



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

Provisional

9174th meeting

Friday, 28 October 2022, 3 p.m.

New York

President: Mrs. Ngyema Ndong (Gabon)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Prizreni
Brazil	Mr. Jardim Oliveira
China	Mr. Tian Bingxu
France	Mrs. Morghad
Ghana	Mr. Nsowah
India	Mr. Setia
Ireland	Mr. O'Connell
Kenya	Ms. Nyakoe
Mexico	Mrs. Robledo López
Norway	Ms. Halle
Russian Federation	Mr. Khloponin
United Arab Emirates	Ms. AlMatrooshi
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. Camara
United States of America	Mr. Kris

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting resumed at 3.05 p.m.

The President (*spoke in French*): I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Security Council to carry out its work as expeditiously as possible. Flashing lights on the collars of the microphone will prompt all speakers to bring their remarks to a close after four minutes.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Jalil Irvani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank you, Madam President, for organizing this important open debate.

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories has deteriorated. United Nations reports indicate that 2022 has been the deadliest year for the Palestinian people since 2006. The Israeli regime has persisted with its oppressive, expansionist and apartheid practices, as well as systematic violations of the human rights of Palestinians by killing innocent people, including women and children, stealing and demolishing the property of the Palestinian people and forcibly evicting them from their homes. Today, Gaza has become the world's largest prison and the voice of the oppressed people of Gaza is silenced. Civilians, including women and children, face severe deprivation and violations of their basic rights. That is a crime against humanity, a violation of all international laws and norms, and a serious threat to international peace and security.

For 74 years, such brutal crimes and atrocities have been committed against the Palestinian people without ceasing, and neither the occupation has ended nor has the occupier and apartheid regime faced any consequences. Today, the Palestinian people need the Security Council's effective support and decisive action to stop the aggressor and end the occupation, not its sympathy. The Israeli regime ignores and violates brazenly all United Nations resolutions, including the Security Council's resolutions.

Due to the Security Council's silence, all United Nations resolutions of the past several decades have remained on paper only, while we continue to witness more atrocities committed against Palestinians by that despicable regime. That regime is fully aware that, due to consistent support and *carte blanche* of one permanent member of the Security Council, it will not be held accountable by the international community. Members

of the Security Council must consider whether any United Nations resolutions, particularly those urging an end to the occupation, settlement expansions or the blockade of Gaza, have been implemented.

We believe that the conflict in Palestine can be resolved only if the occupation ends and the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination is fully recognized, restored and protected, resulting in the full restoration of Palestinian sovereignty over all of Palestine. That, however, will not be achieved until the Security Council's inaction remains an option. The Council's current position has only encouraged and emboldened the Israeli regime to perpetuate its occupation and atrocities against the oppressed people of Palestine.

The Islamic Republic of Iran regards it as its duty to support Palestine's legitimate right to resistance to the oppression and aggression of the apartheid regime, in line with the right of self-determination, and that will be our principled policy until the occupation ends.

The representative of the Israeli regime attempted to abuse the Chamber once again, resorting to fabrications and lies and making repeated allegations by accusing Iran of hostile actions and malicious activities that the terrorist regime has conducted and is continuing against regional countries and beyond. Iran categorically rejects all those baseless allegations. It is obvious that the purpose of such unfounded accusations is to deflect attention from the meeting's agenda item, which is focused on the atrocities committed by that apartheid regime against the Palestinian people, as well as its systematic and deliberate violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestine territories.

At today's meeting, the representative of that rogue regime went beyond that, blatantly threatening a Member of the United Nations with the use of force in the Chamber, in a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. The Security Council must strongly condemn such reckless and belligerent statements, which can pose a threat to regional and international peace and security.

We also totally reject the unjustified and unfounded claims levelled against my country by the representative of Albania, who deviated from the Council's agenda issue. Iran has already rejected those unfounded assertions and detailed its position in its letters to the Security Council dated 10 September

(S/2022/685), 19 October (S/2022/776), and 24 October 2022 (S/2022/794).

Given the Security Council's unique role and mandate in maintaining international peace and security, we believe that membership of the Security Council entails greater responsibility and more professionalism.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Türkiye.

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Türkiye): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate, and Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing.

We remain concerned over the lack of progress towards a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Equally frustrating is the lack of interest on the part of the international community in finding a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the longest-standing conflict on the United Nations agenda. Unilateral actions in the occupied Palestinian territories continue to undermine the prospects for a two-State solution; they also weaken the Palestinian Authority. The situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is fragile. The ongoing tension, escalated by the recent raids and military blockades, is a cause for serious concern. Continuing violations against the sanctity and status of East Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque are unacceptable. Those violations have led to further escalation. The recent raids by radical Israeli groups on the Al-Aqsa Mosque under the protection of Israeli security forces are unacceptable.

Unilateral actions and provocations are triggering more violence in the region. We call for restraint and common sense in order to restore calm. Those events remind us once again of the significance of addressing the root causes of this problem. It is essential to return to the path of negotiations to make progress towards lasting peace and security.

We encourage all Palestinian groups to continue working towards unity and reconciliation. We welcome the positive outcome of the national reconciliation conference among Palestinian factions, held earlier this month under Algeria's auspices. The declaration adopted at the conference is a good basis for the unification of Palestinian factions. We hope that the steps listed in the declaration, particularly the holding of elections, will be implemented.

Providing assistance to Palestine refugees is a joint responsibility of the international community. The

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) plays a vital role in that regard on behalf of all of us. We strongly support the renewal of the Agency's mandate by the General Assembly in the coming weeks. Yet the extension of the mandate alone is not sufficient. Ensuring the Agency's financial stability is also crucial to the continuation of its lifeline services for millions of Palestine refugees. We strongly encourage all to provide financial support to UNRWA.

For its part, Türkiye has contributed \$10 million to the Agency this year and continues making in-kind contributions. We also support the Secretary-General's call to increase assessed contributions to UNRWA from the United Nations general budget. We are also ready to support our Palestinian brothers and sisters in their righteous request for full membership of the Organization.

Türkiye will continue to support all efforts towards finding a comprehensive and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Kadiri (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): It is a true pleasure to see you, Madam, and the Republic of Gabon presiding over the work of the Security Council. As we approach the end of your tenure, I should like to warmly thank and congratulate you on an extremely successful presidency. Your presidency is a source of pride for our African continent.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

I would like to thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his valuable briefing. The Kingdom of Morocco, under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Chairperson of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, supports the Palestinian question and a just and fair peace based on international legitimacy and the two-State solution agreed by the international community. There is no alternative to a political solution leading to an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the 4 June 1967 borders, living side-by-side with Israel in an environment of security, stability, tranquillity and peace.

His Majesty King Mohammed VI, in his capacity as Chairperson of the Al-Quds Committee, is making

every political and diplomatic effort to preserve the privileged status of the holy city. In that context, in the Al-Quds Declaration issued on 30 March 2019, His Majesty the King and Pope Francis reiterated the importance of preserving the status of the holy city as the common heritage of humankind and its legal, historic and demographic status for the three monotheistic religions. In the context of Morocco's permanent commitment to improving the living conditions of the Palestinian people, His Majesty King Mohammed VI mediated successfully to keep King Hussein/Allenby Bridge open between Jordan and the West Bank. That will have a positive impact on the daily lives of the Palestinians by facilitating the movement of persons and goods.

The Al-Quds Committee continues to emphasize its message of protecting Al-Quds and supporting its inhabitants under the direct auspices of His Majesty King Mohammed VI. Morocco allocates nearly 86 per cent of the Committee's annual budget to cover political efforts, along with work undertaken on the ground by the Bayt Mal Al-Quds Al-Sharif Agency. Since its establishment in 1995, the Agency has worked to safeguard Arab and Islamic rights in the holy city by supporting and funding numerous vital projects in the social, cultural, educational, health and construction fields, with direct and tangible effect on the living conditions of the inhabitants of Al-Quds.

