occupying Power. It is horrific and cynical that Palestinians are being forced to demolish their own homes themselves so that they do not have to pay costly demolition fees to Israeli builders.

The magnitude of violence exhibited by radical Israeli settlers, as well as their complete impunity, are staggering. In response to the murder of a 14-year-old Israeli boy from Malachei Hashalom, angry mobs of settlers burned down 37 villages, killed four people

and wounded 91 additional Palestinians — despite the prompt apprehension of the alleged perpetrator. Worst of all, that lawlessness took place in full view of law enforcement officers.

All of this illustrates the vicious cycle of violence in the occupied Palestinian territory, which inevitably leads to further radicalization on both sides. The only solution is to root out the culture of impunity and end the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory.

Turning to Rafah, although all Security Council members have said that the operation in Rafah is unacceptable, it is, nevertheless, in full swing. Resolution 2735 (2024), which envisages some kind of a deal that is supposed to lead up to a ceasefire — at least that is what the United States alleged — is not working. Instead of a recipe for saving Gaza, the Security Council has been sold a pig in a poke, which, as we had warned, turned out to be a dead letter. What is worse, an outright lie has crept into the resolution, which explicitly states that Israel consented to the peace proposal of the international mediators. However, West Jerusalem has yet to confirm that. At the same time, Israel remains determined to completely destroy Hamas. As a result, none of the phases stipulated in resolution 2735 (2024) have been implemented. The Council was essentially dragged into a misadventure and forced to give its blessing to a plan that had no chance of being implemented. We urge the members of the Security Council to adopt a more responsible approach to the decisions they support and to think about their actual content.

The bleakest scenarios about the civilian implications of the assault on Rafah have come true. In an attempt to reach Hamas commanders, Israelis launched indiscriminate strikes against refugee camps, resulting in heavy civilian casualties. We all recall the devastating Israeli Air Force air strike on the Tal Al-Sultan area of Rafah on 26 May, killing 45 Palestinians. Only two days prior, the International Court of Justice had issued its third ruling on provisional measures demanding that Israelis stop the military operation in Rafah. This was yet another blatant demonstration of Israel's egregious violations — in its capacity as the occupying Power — of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, International Court of Justice rulings and the norms of international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions.

That is compounded by the unbearable living conditions of Palestinians evacuated from Rafah, who lack basic housing, sanitation, access to medicine and drinking water. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 69 per cent of school buildings that sheltered displaced persons in Gaza have been and continue to be bombed daily.

We demand that Israel halt the Rafah operation. We also call for an immediate unconditional ceasefire, the release of hostages and Palestinian detainees.

Amid intense fighting, it is utterly impossible to ensure safe and sustainable access to those in need. The special humanitarian mechanism for Gaza, launched by Senior Coordinator Sigrid Kaag, also cannot remedy the situation. The main aid delivery channel, through the Rafah crossing point as well as the Kerem Shalom crossing point, is closed. The floating pier, erected by the United States, has also not lived up to expectations, as its transportation of cargo was suspended due to damage caused by inclement weather.

Now is the time to consider how to prevent a recurrence of the current escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. An equitable negotiations process between Palestinians and Israelis must be launched on a range of final-status issues — one that would result in the establishment of a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, coexisting in peace and security with Israel, in accordance with the approved international legal decisions.

We are convinced that Palestine's membership at the United Nations would help bring that to fruition. In that context, we applaud the decisions of a number of Caribbean and European States to recognize the State of Palestine, thereby confirming their willingness to redress a historical injustice wherein one State was granted United Nations membership in 1948, while the other has been denied that legitimate right for three quarters of a century.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing on the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/480) on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). The report provides another grim picture of developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, sadly, highlights the ever-widening chasm between the legal obligations of the occupying Power and the latter's compliance with those obligations. The Council must act urgently

to curb this tide of impunity and to put an end to the indignities that the Palestinian people are subjected to on a daily basis.

Guyana is concerned that settlement activity continues unabated in the occupied West Bank, in violation of resolution 2334 (2016), and has noted that the occupying Power recently made the largest declaration of State land in the occupied West Bank. Those actions, coupled with the ongoing demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures, directly threaten the viability of the two-State solution, since they are a continuous encroachment on Palestinian territory, while simultaneously displacing its lawful residents. We call on Israel to immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory. We underscore that the establishment of Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 has no legal validity.

The level of violence that accompanies the occupying Power's illegal activities in the occupied Palestinian territory is distressing. We have seen, for example, recent reports of the Palestinian man who was strapped to the hood of a military vehicle and, in his injured state, driven around a neighbourhood in the West Bank. What accounts for that level of barbarity by one people against another? It is the cultivation and perpetuation of an ideology that dehumanizes the other, thus making it possible to devise and execute all kinds of violent and oppressive acts against those seen as inferior. By continuing to promulgate that ideology, Israel remains a constant threat — not only to the well-being of Palestinians, but also to the values of the United Nations, of which it remains a Member State. Guyana urges the Council to seriously consider how it might use the tools at its disposal to stop Israel's atrocities against the Palestinian people.

