



# Security Council

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## Letter dated 31 March 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefing dated 30 March 2020 by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, Nickolay Mladenov, and of the statements delivered by the representatives of Belgium, China, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, Viet Nam and the United States of America, in connection with the videoconference convened on 30 March 2020 (see annexes).

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 27 March 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council ([S/2020/253](#)), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the briefing and statements will be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Zhang Jun**  
President of the Security Council



**Annex I****Briefing dated 30 March by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, Nickolay Mladenov**

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I will devote this briefing to presenting the thirteenth report on the implementation of Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), covering the period from 18 December 2019 to 20 March of this year.

Let me begin, however, by praising the far-reaching measures that both Israel and the Palestinian Authority have taken to try and contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The coordination that has been put in place and the joint commitment to tackle the threat to both populations is exemplary. Their efforts have been supported by the United Nations. The United Nations country team, led by the Deputy Special Coordinator and the World Health Organization, is working closely with all partners and the authorities to ensure coordinated assistance to the health networks dealing with the spread of the virus in the West Bank and to support preparedness in Gaza.

I am grateful to all those who have pledged assistance to our efforts as well.

Returning to the report, let me reiterate that developments during this reporting period cannot be divorced from the broader context: Israel's continued military occupation of Palestinian territory, illegal settlement activity and the threat of annexation; Hamas' continuing hold over Gaza and its militant activity; Israeli closures on Gaza; unilateral actions that undermine peace efforts; severe challenges to the fiscal viability of the Palestinian Authority; and the persistent risk of military escalation. All of these developments collectively erode the prospects of achieving a viable two-State solution.

In today's briefing, I will focus on developments on the ground in accordance with the provisions of the resolution, including on regional and international efforts to advance peace.

Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#) calls on Israel to "immediately and completely cease all settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem" and to "fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard". No steps have been taken to this effect during the reporting period.

Israeli authorities advanced or approved plans for some 3,800 housing units in West Bank settlements, including about 100 in East Jerusalem. Tenders for a total of some 3,200 housing units were announced, including 1,077 in Givat Hamatos, an area strategically located between the East Jerusalem Palestinian neighbourhood of Beit Safafa and Bethlehem. About 30 per cent of the units advanced, approved or tendered are to be built in outlying locations, deep inside the occupied West Bank.

On 25 February, the Israeli government announced it would advance two plans for a total of 3,500 units in the E1 area in the West Bank. If constructed, these units would expand the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim towards Jerusalem, severing the connection between the northern and southern West Bank, thereby further undermining the possibility of a viable and contiguous Palestinian state.

On 9 March, Israel's Defense Minister advanced a plan for a so-called "sovereignty road" between the southern and northern West Bank, bypassing the Ma'ale Adumim settlement and areas around it, and stated that its construction would enable settlement construction in E1. Settlement expansion in E1 has long been

considered controversial due to the area's importance for the territorial contiguity of a future Palestinian state.

On 15 January, following a ruling by Israel's High Court of Justice, Israeli authorities demolished two houses in the outpost of Kumi Ori, in Area B of the West Bank. Structures were reportedly also demolished during the reporting period in the outposts of Ma'ale Shlomo and Ma'ale Pinhas. In all of these cases, clashes were reported between settlers and security forces.

Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures by Israeli authorities continued across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Citing the absence of Israeli-issued building permits, which remain very difficult for Palestinians to obtain, the Israeli authorities demolished or seized 96 Palestinian-owned structures, including 50 in East Jerusalem, in addition to 29 structures self-demolished by their owners, resulting in the displacement of 227 people, including 53 women and 122 children.

During the reporting period, the Jerusalem Magistrate's Court ordered the eviction of several Palestinian families from their homes in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, pursuant to lawsuits brought by an Israeli settler-related organization citing pre-1948 ownership of the properties. The families intend to appeal the cases. However, if upheld, the rulings could put hundreds of Palestinians living in the area at risk of forced eviction.

Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#) calls for "immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including all acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction." Unfortunately, sporadic violence continued during the reporting period.

Between 18 December and 20 March, in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, 9 Palestinians, including 2 children were killed and some 30 injured, while some 30 Israelis, including 4 children and 19 security personnel, were injured in various incidents.

On 5 February, during clashes in Hebron, Israeli security forces shot and killed a 17-year-old Palestinian boy, as he was allegedly throwing Molotov cocktails.

On 6 February, a Palestinian man was shot and killed during clashes in Jenin, while in a separate incident, a Palestinian Authority policeman was killed after being hit by a live bullet shot by Israeli security forces while he was inside a police station. Israeli security forces have opened an investigation into the second incident.

On the same day, a Palestinian man shot and wounded a soldier near the entrance of Jerusalem's Old City. He was killed by Israeli security forces. Twelve Israeli soldiers were injured in a car ramming attack in Jerusalem, carried out by a Palestinian, who was later arrested.

On 6 January, an Israeli girl and a man were reportedly injured, and at least eight vehicles owned by Israelis were damaged, following throwing of stones, and in one case a Molotov cocktail, by Palestinians on West Bank roads.

On 18 January, an Israeli man was wounded in a stabbing attack carried out by a Palestinian youth in Hebron. The perpetrator was arrested.

On 7 February, another Palestinian succumbed to his wounds after having been shot during clashes in the village of Qaffin in the northern West Bank.

On 18 February, during clashes between police and local residents, a Palestinian security forces shot and killed a 15-year old Palestinian boy in Qabatia, Jenin.