The Bayt Mal Al-Quds Al-Sharif Agency has recently funded the tuitions of 100 students in the Al-Quds Open University, pursuant to a partnership and cooperation agreement signed in Rabat in June between the Agency and relevant Palestinian parties. The agreement also includes holding exhibitions and a New Year's Eve festival for the benefit of the Muslim-Christian Associations and in support of Al-Quds and the holy sites. In addition, the Kingdom of Morocco reiterates its support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

We are convinced of the centrality of the Palestinian question, which is a core issue in the Middle East and one of the main priorities of the international community. We reiterate that position at every opportunity. We believe that the stability and prosperity of the region are closely linked to finding a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question in line with international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. In a solidarity statement, His Majesty King Mohammed VI reiterated on 21 November 2021 his solidarity with the

Palestinian people on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and appealed for intense and effective diplomatic efforts to return the stakeholders to the negotiating table in order to find a solution to the Palestinian question within the context of the two-State solution and to build a promising future for the Palestinian and Israeli generations.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Morocco reiterates its full solidarity with brotherly Yemen and its legitimate Government. We strongly condemn the attack perpetrated by the terrorist Houthi militia on Friday 21 October against a ship approaching the port of Dhaba, in Hadramout province. We will maintain our permanent and unconditional support for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and all sisterly countries of the Arab Gulf against any aggression or terror attack perpetrated by the Houthis and their supporters.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Skoog.

Mr. Skoog: I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

The candidate countries Montenegro and Albania, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, align themselves with this statement.

The EU stresses first the important role of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and strongly supports him and his mandate. We are grateful to Mr. Wennesland for his tireless efforts over the last year.

The EU welcomes the commitments to the two-State solution expressed recently by both Israel and Palestine. It calls on the parties to now take concrete steps towards restoring a political horizon and relaunching the peace process as soon as possible. We remain ready to give our support to that end.

The EU reaffirms its commitment to a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine living side-by-side in peace, security and mutual recognition, and with Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States. Furthermore, the EU will seek to encourage and build upon the recent establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and a number of Arab

countries, with a view to enhancing the prospects to reach a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East peace process.

The EU is worried by the deteriorating situation on the ground and increased violence in the occupied West Bank, which fuel tensions and animosity, and calls for efforts to de-escalate. The EU is concerned about the increasingly high number of civilian casualties, including children, as a result of actions, inter alia, by Israeli security forces. We recall that the use of force must be proportionate and in line with international law, and be applied only as a last resort, when it is strictly unavoidable in order to protect life. We reiterate our call for a thorough investigation into the death of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, killed while covering an Israeli security operation in the occupied West bank. The EU firmly condemns recent terror attacks in Israel, as well as all forms of terrorism, and remains committed to the prevention and fight against terrorism and violent extremism.

Having listened to the Special Coordinator earlier today, let me add a call on the parties to end this vicious circle of violence, in which everyone will lose. This is not just an issue of security, but needs to be addressed through political leadership and engagement.

The EU reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and activities, including in and around East Jerusalem, and especially in sensitive areas such as E1. Evictions, forced transfers, including in Masafer Yatta, demolitions, including of EU-funded projects, and confiscations of homes only escalate an already tense environment and threaten the viability of a two-State solution. Settlements are illegal under international law. The EU will not recognize changes to the 1967 lines unless they are agreed by the parties. We call on Israel to halt continued settlement expansion, which has reached record highs in the past years, evictions, demolition and forced transfers. We call on Israel to allow for a tangible improvement of freedom of movement and access for the Palestinians, to enable accelerated Palestinian construction, as well as social and economic development in Area C, and to reverse the worsening of living conditions for Palestinians in Area C. The EU firmly condemns settler violence and calls for accountability.

We recall the special significance of the holy sites and call for upholding the status quo put in place in 1967 for the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, in

line with previous understandings and with respect to Jordan's special role. Underlining the necessity to respect the status quo also for the Christian holy sites, which are under increasing pressure, the EU reiterates the importance of maintaining peaceful coexistence among all three monotheistic religions. The EU will closely monitor developments and their implications on the ground, and remains ready to contribute further to the protection and the viability of the two-State solution.

The EU strongly condemns the indiscriminate launching of rockets by Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other terrorist groups into Israel. The EU deplores the loss of civilian lives during the escalation of violence in and around Gaza in August. We call on all parties to take the necessary steps to produce a fundamental change to the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, including the end of the closure and a full opening of the crossing points, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns.

The EU will continue to call upon the Palestinian Authority to hold free, transparent and inclusive national elections without further delay. It urges all Palestinian factions to engage in good faith in the reconciliation process, adhere to previous agreements, renounce violence and terrorism, and recognize Israel's right to exist, and commit to democratic principles, including the rule of law. Democratic Palestinian institutions based on respect for the rule of law and human rights are vital for the Palestinian people and, ultimately, for the two-State solution. In that regard, the EU encourages the intra-Palestinian reconciliation process and the recent steps towards that end taken at Algiers on 13 October.

Palestinian civil society must be allowed by all parties to carry out its important task freely, while freedom of expression must be upheld. The EU recalls the need to hold those responsible for the death of Nizar Banat accountable. We are proud of our continued support to civil society, which contributes to peace efforts and confidence-building between Israelis and Palestinians. We call on Israel to refrain from any action that would prevent those organizations from continuing their critical human rights, humanitarian and development work in the occupied Palestinian territory. Antiterrorism legislation should not be used to undermine civil society and its valuable work and contributions to the pursuit of accountability.

We welcome measures to improve Palestinian livelihoods and call for the implementation of the commitments made at the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians in New York in September.

Until there is a just, fair, agreed and realistic solution to the refugee issue in accordance with international law, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) remains crucial to providing the necessary protection and essential services for Palestine refugees, supporting peace and stability in the region. The EU will continue to support UNRWA in all its fields of operations, including in East Jerusalem.

Allow me to turn briefly to the situation in Syria. It is essential that the international community continue to pursue a sustainable and comprehensive political solution in Syria. A durable solution to the conflict continues to require a genuine and inclusive political transition, with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and with the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). The European Union remains firm in its commitment to that goal and fully supports the continuous efforts of UN Special Envoy Pedersen to advance on all aspects of resolution 2254 (2015), including his steps-for-steps approach, in furthering the political process and resuming the work of the Constitutional Committee.

We emphasize that no normalization, lifting of sanctions or reconstruction will be possible until the Syrian regime engages in a credible, sustainable and inclusive a political transition, in the framework of resolution 2254 (2015). The Syrian regime must also fully cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and its investigations on the use of chemical weapons in the conflict, including the attack in Douma. The EU, as a member of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, will continue to work towards ensuring full accountability in that regard.

All parties responsible for breaches of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights law must be held accountable. Accountability and justice for victims is essential for a stable, peaceful Syria. We reiterate our call to have the situation in Syria referred to the International Criminal Court. In the absence of international justice, the prosecution

of war crimes and other serious crimes under national jurisdiction, where possible, now under way in several EU member States, represents a crucial contribution towards securing justice, as does the Dutch-Canadian initiative to hold Syria to account for breaching the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

We will continue to support efforts to gather evidence with a view to future legal action, including by the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 and the work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Secretary-General recently issued a report, "Missing people in the Syrian Arab Republic" (A/76/890), on how to bolster efforts to clarify the fate of missing people in Syria, identify human remains and provide a mechanism to support to the families of missing people. We welcome the report and its findings, are fully committed to the fate of the missing, and will look positively into proposals for support of a new mechanism.

Civilians must be protected at all times. The EU echoes the calls made by the Security Council for the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire. We recall that the underlying causes of the refugee and displacement crisis must be addressed under resolution 2254 (2015). The EU continues to warn against any further displacements in any part of Syria, as well as against the potential exploitation of such displacements for the purpose of social and demographic engineering. Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries are still unable to go back home as the conditions for safe, dignified and voluntary return, in line with the parameters defined by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and in accordance with international law, are not fulfilled yet. It is the responsibility of the Syrian regime to remove those obstacles. We will be in a position to support returns only once those conditions are satisfied.