On that latter note, the current situation in the Gaza Strip remains of deep concern to Guyana. We were hopeful that the Council's various resolutions, including resolution 2735 (2024), supporting the efforts of Egypt, Qatar and the United States, would yield a ceasefire and the release of hostages and detained Palestinians, but that has not yet materialized. In the meantime, the human-made catastrophe has got worse, marked by a record death toll, starvation, disease, destruction and displacement, among other things. Amid those realities, it appears that the Israel Defense Forces have incorporated a strategy of bombing refugee camps, where thousands of Palestinians are now living

in extremely vulnerable conditions. This war must end now. We reiterate our calls for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, bringing an end to a hell in which women and children bear the brunt of the suffering.

Guyana also stresses the importance of adequate humanitarian access into Gaza using all available routes and calls on Israel to facilitate the entry of sufficient goods into Gaza to meet the needs of the besieged and ailing population. That is Israel's legal obligation. As States Members of the United Nations and members of the Security Council, we are duty-bound to ensure that justice and obligations under international law are upheld.

Allow me to reflect briefly on the provision in resolution 2334 (2016) requiring that all States distinguish in their relevant dealings between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories that have been occupied since 1967. I would like to emphasize in that regard that Member States should exercise greater diligence in ensuring full adherence to that provision in all their commercial dealings with Israel. We cannot simultaneously condemn the illegality of settlements and engage in the trade in commodities produced in those illegal settlements. There must be consequences for those who flout their obligations in that regard.

Let me conclude by once again emphasizing the urgency of halting the violence in the occupied Palestinian territory and ending the war in Gaza. We call on the parties to prioritize the lives of innocent civilians, who continue to suffer with no end in sight. I call on the Council to prioritize accountability and send a strong message of deterrence to those who hold the view that they can continue to kill and maim innocent civilians without consequences. Finally, I urge a redoubling of efforts to achieve a two-State solution. That will be the just end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and we must re-evaluate our strategies for achieving it. Guyana remains committed to that goal.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting, and I also thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing.

The situation in Israel and throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, along with the rising tensions along the Blue Line, is alarming. The Council's commitment to ensuring that all parties respect international law, including international humanitarian

law and international human rights law, is also aimed at preventing the even more serious possibility of a spread of the conflict to the wider region. In the West Bank, the attacks, threats and intimidation by Israeli settlers against the Palestinian population, including in East Jerusalem, have continued with virtual impunity, and Switzerland condemns them. The numbers of their civilian victims were already reaching record levels before 7 October 2023 and have since increased significantly. They must stop. Resolution 2334 (2016) calls for immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, provocation and destruction. Allegations of the disproportionate use of force and of violence against civilians must be investigated and those responsible brought to justice. Switzerland would like to remind Council members of Israel's obligations under international law as an occupying Power, including the obligation to protect the civilian population.

We also want to point out that Israeli settlements are illegal under international humanitarian law, and according to resolution 2334 (2016) constitute a major obstacle to the achievement of a two-State solution and the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. The recurring announcements of settlements by Israeli leaders and measures to expand them contribute to the escalation and must be stopped. In that regard, Switzerland notes with concern the recent Israeli decisions to transfer the management of settlers' civil affairs in the West Bank to the Israeli civil administration. In accordance with international humanitarian law, Israel must refrain from taking measures that would introduce permanent changes, particularly demographic and administrative changes, in the occupied territory.

In resolution 2730 (2024), the Council reaffirmed the responsibility of States and parties to conflicts to respect and protect the civilian population, including humanitarian personnel. Infrastructure and property used for humanitarian relief operations, as well as convoys, must also be respected and protected. That includes the premises of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, including in East Jerusalem, and the premises of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

When resolution 2735 (2024) was adopted on 10 June, Switzerland emphasized that the resolution currently represents the best chance for an end to the appalling conflict, which has claimed tens of thousands

of civilian victims since the acts of terror committed by Hamas on 7 October, which we strongly condemned. However, despite resolution 2735 (2024) and the related resolutions that the Council has adopted (resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023), and 2728 (2024)), hostilities in the Gaza Strip continue to expose hundreds of thousands of civilians, including many children, to danger, forced displacement and an increased risk of starvation. Moreover, dozens of hostages are still in captivity in Gaza.

Switzerland reiterates its opposition to the current offensive in Rafah and points to the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice. They are binding, and Switzerland expects Israel to comply with them. We reiterate our call for an immediate ceasefire in order to facilitate the safe, rapid and unimpeded delivery by all routes of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip and for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. Those held captive in connection with the conflict must be able to be visited by the ICRC and receive the assistance and protection to which they are entitled.

Finally, the Council must continue to support the concept of a two-State solution, which is the only foundation capable of guaranteeing peace between Israelis and Palestinians and stability in the region. Without further delay, we must help to rebuild that foundation for two democratic States, Israel and Palestine — of which Gaza is an integral part — living side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders.