On 22 February, Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian man near Lions Gate at the entrance to the Old City of Jerusalem, reportedly as he attempted to stab them. On 11 March, during clashes with local residents trying to block Israelis from entering a historical site, the Israeli security forces shot and killed a 15-year-old Palestinian boy in Jabal al-ʿArma in Beita, Nablus.

In March, there were a number of incursions by settlers in Palestinian towns particularly in Ramallah and Nablus Governorates.

In Gaza, despite several days of renewed hostilities in late February, the understandings brokered by Egypt and the United Nations continue to be largely upheld and a fragile calm currently prevails.

On 26 December, the organizers of the protests along the Gaza perimeter fence announced that they would be put on hold until 30 March, leading to a period of relative calm along the fence, despite occasional violent incidents.

On 21 January, three Palestinians, including a 17-year-old boy, crossed the fence into Israel from Gaza and were shot by Israeli security forces after they threw explosive devices towards them.

On 31 January, a 14-year-old Palestinian boy was pronounced dead from tear gas canister wounds he sustained during demonstrations held on 11 October 2019.

Rocket fire from Gaza towards Israel, the launching of balloons carrying explosive devices and Israeli retaliatory strikes have also continued. On 23 February, two Palestinian Islamic Jihad militants attempted to place an explosive device along the fence. One was killed by the Israel Defense Forces, who retrieved his body using a bulldozer inside Gaza in an incident that caused outrage and a serious escalation.

In the following two days, Palestinian Islamic Jihad launched over 100 rockets and mortar shells towards Israel, including one that landed in a playground. Israel responded by firing at Palestinian Islamic Jihad targets in the Gaza Strip. Overall, 18 Palestinians and 16 Israelis were injured in the exchanges before the United Nations and Egyptian-led efforts succeeded in restoring calm on 24 February.

Despite the call in Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#) for the parties to refrain from acts of provocation, incitement, and inflammatory rhetoric, such statements continued.

Palestinian leaders continued to make inciteful and provocative statements. Fatah's official social media pages glorified perpetrators of previous terror attacks against Israelis, and displayed content encouraging children to carry out violence against Jews. Palestinian Authority officials also delivered speeches praising perpetrators of attacks, denying Israel's existence and denying the Jewish historic connection to Jerusalem. Hamas officials encouraged attacks against Israelis in the West Bank and the launching of explosive devices using balloons from Gaza.

Israeli officials continued to make dangerous and discriminatory statements. Senior officials have repeatedly called for annexation of Israeli settlements and other parts of the occupied West Bank. An Israeli minister called for the toppling of the Palestinian Authority if it did not withdraw its claims against Israel at the International Criminal Court. Some Israeli politicians also made a series of discriminatory statements against Israeli Arabs.

Resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#) reiterated calls by the Middle East Quartet for "affirmative steps to be taken immediately to reverse negative trends on the ground that are imperilling the two-State solution."

Over the past months, Israel has removed restrictions and monitoring requirements on a number of materials entering Gaza, including some that previously

entered through the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism. These materials included equipment needed for the construction of critical water and sanitation infrastructure as well as tires, and certain types of cement.

During January 2020, the number of people exiting Gaza via the Erez Crossing was around 27,000, of whom 78 per cent were businesspeople and merchants. This is the highest number of exits recorded since 2007. In a related development, in mid-February, Israel raised the number of business permits for entry from Gaza into Israel to 7,000, the highest it has been since 2007.

Progress has also continued on the reconstruction of damage incurred during the 2014 escalation. To date, 9,000 out of 11,000 totally destroyed houses have been rebuilt, and work on another 800 houses is under way. There remains a funding gap of some \$35 million needed to complete the reconstruction of 1,000 destroyed homes and \$75 million for the repair of just over 56,000 partially damaged homes. Over 1,000 families remain internally displaced.

Despite continued progress on the implementation of critical interventions in support of the economy, and Gaza's water, energy and health sectors, the humanitarian and socioeconomic situations remain dire. Gaza's health system continues to be on the brink of collapse, overstretched and burdened by chronic shortages of drugs and supplies. In January and February 2020, the percentage of medical-related exit permit requests that were delayed or denied by Israeli authorities was 30 and 31 per cent, respectively. As of February 2020, stock levels for 39 per cent of essential medicines have been completely depleted.

Gaza's failing health-care system is particularly worrying in the context of the spread of the COVID-19 virus in the region. Gaza is one of the most densely populated areas in the world – this coupled with its already fragile health-care system makes it a particularly high-risk case for the COVID-19 outbreak. In early March, the phased introduction of measures to stem COVID-19 led the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to close down schools throughout the occupied Palestinian territory indefinitely, though essential medical and other operations continue.

We were informed today by UNRWA that in Gaza they will provide primary health services also to Palestinians who do not have a refugee status in order to assist with the efforts to prevent a COVID-19 outbreak in Gaza.

The United Nations is working to increase its support for Gaza's health system, including in the context of the COVID-19 response.

On the positive side, according to data compiled by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in January, the increased energy supply since October 2018 has contributed to significantly reduced amounts of pollution into the sea alongside increased availability of piped and desalinated water for Gaza's population. It is imperative that sustainable solutions are found to Gaza's energy deficit.

There has been no progress during the reporting period towards intra-Palestinian reconciliation or Palestinian presidential and legislative elections, which have not taken place since 2006. Between 27 February and 17 March, the Russian Federation hosted a series of bilateral discussions with representatives of various Palestinian factions. Discussions focused on the need to advance intra-Palestinian unity and convene an inclusive dialogue to further prospects of reconciliation.

Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#) called on Member States “to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied in 1967.”