We commend Syria's neighbouring countries for hosting large number of Syrian refugees for more than a decade, and call on all leaders to avoid divisive rhetoric. The EU and its member States are the largest donor and have provided €25 billion to meet the needs arising from

the Syrian crisis over the past decade, including over €4.8 billion at the sixth Brussels Conference, with over €3.1 billion coming from the European Commission and €1.7 billion from the EU member States.

Yet, humanitarian needs in Syria continue to increase. Ninety per cent of Syrians live under the poverty line and 55 per cent of the population are food insecure. There is an estimated 14.6 million people in need inside Syria, 1.2 million more than in 2021. The EU will continue to demonstrate solidarity with the Syrian people and calls on the international community, in particular regional donors, to increase their commitments.

Early recovery projects are important for the dignity of the Syrian people and for their future. EU-funded projects are intended and designed for those in genuine need. The EU will not fund early recovery efforts that could support social and demographic engineering.

Türkiye's security concerns stemming from northern Syria need to be addressed through political and diplomatic means, not by military action, and in full respect for international humanitarian law.

The confirmation of the extension of the authorization for the UN to use the crossing point of Bab Al-Hawa for humanitarian deliveries is a humanitarian imperative. Its continuation in January 2023 is essential to preserve the functioning of a critical humanitarian lifeline for people in north-western Syria who depend on that assistance. The EU fully supports the continuation of that essential mechanism and urges Council members to uphold their commitment to renewing the resolution for a longer period to ensure that cross-border assistance is sustained in the midst of winter and beyond.

The EU remains committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian State, and calls once again on all parties to the conflict, particularly the Syrian regime, to advance a credible sustainable and inclusive political solution based on the full and comprehensive implementation of resolution 2254 (2015) as the only route to sustainable peace in Syria.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Ben Lagha (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I am delighted to see you, Madam President, leading the Security Council alongside your team of women. I take this opportunity to congratulate you and Gabon

on successfully assuming the presidency of the Security Council. I wish you further success during the remainder of your tenure.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

At the outset, I would like to thank the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Tor Wennesland, for his briefing this morning. He painted an alarming picture of the dangerous escalation in the occupied Palestinian territories, where Palestinian lives have been lost and Palestinian civilians injured, including women and children. This year has proved to be the bloodiest since 2005. We are deeply concerned and fear that the situation will spiral out of control and become a cycle of violence and destruction in the region. We hope that the Security Council will take measures to prevent that from happening.

We commend Mr. Wennesland's efforts to de-escalate the situation and promote prospects for peace in the Middle East. We stress that those efforts need to be supported by the international community, in particular the Security Council.

While Tunisia reiterates its condemnation of the aggressive and systematic Israeli practices against the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, it condemns the daily violations against Palestinian rights, the settlement projects, the forced displacement policies and the demolition of houses, and stresses the need for urgent international action to protect Palestinian civilians and put an end to the violence and unrestrained activities committed by extremist settlers with impunity and the excessive use of force by the occupying forces, including against women and children. In that context, we call on the Security Council to assume its responsibilities regarding those serious violations, especially by following up on the implementation of its relevant resolutions, the most recent of which is resolution 2334 (2016), and ensuring that the occupying Power is held accountable for its violations. The continued insistence of the occupying Power on violating those resolutions puts the credibility of the Council at stake.

We also call on the international community and the stakeholders to compel the occupying Power to respect international law and to put an end to its repressive practices and its discriminatory and racist policies against the Palestinian people. In that context, we reiterate the need to stop the expansionist settlement

plans of the occupation, the forced displacement of Palestinians, the confiscation of their homes and lands, and attempts to change the historical, demographic and legal status of Jerusalem, and to lift the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip.

Tunisia once again calls on the international community to assume its legal and moral responsibilities towards the Palestinian people by addressing all issues related to aggression and peoples' rights with the same standards and criteria. The Council must defend the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations without selectivity. In that context, my country stresses the importance of the international community's support for Palestine's request for full membership of the United Nations.

Unfortunately, the political stalemate, the ongoing situation in the occupied territories, and international attempts to address the Palestinian question by dealing with episodes of violence without focusing on the main cause of the situation, which is the occupation, portend further violations, violence and escalation. From that perspective, Tunisia stresses that security and stability in the Middle East can be achieved only through a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, in accordance with international law and the resolutions of international legitimacy, and that any attempt to impose a fait accompli will change nothing in that regard, alter historical and legal facts or break the will of the people to recover their legitimate rights, which do not fall under a statute of limitations.

Tunisia looks forward to the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which will enable it to continue to play its role in alleviating the suffering of more than 5.5 million Palestinian refugees until a just and lasting solution to the issue of the Palestinian refugees is found. We also stress the importance of identifying a comprehensive response to the Agency's chronic budget deficit and devising long-term solutions to ensure the sustainability of finances so as not to disrupt the vital services it provides.

With regard to internal affairs in Palestine, my country welcomes the signing of the Algiers declaration by our Palestinian brothers at the reunification conference for achieving Palestinian national unity. We value the efforts of sisterly Algiers in that regard.

In conclusion, Tunisia reiterates its firm support for the just Palestinian question and its permanent support

for the brotherly Palestinian people in their defence of their legitimate rights, foremost among which is the establishment of their independent, sovereign State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Mr. Espinosa Cañizares (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): In this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, I shall refer exclusively to the Palestinian question.

We thank the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process for his briefing. We regret the deterioration of the situation and express our concern about reported acts of violence.

Ecuador reaffirms its solidarity with Palestine and reiterates its commitment to alleviating the difficult situation faced by its people, which will be remedied only through a political, peaceful, definitive and just solution for the parties, based on the existence of two States, Palestine and Israel, within the recognized borders of 1967.

It is essential that all acts of violence against the civilian population — including acts of terror, provocation and destruction — come to an end and that the life and safety of persons be respected, in accordance with the obligations derived from international humanitarian law.

Ecuador calls for a halt to the spiral of violence and reiterates its conviction that both parties have the right to live in peace and with dignity. The hostility between the parties, which has led to destruction and death, is unacceptable, even more so since the two nations are obliged to comply with the norms of international law.

Reiterating the validity of all Security Council resolutions on the issue, we call on all parties to make collective efforts to initiate credible negotiations and step up regional and international diplomatic efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. We express our deep concern about the continuation of settlement activities, which affect the possibility of a two-State solution and make a renewal of the negotiations more difficult.

Finally, we reiterate the call that the Council made in the resolution that summons us here today on both parties to show calm and restraint, as well as political

will, and to act in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Razali (Malaysia): I thank you, Madam, for convening this open debate. Malaysia would also like to thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process for his briefing.

Malaysia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

This has been one of the most horrific years for the Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in recent weeks. Today, we have heard more reports of the merciless killing of innocent lives, including children, forcible evictions, the demolition of houses and the confiscation of lands. This is absolutely appalling, and the message is clear. The situation on the ground continues to worsen, without a durable resolution in sight.

The Security Council cannot remain silent or indisposed. It must assume its responsibility and ensure protection to the Palestinian people, as well as hold the perpetrators accountable. Israel's continued impunity, including that of its illegal settlers, is untenable and undermines the great strides of past international efforts to ensure accountability against war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The occupying Power's continued dereliction of its obligation not only dishonours and disrespects the Council, but further undermines the political horizon. Its intractable attitude also reflects an unwillingness to work towards a just solution for lasting peace in the region. Malaysia calls on the Security Council to urge Israel to end its illegal settler-colonial occupation and apartheid regime, in accordance with international law and relevant Council's resolutions, including resolutions 904 (1994) and 2334 (2016).

Malaysia is fully committed to the plight of the Palestinian people and will continue to work towards the realization of their inalienable rights to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty. We firmly believe that the way forward out of this endless conflict is the realization of a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine.

Malaysia also supports the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in providing assistance to Palestinian refugees, including through predictable funding. We remain committed to providing the necessary means to securing the safety, protection, and well-being of the Palestinian people.