Mr. De Rivièrè (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Wennesland for his briefing and assure him of France's full support.

In adopting resolution 2735 (2024), the Security Council demanded that Hamas accept, as Israel did, the United States peace plan, and urged both parties to implement its provisions fully, without any delay or conditions. The resolution must ultimately be implemented, in accordance with Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations. France demands an immediate ceasefire and the release of all hostages without delay, and we once again condemn the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October 2023. We are opposed to the ongoing operation in Rafah, which has led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians. In accordance with the ruling of the International Court of Justice, Israel must immediately

halt its military offensive and any other action in the Rafah governorate. The delivery of aid must not be hindered and must benefit the civilian population. France calls for strict compliance with international humanitarian law.

While the humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate, Israel's settlement of the West Bank is accelerating. France condemns that policy, which contravenes international law and undermines the prospects for a two-State solution. We will never recognize the illegal annexation of territories or the legalization of illegal settlements, and we condemn the violence committed by settlers. We deplore the forced displacement of Palestinian communities and are resolved to adopt new sanctions against violent settlers. The tensions of the past few weeks in Jerusalem are worrisome. France calls for refraining from any measures that could lead to a conflagration in Jerusalem and the West Bank. The historic status quo at the holy sites must be preserved. France and the European Union do not recognize Israeli sovereignty over areas that have come under Israel's administration since 5 June 1967. Together with its partners, France is actively monitoring compliance with international law, including resolution 2334 (2016). The policy of differentiation through it is aimed at realizing the legal distinction between Israel's internationally recognized territory and the occupied territories.

It is more urgent than ever to lay the foundations of a political settlement for implementing a two-State solution, the only one that can guarantee peace and security for the Israelis and Palestinians. France reaffirms its commitment to Israel's security and to building a State for Palestinians. We are working actively in that regard with the parties and with all regional and international partners. We support a reformed Palestinian Authority capable of exercising its responsibilities throughout the Palestinian territory, including the Gaza Strip. Israel must stop impeding the transfer of revenues to the Palestinian Authority. France is concerned about the aggravation of regional tensions, which risks causing a conflagration, particularly between Israel and Lebanon. We remain fully committed to preventing any risk of escalation on the Blue Line and to promoting a diplomatic solution. We call on all stakeholders in the region to adopt a responsible approach.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing.

The conflict in Gaza has been going on for more than eight months and has caused unprecedented destruction and a humanitarian disaster. The international community has long since reached an overwhelming consensus. Both the General Assembly, in its emergency special session, and the Security Council have adopted multiple resolutions calling for an immediate and lasting ceasefire, the release of all hostages, the removal of obstacles to humanitarian access and the effective protection of humanitarian workers' safety.

After announcing a three-phase ceasefire proposal on 31 May, the United States spearheaded the adoption of resolution 2735 (2024) by the Security Council, urging Israel and Hamas to accept and implement the proposal. At the time, the United States claimed that Israel had already accepted the proposal. Regrettably, so far we have seen no tangible signs from Israel that it has agreed to a lasting ceasefire. On the contrary, we have witnessed its continuing large-scale military operations and repeated attacks on refugee camps in Rafah, Nuseirat and Gaza City, resulting in new and major casualties and putting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian agencies in danger. There must be an immediate ceasefire, and once that is achieved the war should not be resumed. That is at the core of resolutions 2728 (2024) and 2735 (2024). If the hostages are to be rescued, creating more civilian casualties is not the way to go. China urges Israel to heed the international community's resounding call for it to immediately cease military operations in Gaza and end its collective punishment of the Gazan population. We call on the countries that have significant influence on the parties to make concrete and sincere efforts to achieve a cessation of the hostilities.

Gaza is in the grip of a dire humanitarian situation. As long as Israel's military operations pose a grave threat to humanitarian workers, its suggestion or even accusation of inaction on the part of humanitarian agencies is unacceptable. Under international humanitarian law, Israel has an obligation to protect the safety of humanitarian organizations and their staff and ensure the rapid entry of sufficient humanitarian relief into Gaza and its safe and orderly delivery to all people in need. In the West Bank, searches, arrests and raids by Israeli enforcement agencies against Palestinians are daily occurrences. We call on Israel

to effectively curb the violence against Palestinian civilians and stop undermining the basis of governance for the Palestinian Authority, including by returning the tax revenues it has withheld without delay. China reiterates that settlement activities are in violation of international law and resolution 2334 (2016), and that they are eroding the prospects for a two-State solution. Israel must immediately cease all settlement activities.

As the repercussions of the Gaza conflict continue to spill over rapidly, we are seeing worrisome tensions in the Red Sea and along the Lebanon-Israel border. China is gravely concerned about reports regarding Israel's plan for military offensives in Lebanon. As Secretary-General Guterres cautioned on Friday, the situation in the Middle East is very precarious and cannot afford for Lebanon to become another Gaza. China calls on all the parties to exercise restraint and refrain from actions that could escalate tensions, so as not to plunge the entire Middle East into an even greater catastrophe. We call on the international community to take all necessary action to bring about an immediate and lasting ceasefire in Gaza, a speedy relaunch of a two-State solution and the realization of lasting peace and security in the Middle East as soon as possible.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing. I would like to highlight three areas following our most recent meeting on this topic (see S/PV.9650).