On 12 February, the United Nations Human Rights Office issued its report on businesses involved in activities related to settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, as requested by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 31/36, adopted on 24 March 2016. As noted in paragraph 19 of the report, it “does not purport to constitute a judicial or quasi-judicial process of any kind or legal characterization of the listed activities or business enterprises involvement therein”.

Resolution 2334 (2016) also called upon “all parties to continue, inter alia, to exert collective efforts to launch credible negotiations”.

On 28 January, the United States released its “Peace to Prosperity” vision for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. As stated by the Secretary-General in his 11 February briefing to this Council, the position of the United Nations in this regard has been defined, throughout the years, by resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly, by which the Secretariat is bound. The United Nations remains committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis to resolve the conflict on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements and realizing the vision of two States – Israel and Palestine – living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 lines.

In closing, I would like to share some broad observations concerning the implementation of the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016) during the reporting period.

(a) The expansion of Israeli settlements continues to pose a significant obstacle to achieving a viable two-State solution. Their establishment has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law, as stated in Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). They should stop immediately and completely. Potential settlement advancement in the E1 area of the occupied West Bank, or in East Jerusalem neighbourhoods that are crucial to the contiguity of a future Palestinian state, are particularly concerning. The existence and expansion of settlements further entrench the occupation and systematically erode the possibility of establishing a contiguous and viable Palestinian state, and fuel anger and resentment among the Palestinian population.

(b) Unilateral steps are detrimental to peace. In recent months, Israeli officials have repeatedly stated their intention to annex Israeli settlements and other parts of the occupied West Bank. If implemented, such steps would not only constitute a serious violation of international law, but they would also effectively end the prospect of the two-State solution and close the door to negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

(c) The demolition and seizure of Palestinian structures, including internationally funded humanitarian projects, must stop. This practice violates international humanitarian law and must cease. Affected populations must be duly compensated for damages.

(d) There is no justification for violence against civilians, including children, and I call upon all members of the international community to join the United Nations in condemning it unequivocally and calling for all perpetrators to be held accountable.

(e) The indiscriminate launching of rockets and mortars towards civilian population centres is prohibited by international humanitarian law and Palestinian militants must cease this practice immediately. Israeli security forces must exercise maximum restraint and only intentionally use lethal force when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life, in accordance with international law. All incidents must be thoroughly investigated.

(f) Incitement to violence and provocative rhetoric continue to sow fear and deepen mistrust between both sides, eroding hopes for a peaceful solution. All sides must unequivocally condemn attacks when they occur. All perpetrators must be held accountable. Settler-related violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem also remains a serious concern.

(g) Despite the fragile calm in Gaza, and the limited improvements the situation remains a major concern. I reiterate that the only sustainable solution to Gaza's challenges is political and requires concrete steps to ensure that Gaza and the occupied West Bank are reunited under a single legitimate Palestinian national authority, in accordance with the recommendations of the 2016 Middle East Quartet Report. It is critical to end the militant build-up of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza and the constant threat of rocket fire from the Gaza Strip. At the same time, while taking into consideration its legitimate security concerns, Israel must continue to implement additional measures to significantly improve the movement and access of goods and people to and from Gaza, with the goal of ultimately lifting the closures, in line with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

(h) The reconstruction effort in Gaza continues to make important progress and it is important that the remaining projects receive funding and are completed. The United Nations and its partners continue to support this effort as well as other projects aimed at the revival and strengthening of Gaza's industrial and agricultural sectors. At the same time, the Palestinian Authority must do much more to support Gaza's health system, particularly in relation to COVID-19 preparedness, but also in the light of systemic difficulties and chronic drug shortages. I encourage the Palestinian Government and donors to work with the United Nations to this end.

(i) Efforts to improve the situation in Gaza are vital to bolstering the ongoing conflict prevention efforts of Egypt and the United Nations.

(j) It is highly regrettable that there has been no progress made towards the holding of long overdue Palestinian presidential and legislative elections. The Palestinian people must be allowed to exercise their democratic right to vote and elect their leaders and representatives. It is critical that the important Egyptian-led intra-Palestinian reconciliation efforts also continue. Palestinian leaders must engage positively with Egypt, reverse the negative trajectory, take concrete steps to end division and schedule elections.

(k) On 8 March, the United Nations country team celebrated International Women's Day and took the opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of Palestinian women to the development of their communities. This is happening alongside tremendous efforts by United Nations agencies and partners to support civil society actors and the Government to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. Notwithstanding the continued challenges posed by Israel's military occupation, Palestinian women remain concerned about safety and security, livelihoods, employment opportunities, lack of political participation, access to education, health care and other services. I will report in greater detail over the coming months on United Nations efforts to support more gender focused programming as well as to promote greater engagement of women.

(l) The Security Council's 24 February press elements reiterating support for a negotiated two-State solution in accordance with United Nations resolutions and international law was an encouraging sign. Thank you for that. Now is the time to find a way to move the process forward, and to advance proposals to bring the parties back into a mutually agreed framework that allows for meaningful negotiations to commence. The United Nations remains committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis to resolve the conflict on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions,

multilateral agreements and international law, and realizing the vision of two states – Israel and Palestine – with Jerusalem as the shared capital -living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 lines.

As the region continues to confront the enormity of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the broader geopolitical tensions, the situation on the ground remains fragile. Credible negotiations have yet to be launched that will end the occupation and realize a negotiated two-State solution. In the absence of a renewed commitment of the parties to pursue concrete measures that will lead to genuine political progress, the situation I'm afraid will continue to deteriorate.

## Annex II

### **Statements delivered by Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016)**

#### **A. Belgium**

We regret that once again we have to come to the conclusion that no significant steps have been taken to implement resolution 2334 (2016).