It is high time for the international community to recognize the statehood of Palestine, with full membership of the United Nations. The unfair treatment and injustice have persisted too long. The 74 years of suffering have to end. The Palestinian people deserves to live freely in peace and dignity as a rightful member of this community of nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): Developments over the past few months continue to dash our hope for a future comprehensive solution. Like other Member States, we remain seriously concerned about the continued violence in the occupied Palestinian territory, with its severe toll on civilians. The serious cycle of tensions in August reminds us of the confrontation in Gaza last year. We welcome the ceasefire that helped avoid a full-scale war.

However, the latest round of tensions in Gaza and the endless clashes in the West Bank, the most recent just a few days ago, only highlight the long-standing volatility of the situation. Without a comprehensive, just and long-standing solution, it is only a matter of time until the next cycle of violence erupts.

To prevent such a worrying scenario, all relevant parties should work towards negotiations and revive the long-awaited peace process. We continue to believe that there is no alternative to a two-State solution that includes the establishment of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, peacefully coexisting alongside the State of Israel, with secure and internationally recognized borders based on the pre-1967 lines and a negotiated settlement, and in accordance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

We welcome the statement by Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid in the General Assembly last month, confirming his support for the two-State solution (see A/77/PV.8). We also welcome the recent agreement signed in Algeria among Palestinians, which includes

plans for elections in the future. We now need concrete actions to turn that vision into reality. In this regard, I would like to emphasize three points.

First, the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) is key to creating an environment conducive to negotiations or any path to peace. Violence, settlement activities, property demolitions and evictions must stop. We have stressed on many occasions that all the Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have no legal validity, constitute a flagrant violation of international law and United Nations resolutions, and erode the possibility of establishing a viable and contiguous Palestinian State. The use of excessive force can never bring about lasting peace, but only ignite more violence. The security of Israel must be respected, but it is in Israel's security interests to implement resolution 2334 (2016), along with other relevant United Nations resolutions.

Secondly, the international community, particularly the key players in the peace process, must be committed to working towards a long-lasting solution. We believe that all channels of diplomacy should be utilized, be it the Arab Peace Initiative or the Quartet. We also support all initiatives proposed by members of the international community in this direction.

Thirdly, assistance for the Palestinians should remain high on the agenda of the international humanitarian community, even in the face of global economic instability and funding scarcity. In that regard, we highly commend the continued efforts of various donors and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in bringing much needed relief to the Palestinian people.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Alwasil (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to make this statement on behalf of the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar and the State of Kuwait.

We thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, which is truly an issue of great importance to regional and international peace and security.

The GCC countries have always been strong supporters of achieving peace, security and stability in the Middle East. Accordingly, they affirm their firm position in support of the Palestinian question and the importance of expeditiously finding a just solution that guarantees the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. The GCC countries reaffirm the centrality of the Palestinian question, their support for the sovereignty of the Palestinian people throughout the Palestinian territories occupied since June 1967, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, and ensures the rights of Palestinian refugees, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and the resolutions of international legitimacy, with emphasis on the need to activate the efforts of the international community to resolve the conflict in a manner that guarantees all the legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people.

The GCC countries condemn and reject the escalation of aggression against the city of Jerusalem and the intensification of the policy of forced displacement in Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan and other areas. They call on the international community to intervene to stop the targeting of the Palestinian presence in the city of Jerusalem; efforts to change its legal nature, demographics and the special arrangements for Islamic holy places; and attempts to impose Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem, in clear violation of international law, international resolutions and existing agreements concluded in that regard. We affirm the need to refrain from unilateral measures. The GCC countries also condemn in the strongest terms the repeated incursions by Israeli settlers into Al-Haram Al-Sharif with the support, protection and participation of the Israeli occupation forces. That is a violation of Muslim holy sites and an ongoing provocation to the feelings of millions of Muslims around the world.

The GCC countries reject and condemn Israeli settlement policies and measures in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the annexation of lands, the construction and expansion of settlements, the separation wall, the forced displacement of the Palestinian population and the demolition of their property, in clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of international law and United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

The GCC countries continue to support our Palestinian brothers by supporting the political and legal efforts of the State of Palestine to entrench its independence on its occupied land. We will also continue to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in the context of the GCC's firm and supportive position in favour of the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, the GCC countries stress that the Israeli occupation authorities must urgently respond to calls for peace and work to engage in serious negotiations in good faith in order to achieve peace on the basis of the two-State solution and to ensure stability in the Middle East region.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Nasir (Indonesia): Let me begin by stating some facts. First, despite the worsening situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, the Council remains paralysed. Secondly, while the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and other United Nations mandate-holders have on countless occasions provided disheartening factual reports from the ground, the Council chooses to be indifferent. Thirdly, regardless of how loudly Member States call for an end to Israel's blatant violations of various international laws, the Council remains silent.

Against that inaction, Indonesia remains steadfast. We are here today, and for certain we will be here again, to knock on the Council's door again and again and again, call on the conscience of Council members and urge the Council to act decisively. On that note, I wish to emphasize the following.

First, we call on the Council to take action to end the atrocities and human rights violations committed by Israel in the illegally occupied territories. Human rights violations and violence on the ground have resulted in the highest civilian casualties in recent years. For more than half a century, the people of Palestine have lived under duress. They have been deprived of their inalienable right to self-determination and lost their sovereignty over their own natural resources. The Council's inaction has sent a powerful signal of acceptance and a sense of normalization of Israel's occupation of and violence against the Palestinians. The Council must change course and take action to ease the burden of the Palestinians under occupation. We call on the international community to continue

providing assistance where needed, including political and financial support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Secondly, little has been done with respect to Israel, which implements policies to create irreversible geographical and demographic alterations on the ground. Moreover, illegal settlements and provocations against holy sites have created further instability and widespread violence. We see no sign of or commitment to stopping unilateral and unlawful measures against the Palestinians or any serious effort to bring those responsible to justice. A sense of impunity will remain if the Council does nothing to ensure that the perpetrators and the occupying Power uphold their responsibilities under international law.

Thirdly, the Council should actively pursue a breakthrough for the resumption of the peace process. The Quartet has proven to have its limitations. We have to open new avenues and be innovative to devise a credible peace process that works for all parties. We must remain resolute in maintaining the two-State solution as the only option for resolving the Palestinian issue. We should create opportunities, including developments in the Palestinian national unity and reconciliation process. Indonesia stands ready to contribute and move the process forward in the United Nations to safeguard the two-State solution.

Indonesia believes that the continuous inaction of the Council poses a threat to international peace and security. We need a comprehensive and lasting solution for the long-standing question of Palestine within the context of a two-State solution based on internationally agreed parameters and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Only in this way can the Palestinian people have independence and sovereignty, free from oppression.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Pérez Ayestarán (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela): We appreciate the convening of this quarterly open debate on a topic to which our country attaches special importance, due to its historic position of principles and its firm support for the just cause of the heroic Palestinian people. We also appreciate the briefing by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

We also endorse the intervention to be made by the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Unfortunately, since we last met in this very Chamber and in this very format (see S/PV.9099), the situation on the ground has in no way improved. Since then, we have received a copy of two communications sent to the President of the Security Council by the Ambassador of the State of Palestine, in which he presents ongoing reports that constitute a historical record of the brutal Israeli aggression during the last 20 years.

It is those communications, together with the reports that we receive periodically from other instances of the United Nations system, that make us affirm once again today that the situation continues to deteriorate day after day, while the suffering of the noble Palestinian people, a victim of violent attacks by the Israeli occupying forces, is continually perpetuated down the years.

A clear example of that is the situation of collective punishment in the Gaza Strip, the largest prison in the world, which has been subject to a criminal blockade for more than 15 years, resulting in a disastrous humanitarian situation, and in deplorable socioeconomic conditions for more than 2 million Palestinians. We must remember in that context that the month of August was marked by a series of indiscriminate aerial bombardments by Israeli forces of residential areas, including refugee camps located in the Gaza Strip. The result was more death, more pain, more destruction and more forced displacement for dozens of Palestinian families who join a long list of victims of that cruel Israeli aggression.