First, let me start by reaffirming the United Kingdom's commitment to the principles enshrined in resolution 2334 (2016), which serves as a clear reinforcement of international support for a two-State solution. More than ever, the suffering that we saw on 7 October 2023 and have continued to see since those horrific attacks underlines the importance of a diplomatic solution to this conflict that guarantees the safety and security of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. We call for the immediate release of all the remaining hostages, including the return of the bodies of those who have died in captivity. And we are appalled by reports of sexual violence and abuse. The United Kingdom stands firm in its condemnation of those heinous acts. The best way to get the hostages out is to get a deal done. We also urge Israel to let humanitarian aid enter Gaza through all crossing points immediately and guarantee deconfliction for aid convoys and other humanitarian work. We echo the Secretary-General's tribute to the United Nations workers who have tragically lost their lives in this conflict, and we call

on Israel to ensure the protection of United Nations facilities and staff. The integrity of the United Nations and its ability to operate are paramount. It serves as a crucial lifeline for the many innocent civilians affected by this conflict.

Secondly, the United Kingdom remains deeply concerned about the indiscriminate firing of rockets towards Israeli population centres, as noted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/480). That must stop. We also note with concern the continuing construction of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. We are clear that those settlements are illegal under international law. We reiterate our call on Israel to immediately and completely stop all settlement activities. We condemn the human rights abuses and incitement of violence against Palestinian communities in the West Bank, where the United Kingdom has taken action in the form of sanctions against a number of those individuals and groups responsible. We are also deeply concerned about Israel's suspension of revenue transfers to the Palestinian Authority and the risks to correspondent banking relations. Such measures harm the chances for peace, security and stability.

Finally, as the United Kingdom has said throughout, a negotiated pause in the fighting that leads to a sustainable ceasefire, without a return to fighting, is the best way to secure the release of the hostages, enable a significant scaling up of much-needed humanitarian aid and lead to a permanent settlement of the issue. There is now a deal on the table, endorsed by the Council in resolution 2735 (2024), to achieve those goals. The onus is on Hamas to accept it and end the suffering of the Palestinian people and the remaining hostages. We must then work to reach a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security for both nations and the wider region.

Mr. Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing this morning, and the Secretariat for the report circulated. Ecuador values and supports the work of the United Nations and its agencies.

The Security Council has once again received and heard reports of increasing numbers of people dead, wounded or displaced and of the steady deterioration of living conditions in Gaza. The restrictions on humanitarian operations have continued. The

Secretary-General reports that in May barely 50 per cent of the humanitarian missions coordinated in Gaza were successfully facilitated. The military operations in Rafah have affected the already inadequate supply of aid, while at least 120 hostages remain in captivity, almost nine months after the terrorist acts perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October 2023, which Ecuador once again unequivocally condemns.

The bombing has also continued. It is severely affecting the civilian population and causing dozens of deaths and injuries in Gaza. The fighting continues unabated and there is still no end to the indiscriminate firing of rockets into Israel. The situation is particularly discouraging given that a fortnight ago the Council adopted a resolution supporting a ceasefire proposal (resolution 2735 (2024)) which, had it been implemented, would have already put an end to the hostilities, enabled the release of hostages, facilitated the safe, sufficient and timely delivery of humanitarian aid to all in need and helped reduce tensions throughout the region. It is essential to ensure that the negotiations between the parties towards such an agreement continue. My country reiterates its support and appreciation for the efforts of Egypt, Qatar and the United States to that end. It is also essential, and indeed obligatory, to implement all of the relevant resolutions of the Council and to respect the norms of international humanitarian law, which are also binding on all parties and which if violated demand serious accountability.

Regarding the situation in the West Bank, Ecuador once again calls for respect for the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016). The increase in violence since 7 October and the continuing settlement activities are worrisome. Among other factors, statements and actions that undermine the viability of a two-State solution perpetuate the conflict and worsen the security situation. All the actors concerned must show restraint, avoid exacerbating tensions and demonstrate the political will to reach agreements. Without that, the cycle of violence will inevitably repeat itself.

Finally, every opportunity must be seized to start down a path towards a peaceful, negotiated, definitive and just solution for the parties, with the existence of two States, Palestine and Israel, based on the 1967 borders and the relevant resolutions.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his informative briefing.

More than 250 days of violence, grief and suffering have passed and still the situation worsens day by day. Japan maintains its condemnation of the heinous terror attacks by Hamas and others on 7 October as well as their taking of hostages. At the same time, Israel's military operations across Gaza have continued unabated. Japan is appalled by the fact that dozens of casualties, including civilians, are being reported on a daily basis, amounting to more than 37,000 Palestinians killed, with tens of thousands more injured or buried under the rubble. We are also deeply alarmed to hear that 1.7 million people have been displaced, with many families among them displaced again and again. People in southern Gaza are suffering from poor access to shelter, health, food and sanitation. This humanitarian situation defies description.