Resolution 2334 (2016) is clear: Israeli settlement policy constitutes a flagrant violation of international law. Israel must therefore immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. We remain deeply concerned about new settlement announcements, especially with regards to Jerusalem. If put into practice, these would cut the territorial and geographic contiguity of a future Palestinian state and would undermine the status of Jerusalem as the shared capital.

Furthermore, we remain deeply concerned about announcements regarding the annexation of the West Bank or parts thereof and moves in that direction. Let me reiterate that Belgium will not recognize any changes to the 1967 borders, including with regards to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties.

According to the latest figures of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 21 donor-funded structures have been demolished or seized in 2020. We once again call on Israel to cease these activities and to compensate for the damages.

The publication of the database of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on businesses with a connection to the settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories will hopefully create more transparency.

The past reporting period has seen flares of violence. We condemn all acts of violence against civilians and reiterate the importance of respecting international humanitarian law, including its principles of distinction and proportionality.

Unilateral actions and declarations need to make room for a renewed commitment to the two-state solution and the internationally agreed parameters. It is important that the international community helps create the conditions for a resumption of meaningful and direct negotiations leading to a durable solution, in line with international law, guaranteeing equal rights, both for Palestinians and Israelis alike. Belgium, as a member of the European Union, will spare no efforts in this regard.

Let me, in conclusion, briefly turn to the most recent developments regarding the recent COVID-19 outbreak which risks further exacerbating an already dire situation, both in the West Bank and in Gaza, where the health sector already faces an enormous pressure. We welcome the coordination and cooperation between both sides in order to tackle this pandemic as well as the efforts deployed by the United Nations. Humanitarian access remains crucial and steps have been taken in order to facilitate the entry of critical supplies and equipment into Gaza, as well as to allow for the access and movement for medical personnel. We hope further efforts can be made in this regard.

We remain deeply concerned about the financial implications: Belgium for its part contributes to the local response through its financial contributions to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs country-based pooled fund, the

International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

## **B. China**

It's the fourth meeting we have had on the Palestinian Question since beginning of the year. In recent days, we have witnessed some positive development, including the cooperation between Israel and Palestine in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, we share the concerns of the international community regarding the plans of settlements projects and the inflammatory rhetoric of annexation. I would like to highlight the following:

First, all acts and unilateral initiatives aiming at legalizing settlements should be stopped immediately. Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#) should be effectively implemented. Parties concerned should immediately cease all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and stop developing and implementing new settlement plans. The call of the Secretary-General one week ago should be heard and followed by parties on the ground, namely, to pull back from hostilities, put aside mistrust and animosity, and bring hope to the most vulnerable to COVID-19.

Secondly, further attention should be given, and urgent steps taken, in improving the Palestinian economic and humanitarian conditions. The international community should step up its efforts in supporting the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), including through increased and expedited financial support to UNRWA. We welcome the launch of the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 so that the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries including Palestine may benefit from it. China also welcomes the appointment of Mr. Philippe Lazzarini as Commissioner-General of UNRWA.

Thirdly, more efforts should be made to promote dialogue, negotiation and political consultation on the basis of the "two-state solution", the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of "Land for Peace" and the Arab Initiative, among others. We take note of the recent Quartet meeting which discussed how to revive meaningful peace negotiations towards the goal of two states. We welcome the efforts of Israel and Palestine in fighting the COVID-19 as demonstrated by the phone call between Israeli President and President of Palestine. We support the two sides to strengthen coordination and enhance mutual trust.

China remains committed to firmly supporting the just cause of the Palestinian people for restoring their legitimate national rights. We would work together with Council members to seek a comprehensive, fair, and lasting solution to the question of Palestine at an early date.

## **C. Dominican Republic**

At the outset, I would like to reiterate that any contribution of this Council, in relation to the Israel-Palestine situation, must be within the framework of the recognition and respect of mutual rights, including self-determination and independence. These are the basic principles.

With that in mind, we must ensure respect for previous international agreements.

In this regard, we continue to believe that the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly Gaza, including East Jerusalem, and the dire

consequences that they cause for the Palestinian people, induce an atmosphere of tension and insecurity and undermine any possibility of reaching a point from where they can continue the process of reconciliation and peace between the parties.

We reiterate that the only way forward is through a political dialogue and positive leadership that ultimately lead parties back to the negotiating table.

Colleagues, as others have already mentioned, the situation in Gaza continues to be of high concern for the Dominican Republic.

We all know the long-standing dire situation of the health system, particularly in the Gaza Strip. And now, with the global COVID-19 pandemic, it is even more threatened. With already confirmed cases, more sooner than later we may be dealing with the consequences of years of neglect and inaction that has made this one of the most serious protracted humanitarian situations in the world.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has already warned that the health system in Gaza could not cope with an outbreak, since the hospitals in the strip are overloaded and without resources. Facing this pandemic will be extremely challenging.

I just have a few more comments:

We echo the Secretary-General's call for a worldwide ceasefire to allow full response to COVID-19. We continue to see killings and injuries of people during clashes across the West Bank and other areas. This is a source of concern.

But we have also seen on various reports that there has been close coordination between Israeli and Palestinian health authorities, which is unprecedented. And it must be commended.

We are very pleased to learn that these are meeting several times a week to join efforts to stop the spread of the virus. This is another wake-up call and a reminder of how close and Inter-connected these two countries are. And that only through these types of coordination will there ever be an understanding between them.

So, we believe that this juncture could be an entry point for further talks. Linking the cease fire and end of hostilities-including demolitions- to an effective response to a global pandemic, poses a unique opportunity in our view.