This situation is truly unsustainable. The international community and, in a very special way, the Security Council, cannot continue to remain inert in the face of the policies of aggression, colonial occupation and apartheid carried out by the occupying Power, which, to date, have resulted in the death of more than 10,000 Palestinian men and women, including at least 2,000 girls and boys, over the past 20 years. This main organ of the United Nations has a central responsibility, not only to maintain international peace and security, but also to enforce its resolutions, which are legally binding on all of us who subscribe to the founding Charter of the Organization.

In that regard, we believe that it is essential to guarantee a political horizon that leads to the end of the Israeli occupation and to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace, in accordance with internationally recognized parameters, international law and the provisions of the relevant resolutions of both the General Assembly and the Security Council, and based on the solution of two States living side by side, in conditions of peace and security. It is time for the Palestinian people to live, and not merely survive, on their own ancestral lands, now illegally and forcibly occupied. If that is to happen, however, it is essential to move forward with a sense of urgency in at least three critical areas:

First, the prevailing cycle of impunity must be ended. Israel must be held accountable before international justice for the crimes against humanity and war crimes it has committed over the years. It is precisely that lack of accountability, supported by the framework of international impunity that has been provided over time by the Government of one of its main partners, which is also a permanent member of the Security Council, that has encouraged all the criminal practices and policies that Israel carries out on a daily basis, to date, with total impunity.

Secondly, as long as that historical injustice is not ended and there is no progress in terms of accountability, and as long as the occupying Power pursues its shoot-to-kill policies, indiscriminate aerial bombardment, violence and terror committed by the Israeli occupying forces and settlers, among other cruel and inhuman practices that are committed daily against the Palestinian civilian population, we must move forward without further delay in adopting those measures provided for in international humanitarian law that provide and guarantee international protection for the heroic Palestinian people.

Thirdly, there must be an end to the illegal policy of settlements, evictions and demolition of homes, expropriation of Palestinian land, discrimination against Palestinians, arbitrary arrests and detentions of innocent Palestinian civilians, the persecution of Palestinian civil society organizations, incendiary speeches that only encourage fanatical groups and that encourage, among other things, the commission of hate crimes or the assault on religious sites, and all unilateral actions and measures. We are convinced that all of this will help not only to reduce tensions and the continuing cycle of violence, but ultimately to stop the conflict.

For our part, Venezuela has no choice but to continue insisting on calling on this organ to play a constructive role in the peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including through the promotion of an environment conducive to the resumption of a necessary political dialogue and credible, serious and direct negotiations between the parties; to comply with the mandate entrusted to it by the Charter of the United Nations; and to enforce the provisions of its resolutions. This organ has the ethical, political and moral duty to put an end to double standards and to non-existent exceptionalisms.

To conclude, we reaffirm our unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people, as well as our irrevocable position in support of the defence of their independence and inalienable right to self-determination and the realization of their legitimate national aspirations in their own State of free, independent and sovereign Palestine, within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and as a full Member of our Organization. The Security Council cannot continue to delay satisfying the yearning for peace, justice and freedom of the heroic Palestinian people.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Ms. Joyini (South Africa): We thank Gabon for convening this germane meeting on one of the world's most protracted conflicts, the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I also thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, for his insightful briefing on the latest developments in the Middle East and the Palestinian question.

In her report to the General Assembly on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, the United Nations Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese states that for more than 55 years, the Israeli military occupation

“has prevented the realization of Palestinian people's right to self-determination, violating each component of that right, wilfully pursuing the ‘de-Palestinianization’ of the occupied territory” (A/77/356, para. 36).

Her report details the persistent violence, racism and prejudice that Palestinians face. Women, young people and children are not spared by the brutal policies that have been mainstreamed by the occupying Power and

thus affect every segment of Palestinian society, with the deliberate intention of intimidating Palestinians and crushing any glimmer of hope for a better future.

We see that daily, including in the recent raids in Nablus and the persistent violence of illegal settlers against the indigenous people of Palestine. In a recent statement claiming that ending apartheid policies is key to teaching a two-State solution in Palestine, five former European foreign ministers stated that successive Israeli Governments, including the current one, have had no plan to take steps towards ending the prolonged occupation and that the “international community has too often remained silent and failed to act in the face of grave violations of international law”. It is only when sitting foreign ministers of the European Union and other world leaders cease to give the Government of Israel the latitude to violate international law that they may indeed start to respect international law, the Charter of the United Nations and Security Council resolutions.

The situation in Gaza remains of grave concern to South Africa, especially considering the recent August 2022 offensive on Gaza and the statement by Israeli military indicating that the operation would “take a long time”. It is in that context that we agree with the statement of the Secretary General of Amnesty International on 25 October that Israel must be investigated by the International Criminal Court for possible war crimes. Those unjust attacks kill innocent women and children and place innocent civilians at severe risk. Moreover, such actions are in contravention of international law, and Israel must be held accountable for breaching international human rights and humanitarian law.

As members of the international community, Member States have an obligation to ensure that international law is not violated indiscriminately and to urgently stop the Israeli occupation forces' repeated attacks against innocent civilians as they continue their blockade in Gaza.

There must be concerted international efforts to bring about a just solution to the question of Palestine. That will not only allow the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination, denied through colonialism and occupation, but will ultimately contribute to the establishment of peace in the region. It is therefore imperative to revitalize international action and seek avenues for justice. We must intensify the call for international action, with the United Nations playing

a leading role, to find a solution that is premised on a just settlement with just laws that are rights-based. We must, as the international community, seek a solution that facilitates equality and equity for all who have the right to live in the territories of Israel and Palestine. In the absence of those, security, dignity and prosperity will not be achieved.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

Mr. Alenezi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend to you, Madam President, and to the members of the delegation of Gabon our congratulations on your successful conduct of the work of the Security Council for the month of October. I also sincerely thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his valuable briefing. We reiterate our support for him and all his efforts to de-escalate the situation and restore stability in the region.

My country's delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

We have followed the recent worrying developments and the dangerous escalation in the occupied Palestinian territories as a result of the crimes and systematic attacks committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the brotherly Palestinian people. The Al-Aqsa Mosque is still subject to repeated violations, whether by the Israeli occupation forces or by settlers. The State of Kuwait reiterates its strong condemnation and denunciation of those aggressive practices, which represent a provocation to the feelings of Muslims all over the world and an explicit threat to freedom of worship in the Al-Aqsa Mosque, in addition to being one more link in the chain of flagrant violations of all international charters and resolutions, as well as a destructive element for the pillars of stability in the region and a stimulus of feelings of hate, extremism and violence.

The State of Kuwait also condemns in the strongest terms the continuous incursions and brutal attacks of the Israeli occupation authorities on Palestinian cities, including Nablus and Ramallah, several days ago, which led to the deaths and injury of dozens of brotherly Palestinians. We warn of the consequences of that dangerous military escalation, responsibility for which

will be borne by the Israeli occupation authorities, and which threaten security and stability in the region.

We call on the international community to take immediate and urgent action to provide protection to the brotherly Palestinian people and ask the Security Council to assume its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations. The Israeli occupation forces must be held fully responsible for the consequences of their crimes and illegal and provocative practices in Jerusalem and Al-Haram Al-Sharif, as well as violations against the defenceless Palestinian people on its own land and in its own holy places. How long will the Israeli killing machine continue to claim the lives of defenceless Palestinians without deterrence or accountability from the international community? How far will the multiple violations by the Israeli occupation force go before the eyes of the entire world? How long will the Security Council allow Israel, the occupying Power, to continue its actions, practices and violations as if it were above the law?

The attacks and crimes committed by the Israeli occupation forces are among a series of violations of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 476 (1980), 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016), which underscore the inviolable special status of Jerusalem and declare any action aimed at changing its demographic nature to be null and void. The occupying Power must respect the historical and legal status quo at Al-Haram Al-Sharif.

In the absence of accountability for the daily and systematic violations by the occupation Power inside the occupied Palestinian territories, and in light of the occupation Power's exploitation of that reality to deprive the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights and to seize their land, wealth and sources of livelihood, undermining the chances of reaching a just peace, it has become urgent to stop acting as if the rights of the Palestinian people were excluded from the rules and provisions of international laws. We stress the need to ensure accountability and justice for the defenceless Palestinian people.