Two weeks ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 2735 (2024), offering a glimmer of hope that the three-stage proposal could pave the way for the hostages to be released and humanitarian aid increased and eventually bring about the long-awaited ceasefire. However, the tragedy is still unfolding. Japan strongly urges Hamas to work in good faith, based on resolution 2735 (2024), without further delay. In that context, we reiterate our support for the tireless and commendable diplomatic efforts of the United States, Qatar and Egypt, and our call on Israel to lift the impediments to humanitarian activities on the ground. We would also like to stress that the staff and premises of the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, must be protected. We express our continued support for the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East as the backbone of the United Nations' humanitarian operation in Gaza.

A ceasefire is necessary not only for Gaza but in order to halt destabilization in the region and beyond. The ongoing settlement activities are in violation of international law, and Japan once again strongly urges the Government of Israel to stop those activities. We also deplore the increase in settler violence and attacks on refugee camps in the West Bank.

We are very worried about the fact that exchanges of fire are rapidly increasing across the Blue Line. Japan echoes last Friday's statement by the Secretary-General that a further military escalation between Israel and Hizbullah would be disastrous for people in Lebanon, Israel and the wider region. All parties must exercise full restraint and immediately recommit to

ensuring a cessation of hostilities along the Blue Line in accordance with resolution 1701 (2006). Actors with influence on the parties should also make every effort towards that end. Even in this terrible moment, we must keep a political horizon as our goal.

Japan maintains that a two-State solution with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security is the only viable way to end the conflict and the plight it continues to cause.

Mr. Sowa (Sierra Leone): I would also like to thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his thorough briefing on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) and the current situation in the occupied Palestine territory overall.

We acknowledge the report of the Secretary-General on this subject (S/2024/480) and note the lack of implementation of the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016). The reports of plans for the construction of housing units by the Jerusalem District Planning Committee across the Green Line in occupied East Jerusalem, the illegal outposts in the occupied West Bank and the demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures across the occupied Palestinian territory are serious violations of that resolution and pose risks to peace efforts between Israel and Palestine.

The continued hostilities in the Gaza Strip for the past eight months and the volatile security situation across the Middle East undermine the prospects for durable and sustainable peace in the region. It is crucial at this stage therefore that the parties to the conflict in the Gaza Strip adhere to the call for a permanent ceasefire without any further delay. It is also important that attacks between Israel and other parties across the region in Lebanon, Yemen, Iran and elsewhere cease immediately.

Since 7 October 2023, there have been reports of more than 37,000 Palestinian fatalities in the Gaza Strip, as well as more than 1,200 fatalities in Israel. The consistent attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, including humanitarian aid workers and volunteers serving in the region, are outright violations of resolutions of the Council. The Council must continue to strongly condemn those violations of international human rights.

Sierra Leone remains deeply concerned about the significant rise in the scale and depth of humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip, which are being exacerbated by severe access restrictions, including the closure

of key crossings, denials and delays in processing humanitarian relief access. The destruction of essential infrastructure, such as roads, and the presence of debris and unexploded ordnance in the armed conflict, further limits the capacity of humanitarian organizations to deliver vital assistance at scale to the suffering population.

We empathize with the 1.7 million internally displaced men, women and children in the Gaza Strip, crammed in congested areas and exposed to unfavourable weather conditions. Unsanitary conditions, overcrowding in makeshift shelters and inadequate water have resulted in increases in waterborne diseases.

At this crucial stage of finding common ground for peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine, the situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, demands our sustained attention. Recent developments between settlers and Palestinians indicate the potential for possible escalation and increased casualties.

To that end, permit me to emphasize the following points in ensuring compliance with resolution 2334 (2016).

First, we reaffirm that any attempt to expand settlements activities in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, constitutes a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution.

Secondly, we reiterate our calls for parties to the conflict to stop all violence against civilians and honour their obligations as outlined in international law, including international humanitarian law and all International Court of Justice orders issued on the matter. In the light of that, we demand the safe release of the remaining 129 hostages held by Hamas since 7 October 2023 without further delay.

Also, parties to the conflict are reminded to refrain from unilateral and provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, which undermines trust, erodes confidence and limits the space for dialogue and negotiations. Those actions are counterproductive to the aim of having two effective States coexisting side by side. Protracted military attacks and restrictive administrative measures being deployed by Israel against Palestine ultimately destroy its ability to develop the good governance, effective security and sustainable socioeconomic development conditions necessary to support peace and security in the region.

In conclusion, my delegation urges parties to the conflict to respect and abide by the decisions of the Council as outlined in all its resolutions, including resolutions 2334 (2016), 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023), 2728 (2024) and 2735 (2024). We emphasize the binding nature of all the resolutions and the implications associated with non-compliance under international law.