We understand and as it has been stated before, that no amount of humanitarian or economic support on its own, will resolve the difference between the parties, but in this context, we are hopeful that together Israelis and Palestinians, with the support of the United Nations, are able to build the bridges in the vast spaces between them, while fighting a global pandemic.

#### **D. Estonia**

Security Council must do its utmost to be able to follow and discuss the ongoing developments in the world despite the current situation.

Among others, it is essential to continue with the regular meetings on the Middle East, as the developments unrelated to the COVID-19 are ongoing in parallel.

The most important goal should be keeping the momentum alive for moving towards peace and to refrain from actions that undermine it, in the spirit of the Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#).

We urge the parties to start negotiations and we welcome continued efforts in this regard. It is essential to stress that starting the negotiations would not mean

ignoring the internationally agreed parameters and that the outcome should be a negotiated solution agreed by both parties.

The advancement of settlement development by Israel in several areas in East Jerusalem and around it is worrying, especially in the E1 area. Our position on settlement activity remains the same, it is illegal under international law and undermines the prospects for peace process.

The biggest immediate worry is, of course, the risk of COVID-19 spreading in Gaza. It is important that Israel and Palestine continue their cooperation regarding preparedness to crisis.

It is positive that the overall security situation in Gaza has remained calm since February, although the latest rocket attack last Friday indicates continued instability. We urge the parties to refrain from further violence and focus on the common fight against the virus.

## **E. France**

First, I thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing and the presidency for organizing the monthly meeting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is important that the Council continue to meet on the main hotspots.

The Special Coordinator's briefing underlined the threat that COVID-19 represents for the Palestinian territories.

In Gaza, the health system was already on the verge of collapsing before the pandemic. There was only half of the essential medicine available for only a month. Basic equipment to respond to COVID is obviously lacking. The spread of the virus could also lead to a wider social and political destabilization, with regional consequences.

We took note of the efforts made. We urge Israel to allow the delivery of medical equipment and humanitarian emergency evacuations. The Palestinian authority should also lift restrictions that prevent the delivery of medical equipment and medicine to Gaza.

In echo to the Secretary-General's call for humanitarian truce, all actors must refrain of act of hostilities, maintain the ceasefire and ensure humanitarian access to all the people in need. We condemn the launch of rockets against civilian areas in Israel, including those over the weekend.

Nevertheless, there will be no sustainable stability in Gaza without a lift of the blockade with credible security guarantees for Israel and the return of the Palestinian authority to the enclave thanks to Palestinian reconciliation. I urge for progress on those two fronts.

Regarding the West Bank, we are very concerned about the situation of Palestinian detainees, including in Israel, and civilians living in the Area C and East Jerusalem. Let me recall the responsibilities of Israel as an occupying power according to the Geneva Conventions. We urge the Israeli authorities to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian supplies.

More cooperation is needed between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. I welcome the decision of Israel to transfer 120 million shekels of fiscal revenues to the Palestinian authority; the parties nevertheless need to agree on a more comprehensive agreement.

The international community needs to step up its support to Gaza and the West Bank. I welcome the global humanitarian response plan of the United Nations to

respond to the COVID crisis as well as the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) which remain all the more essential today. And I commend the appointment of Mr. Lazzarini as Commissioner-General of UNRWA.

Finally, we reiterate our condemnation of the recent announcements by the Israeli government to advance settlements in Jerusalem and the West Bank. They clearly threaten the viability of a future Palestinian state.

Along with our European partners, we have called upon the Israeli government to reconsider its decisions and to put an end to all settlement activity, in line with its obligations as an occupying power under the Geneva Convention and relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016). We also call on all parties to fully meet their obligations under International Law.

We have warned against any unilateral steps, including annexation of parts of the West Bank, that would undermine the two-state solution and the prospects for peace. Such steps if implemented would not pass unchallenged.

In conclusion, let me hope that COVID-19 will also be an opportunity to foster reconciliation and peace. Unilateral steps to respond to common challenges simply do not work. I therefore hope we can collectively prepare the ground for the resumption of the peace talks in the framework of the internationally agreed parameters and the two-state solution.

## **F. Germany**

First, I would like to express my concern at the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. We welcome the Israeli-Palestinian cooperation against this common threat which knows no boundaries and endangers Israelis and Palestinians alike.

We commend the United Nations and its efforts to support Israeli-Palestinian cooperation against COVID-19 and the enhancement of medical capacities where they lack most. We echo the call of the Secretary-General to put aside mistrust and animosity and to focus on dialogue and cooperation in order to enable joint responses to COVID-19.

We need to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in this situation. UNRWA plays a critical role in the current pandemic, but lacks funding to handle the realistic scenario of a deterioration of the humanitarian situation caused by a massive outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Palestinian refugee camps and Gaza.

With regard to the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), we remain greatly concerned by the situation on the ground and the general state of play in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Germany remains convinced that a negotiated two-state solution based on international law and on the internationally agreed parameters is the only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs, fulfils Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967, resolves all permanent status issues, and guarantees equal rights for all inhabitants.

To build a just and lasting solution, the final status issues, including the issues related to borders, the status of Jerusalem, security and refugees, must be resolved through direct negotiations between both parties.

Unilateral actions creating facts on the ground neither help reaching a just and lasting solution nor do they lead to sustainable peace and security.

We therefore call on the parties to the conflict, and on all international stakeholders, to refrain from taking any measures which risk undermining the viability of a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of international law and the internationally agreed parameters.

The ongoing Israeli occupation and the continued settlement activities in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 remains one of the main obstacles to a political settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We reiterate our position that Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories are illegal under international law and undermine the prospects for ending the occupation and achieving a negotiated two-state solution.