The State of Kuwait reiterates its full support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East while believing in the vital and important role it plays in alleviating the suffering of Palestinian refugees in its five areas of operation. We call on the international community to maintain its

support for the Agency to ensure that it continues to provide its health, educational and relief services.

Furthermore, we welcome Australia's announcement that it will cancel its previous Administration's recognition of West Jerusalem as the alleged capital of the Israeli occupation. That decision will constitute support for international endeavours, adherence to international law, a bulwark of the relevant United Nations resolutions and a tributary to achieving a just and comprehensive peace. We call on the countries that have recognized Jerusalem as the alleged capital of the Israeli occupation to do likewise by reversing their decisions, which violate international legitimacy.

In conclusion, on 29 November we celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. I take this opportunity to renew the support of the leadership, Government and people of the State of Kuwait's for the brotherly Palestinian people and our historical and principled solidarity with their just cause. Kuwait salutes their steadfastness and legitimate struggle against the occupation in order to obtain their full legitimate political rights. We also reiterate our adherence to the Arab, Islamic and international position, which affirms that peace is the strategic option and that a permanent, comprehensive and just solution is based on the two-State solution, in accordance with the agreed terms of reference represented in the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, in a manner that leads to the Palestinian people obtaining all their legitimate political rights and the establishment of their independent State on their land, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Abdelaziz.

Mr. Abdelaziz (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to begin my statement by congratulating you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October, and to thank Mr. Tor Wennesland for his outstanding briefing to the Council today. We endorse the statement of the Group of Arab States to be made by the representative of the Republic of Iraq.

The Palestinian question is central to the work of the League of Arab States, as it is the primary Arab issue based on the decisions, statements and initiatives of the Arab summits, as well as the meetings and ministerial committees of the Arab League since its

establishment in 1945, in addition to the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Following today's briefing on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), which indicated an escalation in the severity of the situation in the occupied territories in a way that portends imminent danger, the League of Arab States believes that the Council must re-evaluate the way to address the Palestinian question.

It is illogical, or contravenes the rules of international multilateral legitimacy, to read United Nations report after report that Israel is continuing to implement its fierce settlement policies, in flagrant violation of resolution 2334 (2016) since its adoption in 2016, and to kill and repress the defenceless Palestinian people. The Council has taken no punitive measure to compel Israel to respect its resolutions. It is equally illogical that Israel practices crude opportunism by condemning the Russian Federation's occupation of parts of the territory of Ukraine while it arrogantly occupies the entire territory of the State of Palestine, in violation of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947, which established and adopted the two-State solution. It is also in blatant defiance of the numerous resolutions of the Council seeking to launch direct negotiations for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Israel is also seeking to impose its sovereignty over Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories, where it is continuing its massacres in clear violation of the successive resolutions of the Council over the years, without the slightest measure of accountability.

Nor is it logical to interpret Israel's indication in its statement today that normalizing its relations with some Arab countries means abandoning the centrality of the Palestinian question in the Arab world or giving up the principle of the two-State solution, which has been and will continue to govern the peace process in the region, or even as a transformation of the principle of land for peace to the principle of peace for peace. The Palestinian territory is precious to all Arabs, regardless of their political orientation. We must always remember that the Palestinian State and territory were and will remain the basis for the Arab Peace Initiative, launched by the Arab summit, under the auspices of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in Beirut in 2002. That initiative was inaugurated 20 years ago today. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the LAS are seeking together, with the support of the European Union and other parties, to revive and restore it to the centre of events as the most

practical of initiatives in compliance with the rules of international legitimacy. That initiative was and remains the governing principle of the peace process, no matter how leaders and Governments may change.

After I heard the statement by His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary in the Council today, and to demonstrate the credibility of the Arab countries and their observance of the required balance in dealing with the binding rules of international legitimacy, the Arab countries have voted in favour of the two General Assembly resolutions on Ukraine, sending a clear message to the international community that Arab countries reject the occupation of others' lands by force. The Arab countries have also voted and will vote in favour of all resolutions calling for an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and for the start of serious peace negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian parties on the basis of the two-State solution, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant resolutions of the Council. They will also vote in favour of other political, economic and social decisions and resolutions adopted on the Palestinian question by the main United Nations organs, especially those extending the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for three years. That is the credibility that Israel and other countries that support it unfortunately lack.

It is not enough for the Israeli leaders and their supporters in the General Assembly to express their support for the two-State solution; they must work to translate words into practical deeds by engaging in serious negotiations with the Palestinian partner based on that important principle and in compliance with the terms of reference of international legitimacy. The Security Council, and specifically the international Quartet, play a very pivotal role in lighting the first spark of those negotiations, leading to the international conference repeatedly called for by Palestinian President Abu Mazen before the Council and before the General Assembly.

Until that happens, and to ensure that the Palestinian leadership and people do not lose hope or that matters do not reach the brink of explosion or spin out of control — and after we all heard the statement delivered by President Mahmoud Abbas at the general debate of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly and the bitter appeals it contained in that regard (see A/77/PV.10) — urgent international decisions and

steps are required to ensure the expansion of the circle of international recognition of the State of Palestine and to ensure that the State of Palestine is granted full membership of the United Nations. That would lead to the protection of the defenceless Palestinian people, while supporting the efforts of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Kingdom of Morocco to protect Islamic holy sites from the oppression of the Israeli forces and settlers. That would also ensure that Israel does not enact laws perpetuating the apartheid regime against the Palestinian people or Jewish State law, which has been rejected by the Arab world and the international community, and that Israel does not repeat the unaccountable assassination of Palestinian journalists for exposing Israeli violations.

Israel must also be stopped from preventing Jerusalem residents from participating in local elections, especially following the international and regional support for the declaration adopted in Algeria this month and the signing of the agreement for the reunification and national reconciliation of the Palestinian people, which will pave the way for holding the delayed Palestinian elections, with the support of Egypt, Qatar, other Arab countries and other parties working to achieve Palestinian reconciliation.

The international multilateral system has suffered and continues to suffer from double standards and their consequences in the work of the United Nations organs, especially the Security Council. The time has come for the Council to realize that its credibility is at stake; that the international move towards the establishment of a Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital will not stop, but will continue and increase, with the full support of the Arab countries and the Arab League; and that the Council's failure to deal effectively with the Palestinian question will only lead to a greater orientation towards the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court in order to enhance the strength of democracy, the strength of human rights and the force of law, which transcends the strength of geopolitical conflicts.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Every day, we continue to witness further acts of aggression on the part of Israel, pushing our region to unprecedented levels of tension and instability.

Israel is committing massacres against civilians in occupied Palestine and continues to implement policies of settlement, Judaization, siege, arbitrary detention, forced displacement and racial discrimination in the occupied Arab territories, including the occupied Arab Syrian Golan. Israel has also escalated its military attacks on Syrian territories, infrastructure and vital facilities.

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns in the strongest terms the ongoing Israeli occupation of Arab lands. We also strongly condemn Israel's practices against Arabs in Palestine and the Syrian Golan. Such practices are grave violations of international law and international humanitarian law. We must not remain silent vis-à-vis those practices, or allow Israel to continue to operate with impunity. We also stress that, when some countries continue to support such Israeli practices or remain silent about them, they become complicit in those crimes, which lays bare the despicable double standards they follow.

Syria reaffirms its support for the brotherly Palestinian people in their struggle to liberate their occupied land, establish their independent, sovereign State, with Jerusalem as its capital, and guarantee the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland, in line with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. We also reaffirm our support for Palestine's decision to obtain the long-awaited full membership of the United Nations and call not to be obstructed by certain members of the Security Council.

The occupied Syrian Golan is in the heart of every Syrian. It is our right to recover it in full up to the 4 June 1967 lines. That right is unalienable and not subject to bargaining or pressure. It is an imprescriptible right guaranteed by international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, especially resolution 497 (1981).