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria): I would like to extend my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2024/480) and to Mr. Wennesland for his briefing.

Once again, we convene to address the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, nearly nine months after the occupying Power initiated its senseless aggression against the defenceless Palestinian people.

There is no need to reiterate the figures. The humanitarian situation in Gaza, already catastrophic, has further deteriorated. People are dying from starvation. They are dying from hunger in Gaza. That is the cruel reality. The culprit is well known — the Israeli occupying Power. It must be held accountable for that devastation.

Ms. Navi Pillay, Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, has stated

“The Commission concluded that Israeli authorities were responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity, using starvation as a method of war, forcible transfer and cruel or inhuman treatment.”

The objective of that barbarity is clear — a second Nakba. Yes, the occupying Power is aimed at destroying Gaza and displacing its population. An Israeli minister has even stated:

“We do not have an interest in governing the people of Gaza, but also cannot live near a state of human animals.”

We echo the Secretary-General’s warning against the risk of further escalation in the region. The risk of the Middle East conflict widening is real now. It must be avoided. Continued violence serves no one’s interests.

While the situation in Gaza is catastrophic, the Secretary-General’s report indicates clearly that conditions in the West Bank are no better.

In that regard, I would like to highlight several points.

First, the situation in the West Bank will deteriorate further if the occupying Power does not cease its policy of terror, expansion and settlement. We call for full compliance with resolution 2334 (2016). Security Council resolutions are binding and must be implemented. The purpose of our meeting today is to monitor the implementation of this very resolution and to draw the appropriate conclusions.

Secondly, settler terror has reached an unprecedented level. Such activities are often perpetrated under the protection of the Israel Defense Forces, which, under international humanitarian law, has the obligation to protect the Palestinian civilians. We demand accountability for the perpetrators of these acts of terror.

Thirdly, provocations by settlers in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and at Al-Aqsa Mosque will definitely fuel tensions and risk further escalation. We condemn these repeated provocative assaults on the holy sites and reaffirm that the entire area of Al-Aqsa Mosque, is an exclusive Muslim place of worship. The historic and legal status quo of the holy site must be respected.

Fourthly, the Palestinian Authority should be empowered to assume its responsibilities. We condemn the occupying authorities' decision to suspend the transfer of clearance revenues collected on behalf of the Palestinians. Those revenues belong to the Palestinians and are not a charity from the Israeli occupying Power. They must be released without delay.

Fifthly, If those violations had occurred elsewhere, sanctions would have already been imposed. We therefore demand sanctions against the occupying Power for non-compliance with Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016).

In conclusion, those who believe that they can uproot the Palestinians from their land by force are mistaken. The Israeli occupying Power's plans will ultimately fail, not because of international intervention or a change in the Israeli behaviour, but because the Palestinians — the people of Palestine — have learned from the Nakba of their ancestors. They will not leave their homeland. They will continue their struggle until they fully enjoy their rights, including the right to self-determination and the establishment of their State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as their capital.

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

I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing.

International norms regarding Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 are obvious. Paragraph 1 of resolution 2334 (2016) clearly provides that such settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, constitute a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and peace. The Republic of Korea is deeply worried that settlement activities by the Israeli Government and illegal settlers are not only ongoing, but indeed expanding — even during this dire juncture. We urge Israel to cease such activities and to respect relevant international law and United Nations resolutions.

The adoption of resolution 2735 (2024), earlier this month, showed the strong support of the Council for diplomatic efforts by the United States, Egypt and Qatar to achieve an immediate ceasefire and release of hostages. And we were highly hopeful for the success of the deal. Sadly, we have yet to hear any news on the finalization of the deal and, as of now, the conflict in Gaza has not shown any sign of abatement.

However, we expect that negotiations will be maintained, and urge all parties, notably Hamas, to say yes to the deal for the release of hostages and an immediate ceasefire, and to implement Council resolutions.

We note, with serious concern, that the report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel (A/HRC/56/26) found evidence of grave crimes, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, committed on and after 7 October by Hamas and Israeli security forces. We remain horrified by the heinous and unjustifiable terrorist attacks by Hamas and other militant groups, which included killing and sexual violence. We are also gravely alarmed by Israeli acts in Gaza, including widespread attacks against civilians, resulting in massive fatalities and destruction. We call for accountability for the crimes described in the Commission of Inquiry's Report.

We also observe that the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/480) on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) details ongoing violence in the West Bank, either by the Israeli security forces and settlers or by Palestinians. We call on Israel to respect the rights of Palestinians and to take measures to prevent

and punish settler violence. Also, in accordance with resolution 2334 (2016), calling for a halt to all provocative actions and incitement, we urge both parties to cease all inflammatory rhetoric, including remarks by Israeli high-level officials that promote settlement expansion and population transfer. We also appeal that Israel cease withholding tax revenue from the Palestinian Authority.

As resolution 2735 (2024) reiterates, the commitment of the international community to the two-State solution is unwavering and, in order to take meaningful steps toward that goal, the current conflict in Gaza must come to an end as soon as possible. All the hostilities in the region, including those across the Blue Line between Israel and Lebanon, should also cease. Now is the time to move towards the realization of peace for all.