We reiterate our call on the Israeli government to halt the settlement construction plans for Har Homa and Givat Hamatos as well as for the area E1 and abide by resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#). It bears recalling: severing East Jerusalem from the West Bank would severely undermine the prospects for a viable and contiguous Palestinian state within the framework of a negotiated two-state solution.

We call upon Israel to end the expansion of settlements, the legalization of settlement outposts, the confiscation of Palestinian land and the demolition and seizure of Palestinian-owned structures.

We remain extremely concerned about repeated statements, plans and steps on the ground towards the annexation of parts of the occupied Palestinian territories.

We strongly advise the Israeli government against the annexation of or the “extension of Israeli sovereignty” to occupied Palestinian territories as this would constitute a clear violation of international law and have serious, negative repercussions on the viability of the two-state solution and the entire peace process.

We reiterate that Germany will continue to distinguish between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967 and that we will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, unless agreed to by both parties.

Resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#) needs to be fully implemented, not only with regard to settlement activities but also with regard to acts of terror, violence against civilians, incitement, provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric which also constitute obstacles to achieving peace.

Germany condemns all attacks on Israel in the strongest possible terms, including the firing of rockets from Gaza into Israel as recently as last Friday (27 March).

Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad must stop firing rockets into Israel. There is no justification for the firing of rockets into Israel or any other form of terrorism – not at any time, and certainly not at a moment of global crisis.

If we want to prevent a further deterioration of the situation on the ground, we have to find ways to revive the political process.

We reaffirm our belief that any viable proposal for direct negotiations must be accepted by both parties. The previous resolutions of this Council reflect both international law as well as parameters for negotiations that both parties have previously accepted in negotiations.

We think that establishing or reviving a multilateral format, such as the Quartet, would enable us to discuss the recent United States proposals and any other proposals, in particular further concrete proposals from the Palestinian side.

Such discussions could be helpful towards the shared objective of creating an environment conducive to the resumption of meaningful and genuine negotiations between the parties to resolve all permanent status issues and to achieve a negotiated, just and viable solution which is acceptable for both sides, Israelis and Palestinians.

## **G. Indonesia**

I wish to begin by thanking your delegation for convening this meeting during a very difficult period.

Our appreciation also goes to Mr. Mladenov for delivering the Secretary-General's quarterly report on resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), and his update of the Council on the latest developments on the ground.

With that background, I would like to make the following pertinent points:

First, the creeping annexation of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territories must be stopped.

Indonesia deplores this reprehensible practice, particularly in recent weeks following the outbreak of COVID-19 in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Based on data of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, since 5 March 2020 when the first seven cases of the disease were discovered in Bethlehem, the Government of Israel has demolished 30 structures in the West Bank belonging to the Palestinians.

This is against the background of Israel also announcing plans last month to construct over 17,500 settlement units in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including in and around East Jerusalem; and on February 27, approving plans for an additional 1,739 units.

These brazen efforts clearly violate international law and Security Council resolutions, including resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#).

Moreover, they take advantage of, and jeopardize, the international concern over, and efforts to tackle, the spread of COVID-19.

We therefore urge the Security Council not to entertain this slight by Israel, or let these unjustifiable measures go unchecked.

Second, urgency to assist Palestinians to address the outbreak of COVID-19 in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

While we continue to maintain pressure on Israel in this Council concerning the illegality of its actions in the Occupied Territory, it is also imperative that we find ways to help the most vulnerable Palestinian population in the area to respond to COVID-19.

In that regard, Indonesia urges the Council to call on Israel to halt all illegal settlement activities, including the destruction of Palestinian properties, that are causing displacements and enhancing the humanitarian crisis of the civilians.

We must also urge the Occupying Power to assume its legal obligations to help address the COVID-19 situation in the West Bank and Gaza, among others by ensuring unhindered access to essential health supplies as well as lifting the movement restrictions on patients and health workers.

We must also appeal to the international community to extend urgent humanitarian support and resources to the Palestinian population, including through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

We also would like to welcome the appointment of Philippe Lazzarini as the Commissioner-General of UNRWA.

Third, the need to prepare Gaza to cope with the pandemic.

I am particularly worried about the potential impact of COVID-19 on Gaza, as its health-care system was collapsing even before the outbreak.

It is common knowledge that its stocks of essential drugs are extremely low, its natural sources of drinkable water largely contaminated, and that its electrical system supplies limited power.

As a result, if the situation in Gaza is not addressed, we could witness a large-scale COVID-19 outbreak capable of leading to a devastating humanitarian catastrophe.

Before I close, I wish to express my delegation's denunciation of Israel's recent airstrikes in the Gaza Strip. We reject this and all forms of violence, particularly those that are disproportionate and aimed at extending the pain and suffering of helpless Palestinians.

Finally, I would like to once again reaffirm Indonesia's long-standing position that the two-state vision, based on various United Nations resolutions, is the only viable solution to the prolonged Palestine-Israeli conflict.

While we continue our concerted efforts to fight the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia reiterates its call for the early resumption of credible multilateral negotiations on the Question of Palestine guided by the internationally agreed parameters.

In closing, I would also like to request the Secretariat to distribute the statement by Mr. Mladenov today to all Council Members as official document of the Council.

## **H. Russian Federation**

We were pleased to learn that contacts between Palestinians and Israelis in the context of confronting COVID-19 have resumed. Israeli President Rivlin's phone call to his Palestinian counterpart Mr. Abbas was an important step. While the focus of the ongoing cooperation is on the health crisis, there are many other areas that overlap and are under discussion now. We hope that this dialogue becomes part of the confidence building measures.