To those who have missed no opportunity over the past few months to lecture us on the need to respect the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of international legitimacy, we ask them: why did they not raise their voice against Israel's continued occupation of the Syrian Golan since 1967? Why did we not see their enthusiasm in rejecting Israel's decision to annex the occupied Syrian Golan and impose its laws on it? Why do they not demand that Israel implement resolution 497 (1981), which considers the annexation decision null and void and without legal effect? For some countries in the Council, the call for respecting

the Charter and implementing Council resolutions is an approach subject to selectivity and double standards.

Since 1967, the Israeli occupation authorities in the Syrian Golan have been committing the most heinous systematic violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law. Furthermore, Israel continues to add new chapters to its violations. Since the beginning of the terrorist war on Syria in 2011, Israel has been supporting terrorist organizations, primarily the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (Da'esh) and the Al-Nusra Front, which is affiliated with Al-Qaida. Israel has resorted to launching direct and repeated military attacks against Syrian territories to weaken the capabilities of the Syrian army to combat those terrorist organizations. Recently, Israel has resorted to targeting civilian facilities systematically and intentionally, including civilian ports and airports while subjecting the lives of civilians to danger, affecting the delivery of international humanitarian aid to the Syrian people and jeopardizing peace and security in the region and the world.

Syria calls on the Security Council to end its silence and to urgently assume its responsibilities to stop the repeated Israeli attacks on Syrian sovereignty and hold the occupation forces accountable for all their violations and aggressive practices, which threaten regional and international peace and security. We stress that we will exercise our legitimate right to defend our land and people by all necessary means.

My delegation once again calls upon the representatives of the Secretariat to fulfil their mandate and not to remain silent about, or cover up, Israeli practices in their reports and briefings. In that regard, my delegation is surprised that Mr. Wennesland insists, in his briefing, on ignoring the Israeli practices in the occupied Syrian Golan and Israel's continuous military attacks on Syrian sovereignty, some of which are even launched from the occupied Syrian Golan.

At every meeting on this item, the observer of the European Union delivers a statement to derail the discussion from its main goal of exposing the practices of the Israeli occupation. The European Union addresses issues related to Syrian affairs that have absolutely nothing to do with the topic of the meeting, in an attempt to draw the attention of the Council away from those aggressive Israeli practices.

It is not surprising that the European Union launches false accusations against Syria while its

principles change to a clumsy defense based on explicit manipulation of international law when it comes to condemning the grave violations of Israel, the occupying Power, and its arbitrary practices against the people of the occupied Syrian Golan or its aggression against the Syrian people.

It is not surprising that the voice of the European Union fades away when it comes to condemning the repeated Israeli attacks on Syria's sovereignty and its vital civilian facilities. Those attacks represent a clear and grave violation of the United Nations Charter and the relevant Security Council resolutions. At the same time the voice of the European Union is loud only to confirm its determination to extend and expand its illegal and inhumane economic blockade, its collective punishment of the Syrian people and its quest to prolong the crisis in Syria, in complete disregard of the catastrophic negative impacts of its coercive measures. The European Union continues to disregard the repeated calls from the Secretary-General to lift or mitigate such measures.

It is shameful that the European Union insists on imposing its political conditions on humanitarian and development work in Syria, thereby impeding early-recovery efforts and the promotion of Syrian resilience. Furthermore, that deprives them of a dignified life, prevents the displaced and refugees from returning home and pushes more Syrians into displacement and migration. My delegation calls on the European Union to correct its compass and stop its hostile policies against my country, Syria, and cease its measures that punish the Syrian people.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kim Dongjoon (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening today's open debate. In addition, my delegation thanks the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Tor Wennesland, for his briefing. My Government appreciates his ongoing efforts and complete dedication to bring peace to the region.

My delegation is deeply concerned about the ongoing settler-related violence in the West Bank and in and around Jerusalem. All acts of violence perpetrated by any side, especially against civilians, cannot be justified. My delegation condemns all terrorist attacks in the strongest terms. Any violence against civilians

must stop immediately, and those who are responsible for such acts must be held accountable. My delegation also notes with serious concern that this year has recorded the highest number of Palestinian fatalities since 2008.

Furthermore, it is still worrisome that there has been little progress in the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) and that the advancement of Israeli settlements, demolitions and evictions continue on the ground. Such actions will only exacerbate tensions, erode trust and undermine the foundation for a political solution.

Amid those various challenges, the Republic of Korea welcomes some recent positive developments. We note that both the Israeli and the Palestinian sides reaffirmed their support for the two-State solution on the margins of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly last month. Reiterating its support for the two-State solution, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements, my delegation hopes that those positive signs will translate into concrete and constructive steps, including the resumption of good-faith negotiations. We believe that a negotiated sustainable political solution is the only way to achieve lasting peace in the region.

My delegation also echoes the Secretary-General's statement welcoming the signing of the Algiers declaration by 14 Palestinian factions on 13 October, and we hope that it will provide impetus towards intra-Palestinian reconciliation.

My delegation expresses its grave concern about the deteriorating humanitarian and economic situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Republic of Korea expresses its strong support for the ongoing efforts by the international community to meet the humanitarian and development needs of the Palestinian people. In that regard, the Korean Government remains steadfast in its support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, including contributions for vocational, educational and food-assistance activities.

The Republic of Korea reaffirms its strong commitment to its constructive role in advancing peace and stability in the region, and we remain hopeful that a lasting solution can be found.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Fatah (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Group of Arab States, it is my pleasure to congratulate Gabon on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month. We also thank you, Madam President, for presiding over this important meeting. We wish the presidency every success for the remainder of the month. We also thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process for his briefing.

The Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people continues and is increasing. That reflects a situation that cannot persist. A resolution in the form of ending the occupation and adopting the two-State solution — an independent, sovereign and contiguous Palestinian State, with occupied East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of 4 June the 1967 borders — is lacking. That is the only way of resolving the conflict and achieving just and comprehensive peace. The international community must make an immediate move to bring an end to the Israeli escalation, which is having harmful consequences for all. It must make an active move to find a real prospect for achieving a comprehensive and just peace, which cannot be reached by means of aggression and undermining the two-State solution through the continuation of the settlement-building activities, land confiscations and the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes. Peace and security for all can be achieved only through the resumption of serious and active negotiations towards the two-State solution and the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State on the basis of 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with the international resolutions, Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Arab Group requests that urgent international protection be granted to the Palestinian people, in accordance with the proposals made by the Secretary-General, which were welcomed by the General Assembly, particularly given the ongoing and escalated Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people.

We have witnessed escalations over the past few days. It is clear message to the international community that we cannot continue without a political commitment. The Arab Group reiterates its commitment to achieving peace as a strategic choice to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict in line with international law and the relevant resolutions of the international legitimacy, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1515 (2003) and 2334 (2016) as well as the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative with all its elements.

In that context, we would ask the Security Council to play its role in bringing an end to the Israeli occupation and for Israel to fully withdraw from the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem. We also call on the Council to support Palestine's full membership in the United Nations in order to practically uphold the Council's positions and responsibilities to support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and achieve progress on the two-State solution in line with the internationally recognized parameters.

The Arab Group requests that the Security Council shoulder its responsibilities and implement its resolutions so as to put an end to all Israeli unilateral, illegitimate, provocative and escalating measures as well as the continued relentless violations by Israel in order to build and expand its illegal settlements. In addition, Israel must stop killing innocent people and sweeping repeatedly Palestinian cities and villages, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and flagrant violations against the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque perpetrated by the Israeli occupation army and extremist settler groups.

The Arab Group reiterates that Al-Haram Al-Sharif, with its area of 144,000 square meters, is a worshipping holy site exclusively for Muslims in line with relevant international resolutions. In that context, the Arab Group reiterates that Jordan's custodianship of the holy sites is essential as the only party responsible for administering all areas of Al-Quds and the Al-Aqsa compound, in accordance with international humanitarian law. The Arab Group values the continued efforts of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to preserve the historic and legal status of Muslim and Christian holy sites, address the Israeli measures against them and preserve the Arab, Muslim and Christian identity of those sites in the context of the Hashemite custodianship under the auspices of His Majesty King Abdullah II.

The Arab Group also values the role of the Al-Quds Committee under the chairmanship of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of the Kingdom of Morocco. The Committee seeks to carry out important work on the ground through the Bait Mal Al-Quds Agency in support of Al-Quds inhabitants.