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): I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his presentation of the Secretary-General's quarterly report (S/2024/480) on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016).

The report of the Secretary-General tells a story — a story members know only too well, but to which they should never grow accustomed. It is a story of the dispossession and displacement of communities by violence and unjust laws and orders; a story of colonial settlement and annexation that are undeniable, unrelenting and unapologetic; a story of indiscriminate attacks against Palestinians, mass killing and maiming of an entire civilian population, mass graves, attacks on hospitals and the United Nations and its personnel; the killing of humanitarian workers and wanton destruction of civilian infrastructure and living conditions. It is the story of Israelis' continuing attempt to destroy Palestine and its people and the world's failure to put an end to it.

I did not come here to speak about policies that all members know and denounce. I am here to sound a wake-up call to us all and to underscore that the writing of this ongoing tragedy started long ago. All the signs were there, and yet no action was taken to address this existential threat we are facing. It is time to break the taboo of Israel's impunity. Let me put this in the clearest terms possible: there must be no arms with which to kill us, no money with which to colonize

us, no trade with which to rob us. Every State has a duty to make this its starting point: it must ensure its Government, entities, companies and citizens do not contribute in any way or anymore to Israelis' crimes against the Palestinian people.

Let me commend all of those countries that have actively supported Palestinian rights, supported our people and our Government, provided humanitarian relief, taken legal action, adopted concrete measures aimed at putting an end to these crimes and adopted sanctions against settlements and violent, extremist settlers. I of course commend those countries that have recognized the State of Palestine and advocated for its membership of the United Nations and urge those that have not yet done so to take the right step of recognizing the State of Palestine as a means of investing in peace and saving the two-State solution.

But much more is needed to restrain the Israeli Government, which while members help us build, destroys; while they fund, steals; while they promote Palestinian rights and independence, denies our rights and acts to destroy our State, and with it, the two-State solution and any chance for peace. Whose will is stronger? The will of the extremists in Israel or the will of the peacemakers around the world? The Israeli extremists in power are ready to do whatever is necessary to destroy peace. Are members ready to do whatever is necessary to salvage it? We will do our part, as we have done in the worst of circumstances, with an ironclad commitment to the rule of international law, but the party breaching the law every single day must be held accountable. Laws are adopted to ensure justice, but there can be no justice without enforcement. One cannot have one party acting responsibly, while the other is acting with full impunity, and expect a different outcome than the appalling situation we face.

This Israeli Government is defying every measure the Council takes to support our freedom and to achieve peace and security for Palestinians and Israelis alike. They take punitive measures against us and against members. They openly declare for the whole world to hear that, in response to our actions and those of the Council grounded in international law and aimed at upholding it, they will commit further crimes. They openly declare that they will settle more of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, breach the historic and legal status quo, continue their assaults on the sanctity of the holy sites and withhold Palestinian tax revenue. They so declare with the utmost shamelessness, in

disregard of the law, confident that their impunity will endure. Such is the arrogance of the fundamentalists and colonizers. They attack their closest allies as if they were enemies just because they criticize Israeli policies and show no hesitation in attacking and insulting all of those here. They are very quick to do so with such regularity in this Chamber, in the General Assembly and elsewhere. Criticism, therefore, is not enough. Consequences are what is needed.

Let me speak of those who are mentioned only at the very end of the Secretary-General's report but barely ever mentioned in this Chamber and are left to their suffering and terrible ordeal as if they do not deserve to be recognized and to have their humanity and rights respected.

We are a nation of prisoners. There is scarcely a Palestinian family that has not had, or does not have, members imprisoned in Israeli occupation jails. Those prisoners were already suffering on account of arbitrary arrest, torture, ill-treatment and sexual abuse and violence long before 7 October 2023. Since then, they have been living in sheer hell. We are a nation of 1 million Palestinian prisoners. Thousands of Palestinians have been abducted and tortured and many have been killed in detention; several have undergone amputation as a result of ill-treatment. The number of Palestinians who have died in Israeli detention in the last eight months is four times that of the number of prisoners who have died in Guantánamo in 20 years. Abduction, torture, enforced disappearances, the use of prisoners as human shields and sexual violence against men, women and children — yes, children — are not worthy of outrage if the victims are Palestinians. Some of the first rules of humanitarian law, adopted hundreds of years ago, were about the treatment of prisoners, because they were vulnerable in the hands of the enemy and it was considered an indignity to harm them when they were defenceless. And that was to protect combatants, so imagine when the detainees are civilians, when they are children. An essential part of the freedom of our people is the freedom of our prisoners.