As Mr. Mladenov underscored, potential consequences of the spread of the disease in the Gaza Strip are of particular concern. As we understand, Palestinians, Israelis and Egyptians are contacting on the issue with the help of the United Nations. The work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and its support by the international community becomes even more important than ever. Of course, the safety of UNRWA staff is a priority.

Due to the current state of affairs, many questions arise regarding the Palestinian elections. Israelis themselves have problems related to the formation of the Government.

We are going through a difficult period of time in the Middle Eastern peace process that is even more aggravated by the COVID-19. Still, our principal approach

remains unchanged. Russia supports a fair solution of the Palestinian question on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid Principles and the Arab Peace Initiative, which provide basis for creation of an independent, sovereign, territorially contiguous Palestinian state within 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

On March 26, Russia took part in a teleconference of special envoys to the Middle East Quartet of International Mediators. The participants held an in-depth discussion on the current lack of progress with the Palestinian-Israeli settlement and on the tasks of containing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. They agreed that it was important to revitalize the work of the Quartet and to hold next teleconference soon.

At the last meetings of the Security Council we heard both from Palestinians and Israelis that they were prepared to engage in negotiations. We should hear from the parties how they see parameters of such negotiations. We reiterate the importance of restoring Palestinian national unity. As Mr. Mladenov mentioned, we held a series of consultations with Palestinian factions on that issue.

Unfortunately, reports from the ground indicate that even the Coronavirus does not change plans for the continuation of settlement activity, and demolition of Palestinian real estate. Clashes that lead to casualties do not stop. We believe it is important that the parties do not engage in provocative actions and unilateral steps, in particular at this time.

## **I. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**

We convene this meeting today amid a tsunami of global challenges. The worst global pandemic in over a century continues to ravage us all, while the slow onset of the climate crisis leaves each of our countries with a cloud of uncertainty looming overhead. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines echoes the Secretary-General's appeal for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world. Now, more than ever, we must come together to fight these unseen enemies that lurk at each of our gates.

We note with concern the growing number of detected COVID-19 cases in the occupied Palestinian territory. At the same time, we welcome the recent discussion between the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to coordinate efforts to combat the virus. Similarly, we welcome the recent meeting between the United Nations Special Envoy, Nickolay Mladenov, and the Middle East Quartet to discuss the prospects for peace negotiations and the current situation surrounding COVID-19.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines encourages the international community to support the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to deal with COVID-19 in the Palestinian refugee community, including by contributing to the Flash Appeal.

In the midst of this global pandemic, we are concerned about the ongoing Israeli settlement throughout the Occupied Palestinian territory. We once again reiterate that the annexation of Palestinian land undermines the feasibility of a two-state solution and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law.

Article 56 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states that, "the Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring and maintaining, with the cooperation of national and local authorities, the medical and hospital establishments and services, public health and hygiene in the occupied territory". In this context, we call on Israel, the occupying power to ensure that all the necessary preventive means available to it are utilized to combat the spread of COVID-19.

Indeed, fighting this virus is one of the most urgent challenges facing us all today. We should be united in rising to the challenge. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reaffirms its commitment to this international coalition.

## **J. South Africa**

I would like to thank Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov for his informative, yet disturbing briefing on the situation in Palestine, particularly with regard to continuing settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory.

South Africa's position on Palestine is well known so I will not repeat it here today, but will focus my remarks on the reason we have all met today; the continuing illegal settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory.

### **Settlements/annexation**

South Africa is particularly concerned at the continuous settlement and annexation rhetoric by the Israeli government. These negative gestures and Israel's pronouncements about the annexation of a large part of the West Bank and Jordan Valley do nothing to move the peace process forward but only moves positions and people further apart

My delegation, must once again, reiterate that the continued expansion of settlements violates international law, contravenes decisions of this Council and undermines the prospects for peace. South Africa is particularly concerned at the announcement for plans for the construction of 3,500 units in the E1 area (between the Ma'ale Adumim colony and Jerusalem), which would severely compromise the possibility of a two-State solution. These announcements and all settlement must stop.

We call on all Council members and States Members of the United Nations to fully implement all provisions of resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), in line with their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and decisions of the Security Council. This includes written reports from the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#). We look forward to receiving a written report, on which the Special Coordinator based his briefing today in keeping with recent Council practice.

All resolutions adopted by the Council, be they unanimous or not, must be uniformly implemented. We cannot pick and choose which Security Council resolutions should be implemented. In a similar vein, overt violations of Council resolutions, as is the case with the continued settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, usually evoke stricter measures on the party responsible for the infringement.

South Africa continues to be concerned at the continued human rights violations in the Occupied Territory, and emphasize that such violations only contribute to the festering hatred between Palestine and Israel, causing further divisions. The killing and injuring of Palestinians, who are protesting illegal Israeli action must be condemned. We are appalled at the death once again of a Palestinian youth earlier this month, whose only crime was to demonstrate against the unjust occupation.

### **COVID-19**

During this time of the COVID-19 pandemic and with many nations under lock down, self-isolation or quarantine, we must pay particular attention to how this health crises affects the Palestine people. During this time, when millions of people are being told to stay at home, some Palestinians are having their homes demolished. This is unacceptable and must be condemned.

We have seen reports of the first positive cases of COVID-19 in Gaza. In an area where the health-care system is poor, there are restrictions on the movement of goods, including medical supplies and equipment and people living in close proximity to each other, it can only be anticipated that the number of positive cases may increase. We call on the relevant parties to ensure that the necessary equipment to battle and contain this pandemic is made available to all those who require it. The international donor community should try its best to also assist the Palestinians in dealing with the pandemic.

In this regard, we call on the Government of Israel to fulfil its responsibilities, as the occupying power to lift the blockades instituted against the movement of goods and persons into Gaza.

Additionally, South Africa calls on Member States and the international community to support the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to provide humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees, especially in these uncertain times. We also would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Lazzarini on his appointment as the Commissioner-General of UNRWA and wish him well in leading the organization.

## **K. Tunisia**

At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to Mr. Mladenov, for his tireless efforts, especially in these difficult circumstances, and thank him for his comprehensive briefing.

The situation on the ground regrettably continues to deteriorate, and as mentioned in Mr. Mladenov's briefing, settlements have expanded significantly and demolition of homes have accelerated, in violation of international humanitarian law and relevant United Nations resolutions. These unlawful policies and illegal activities are dangerously imperilling the viability of the two-State solution and have led to increased tensions in the occupied Palestinian territory and beyond.

Moreover, the international community should urge Israel to abide by its obligations under the international law and to refrain from any attempts to implement its long-planned de facto annexation of the Palestinian land, in grave breach of international law and further shredding the contiguity of the Palestinian territory. The Secretary-General warned that "such steps, if implemented, would be devastating to the possibility of reviving negotiations and regional peace, while severely undermining the viability of the two-State solution".

Tunisia is deeply concerned with the deteriorating humanitarian situation especially in Gaza and the lack of significant steps aimed at putting an end to the hardships of the people living there. The situation of the public health is precarious as a result of the destruction of hospitals and lack of drugs and medical equipment. It's hence fundamental that the international community continue its vital humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, especially at this critical juncture to strengthen the Palestinian capacity in response to COVID-19 pandemic. It is likewise crucial to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need. We also insist on the necessity of providing continued support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, as it is still facing huge financial difficulties, including to fund immediate response to the COVID-19.

In closing, Tunisia renews its commitment to maintaining its steadfast and principled support for the Palestinian question and the indivisible and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, which are not time-bound. We stress our attachment

to peace as a strategic choice and reaffirm our support for any constructive efforts to revive the peace process based on international resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the two-State solution as the only path to achieving a lasting, comprehensive and just peace. A peace that puts an end to occupation and leads to the establishment of the independent sovereign Palestinian state based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

## **L. Viet Nam**

I would like to thank Mr. Mladenov, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his valuable briefing. I would like to make the following points:

First, we are deeply concerned of the dire and fragile situation in Gaza. Suffering people in Gaza and other occupied Palestinian territories are at risk of a potential outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. We hope there will be no outbreak but it is good to prepare for the worst, especially we all know that the health service system is collapsing in Gaza under many years of blockade. Under the current circumstance, the concerned parties need to refrain from all acts of provocation or violence and immediately carry out necessary measures to protect civilians. We commend and fully support the works of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East on the ground.

Second, we noted with much worries that the Israeli government is advancing plans of settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. These unilateral steps on the ground continue to undermine prospects for a two-state solution. Meanwhile, the possible annexation of territory in the West Bank remains a matter of big concern and would close the door to negotiations.

Third, it is urgent to resume dialogues and negotiations towards a peaceful solution to the conflict. We urge the concerned parties to step up efforts and we call for the intensification of international and regional diplomatic efforts and support aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of the internationally agreed parameters, including the relevant United Nations resolutions. We also wish to see progress in other peace initiatives towards this goal. I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to mediation efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, his Special Coordinator and regional countries.

Lastly Viet Nam reaffirms its position that a lasting and just peace in the region can only be achieved through realizing the vision of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security on the basis of the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both states.

## **M. United States of America**

Thank you, Mr. President and thank you, Mr. Mladenov, for your briefing. As always, and especially under these difficult circumstances, we are grateful for the continued efforts of your team to fairly address the longstanding conflict.

I understand that in the current environment, much of our attention rightly remains focused on minimizing the impact of COVID-19 on communities around the world. We also recognize that this is not the time for a complex discussion of the granular details of the Trump administration's Vision for Peace. There will be another day to address these important matters, as well as how we can secure a future of dignity and prosperity for all Israelis and Palestinians.

But today, while my comments will be brief, I do want to shine a light on recent engagement between the Israelis and Palestinians that is encouraging, constructive, and that, in a small way, speaks to the power of dialogue – the kind of dialogue we have all been urging the parties to engage in for many months now.

In recent days, we have seen close coordination between Israeli and Palestinian authorities as they seek to prevent widespread harm from the presence of COVID-19 among their peoples. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, representatives from both the Israeli and Palestinian ministries of health have been coordinating regularly to mitigate the spread and impact of the coronavirus. They have been meeting regularly for conversations about recent developments. And they have been sharing best practices with one another to help those in their care stay safe and healthy.

This kind of dialogue, though just one example, is a model of collaboration and cooperation. It is a tangible demonstration of the good that comes – and the human lives that can literally be saved – when leaders come to the table just to talk with one another – to recognize one another’s dignity, and to do the hard work of laying out a path to a safer, healthier, more prosperous future.

So when this disease passes, when we have escaped its grip – which I know we will – each member of this Council will be able to point to the cooperation we’re seeing now and say that dialogue between the Israelis and Palestinians is possible. We will be able to say that achieving mutually beneficial solutions is possible.

I want everyone to take note of what we’ve seen in recent days, and to remember it. Because when COVID-19 has passed, the need for dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians will be just as great as it was before. And the Council will have an important role to play in reminding both sides that in a time of trial, it was dialogue that saw them through to the other side.

We continue to believe that a comprehensive and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians is in reach, and we are committed to increasing our efforts until that future is safely in their hands.

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