In conclusion, as has been roundly and repeatedly affirmed around this table, the resolutions of the Security Council are binding, including resolution 2735 (2024). We call for their full implementation, without delay and as a matter of urgency. Resolution 2735 (2024) is clear that there are three phases in the ceasefire proposal, including phase 2, which foresees a permanent end to hostilities and Israel's full

withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. The proposal is not subject to a destructive process of picking and choosing that renders it devoid of meaning. We are well aware of the objective of the conflicting messages from Israeli leaders, notably Netanyahu himself, suggesting that this is all a scheme and that the assault will continue under any circumstances. The aim is to sabotage the initiative of the United States without taking the blame for it and to sabotage the efforts of Egypt and Qatar and of the international community as a whole.

The best way to frustrate Netanyahu's goals is to achieve an immediate ceasefire and to do so now to not allow him to continue to play with so many members' minds. The best way to save human lives is to achieve an immediate ceasefire, and we want to save lives — all lives, not only Palestinian lives. An immediate ceasefire is indispensable for all — for Palestinians first and foremost — to stop the mass killing and maiming, the arbitrary arrests and wanton destruction, the mass starvation of our people in Gaza, of whom 96 per cent face catastrophic levels of food insecurity, but also for the Israelis being held captive and their families, for our region, which cannot bear further escalation and destruction, for humankind and for what remains of our international-law-based order.

It is time to end this illegal, abhorrent 57-year occupation, time to free the Palestinian people from the endless oppression and torment that their ruthless occupier has inflicted on them for decades and vows to continue inflicting without end, driven by its colonial agenda, ethnic cleansing, apartheid and now genocide, the pillars of its policies against the Palestinian people. No one can survive by simply relying on the power of the sword, especially a sword provided by another. Justice and peace are the best guarantees for our peoples. We call on the Council to go further and act faster in ensuring that they are not forever lost in this assault, leaving us prey to a reality that will devour us all. Blessed be the peacemakers. Now is the time for them to demonstrate that they have the will and the courage to do what is needed before it is too late.

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

Mr. Miller (Israel): Just this past week, the international community and the United Nations commemorated the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. While the world advocated for the eradication of sexual violence

as a weapon of war and terror, that is the reality of 16 Israeli women who are still being held hostage by Hamas terrorists in Gaza, ever since the 7 October 2023 massacre. In all, 120 Israeli hostages are still being held captive in harsh conditions, undergoing mental, physical and sexual abuse. One of them is Naama Levy, who turned 20 in captivity just three days ago, surrounded by terrorists and rapists for the past 262 days. Why is the Security Council not focused on addressing the dire humanitarian situation of the hostages? What does it have to say to Hersh Goldberg-Polin, Eliya Cohen and Or Levy, whose brutal kidnapping video from 7 October was released yesterday? What would members say to their families, who watched their children being dragged from a shelter, bloody, scarred and hurt, being abused throughout their torturous drive into Gaza?

Hamas's refusal to release the hostages through diplomacy proves that the efforts to bring our hostages home must also include military means. The recent Israel Defense Forces rescue operation that brought four hostages back home was an example of how that can be achieved. Israel stands firm on its principles, and they have not changed. We will continue until the last remaining hostage is returned, and we will not stop until Hamas's military and governing capabilities are dismantled. We are committed to the Israeli proposal, which President Biden has welcomed. Our position has not changed. Those have been our goals from day one.

As for the humanitarian situation in Gaza, since the beginning of the war, more than 36,000 aid trucks have been brought into Gaza. That is more than 682,000 tons of humanitarian aid, which has included food, water, shelter, equipment, medical supplies, fuel, gas and more. The problem was, and remains, the collection and distribution of that aid by the United Nations. Almost all United Nations requests for the

coordination of humanitarian convoys have been or are being approved, and the daily pauses in operations against terrorists continue to enable the distribution of aid. Yet Hamas continues to attack aid convoys, serving their dual objectives of stealing food and supplies for terrorist combatants and disrupting the delivery of aid. On 14 June, Hamas fired five projectiles towards Israel from a humanitarian aid area in central Gaza. Two of them crossed into Israeli territory, and three fell within Gaza. Where was the Council's outrage at that?

Hamas is entirely to blame for this conflict. It launched an unprovoked, brutal invasion of Israel, a sovereign country, murdered innocent civilians and took hundreds of hostages. They are still holding our loved ones in Gaza, while continuing their attacks on Israel. They use Gazans as human shields, while pursuing their genocidal aims. Alongside that, more and more weapons of the Hamas terrorists continue to be discovered inside United Nations facilities, universities, civilian homes, mosques and other civilian sites. It is imperative that the Council finally hold Hamas accountable, assign blame where it belongs and unequivocally condemn terror and its sponsors.

The Security Council has a responsibility to exert relentless pressure on terrorists, whether it be Hamas in Gaza or Hizbullah in Lebanon. Over the past months, Hizbullah has increased its attacks on Israel, firing thousands of rockets, suicide drones and missiles from Lebanon towards Israel on a daily basis. Israel will not allow the Hizbullah terror organization to continue attacking its territories and citizens. In an all-out war, Hizbullah, which has been violating Security Council resolutions for years, endangering both the Israeli and Lebanese peoples as well as United Nations peacekeepers, will pay the price.

The meeting rose at noon.