The Arab Group welcomes the signing of the Algiers declaration by Palestinian factions at the reunification conference for achieving Palestinian national unity. We appreciate the efforts made by His Excellency the President of Algeria, Mr. Tebboune, to reach that

historic agreement. The Arab Group also values the continued efforts made by the Arab Republic of Egypt, under the auspices of His Excellency Mr. Al Sisi to bring about Palestinian reconciliation and reconstruction for the Gaza Strip.

The Arab Group again emphasizes the centrality of the Palestinian question to the entire Arab nation and of preserving the Arab, Islamic and Christian identity of occupied East Jerusalem, the capital of the State of Palestine. We also underscore the right of the State of Palestine to absolute sovereignty over all of its territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, as well as its maritime and air spaces, territorial waters, natural resources and its borders with neighbouring countries. The Arab Group calls on the international community to urgently make every effort to guarantee the national rights of the Palestinian people, especially their right to self-determination.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bahrain.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the delegation of Gabon for its appreciated efforts in managing the work of the Security Council this month and for convening today's important open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I would also thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his valuable briefing.

The continuing crises and conflicts facing the Middle East have led to enormous human and economic losses and the displacement of millions of people. They threaten navigation, trade, energy and water and food security and deprive millions of young people in the region of hope and optimism for a better and more prosperous future. We therefore need to take collective action in order to establish security, stability and peace in this strategic and vital region, which is a cornerstone of international peace and security.

The Kingdom of Bahrain, under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain, with the support of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain, has always promoted international partnerships and joint cooperation based on the deep-rooted values and principles of mutual respect, dialogue and peaceful coexistence, adherence to the Charter of the United Nations and its purposes of respect for sovereignty,

international law, commitment to good-neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of countries and the peaceful settlement of regional and international conflicts and tensions.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates its belief that achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East depends primarily on settling the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. We therefore stress that it is important for the international community to work to achieve the aspirations of the brotherly Palestinian people to live in a secure, stable and prosperous homeland, as well as their right to establish an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with the two-State solution, as well as resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the signing by the Lebanese Republic and the State of Israel of an agreement on the demarcation of the maritime borders between the two countries, with the constructive mediation of the United States of America. We hope that that historic agreement will constitute a positive opportunity to enhance both countries' benefits from natural resources, namely, oil and gas. That would highlight the importance of dialogue and mutual understanding in settling disputes and promoting security, stability and peace for the good and interest of all the peoples of the region, as well as their rights to prosperity and sustainable development.

The Kingdom of Bahrain strongly condemns the Houthi terrorist group's refusal to extend and expand the truce in the Republic of Yemen, as proposed by Mr. Hans Grundberg, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and agreed by the Government of Yemen. That refusal demonstrates the terrorist group's intentions to continue its military activities inside Yemen and beyond in order to achieve its illegitimate goals and objectives and endanger security and stability in the region.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates its strong condemnation of the recent dangerous escalation by way of the terrorist attack carried out by the terrorist Houthi militia with two drones targeting the Al-Dabba oil port in the Hadramaut governorate of the sisterly Republic of Yemen, in clear violation of all international laws and norms and as a serious threat to navigation, global trade and the marine environment.

While the Kingdom of Bahrain appreciates the efforts of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and

its continuous support to bring peace and stability to brotherly Yemen, it calls on the United Nations to continue its efforts to reach a political solution to the Yemeni crisis, in accordance with the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference and resolution 2216 (2015), with a view to achieving peace, security and stability for the brotherly people of Yemen.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Bahrain remains committed to fulfilling its responsibilities towards the Middle East region and the entire world, as well as harnessing joint efforts and increasing capacities in order to address the challenges and dangers affecting countries and their peoples and ensure them a peaceful and prosperous future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): We congratulate you, Madam President, on your country's successful presidency of the Security Council this month. We also thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing this morning.

My country's delegation aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Group of Arab States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

We are pleased to participate today in another open debate on the situation in the Middle East, specifically on the most important issue for the Arab region, namely, the Palestinian question.

The international community agrees that the best solution for achieving a permanent, just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question is the two-State solution, according to which an independent and lasting State of Palestine is established based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. That requires an end to Israel's occupation of the occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan and the occupied Lebanese territories, and the immediate and complete cessation of settlement activities, as well as ensuring the return of refugees and the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The best way to achieve that end is through negotiations between the two sides, and consequently the international

community should do its utmost to facilitate the peace process and resolve all final-status issues.

The issue of Jerusalem is one of the most important final-status issues. We affirm that any attempts to undermine the existing historical and legal status of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem or to Judaize them, as well as any attempts to divide the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque temporally and spatially and to limit the freedom of Muslim prayer in it, are null and void under international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. We are concerned about the latest such attempt, this month, in which hundreds of settlers stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The State of Qatar has strongly condemned those attacks, both as a flagrant violation of international law and as provocative to the feelings of Muslims around the world. In that regard, the international community must shoulder its moral and legal responsibilities to protect the brotherly Palestinian people and their holy sites.

The State of Qatar welcomes the announcement by the Government of Australia to cancel its recognition of West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. We believe that decision to be consistent with the international consensus and resolutions of international legitimacy, and it supports international efforts to achieve peace and improves the chances for a two-State solution.

Israel is continuing its illegal settlement policy and other repressive policies against the Palestinians through its annexation of their land and appropriation and demolition of their property, as well as its use of excessive force and arbitrary arrests, against a backdrop of repeated cycles of violence and escalation that requires us to make further efforts towards achieving sustainable peace. The Gaza Strip is suffering in particular from the painful humanitarian effects of the military escalation and the blockade that has been imposed on the Strip for more than 15 years. The State of Qatar continues our efforts to provide humanitarian support in order to improve the living conditions of the residents of the Strip as part of our continuous support to, and solidarity with, our Palestinian brothers.

The State of Qatar welcomes the signing of the Algiers declaration by Palestinian factions, which resulted from the reunification conference to achieve Palestinian national unity. That declaration constitutes a positive step towards achieving national unity and the creation of an independent Palestinian State. We deeply

appreciate the role played by the brotherly People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to that end.

In conclusion, the State of Qatar is preparing to host the FIFA World Cup next month, which will take place in the Middle East for the first time. We hope that such a historic event will be an opportunity to uphold the values of peace and coexistence and to reflect positively on achieving peace and security in the region.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Gertze.

Mr. Gertze: On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I congratulate Gabon on its successful presidency of the Security Council during October. I also thank Mr. Wennesland for his briefing.

The Committee is alarmed by the dangerous escalation in Israeli military raids across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. That is dramatically destabilizing the situation and taking us further away from international consensus to achieve a just peace in the Middle East, as outlined in international law and countless Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, most recently in Security Council resolution 2334 (2016).

Israeli military raids in Jenin and Nablus, as well as other areas in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, are exacerbating an already dangerous situation and leading to the killing and injuring of more civilians, including women and children. There is no justification for killing civilians. We urge an immediate lowering of tensions and the exercise of maximum restraint in full adherence to the law, including international humanitarian law, and reiterate the imperative of ensuring accountability for unlawful and excessive use of force, in accordance with international law. Violence is simply not the answer.

The situation in Jerusalem deserves renewed attention. Repeated provocations and violations of the historic and legal status quo by Israel, the occupying Power, at Al-Aqsa Mosque must end. The consensus is clear: such provocative rhetoric and actions inflame tensions and threaten to ignite yet another needless cycle of violence. The Committee reiterates that the historic and legal status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem must be upheld and respected by all parties.

The ongoing expansion of illegal settlements and settler-related violence needs decisive action. Last week,

Israel approved hundreds of new settlement units in northern Jerusalem, adding to the plight of Palestinians, who suffer discrimination and dispossession in their own city, in flagrant breach of international law and the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. Such illegal actions reinforce hopelessness, undermine the viability of a two-State solution along the pre-1967 borders and are a flagrant obstruction of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

In her first report to the General Assembly, Ms. Francesca Albanese, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, notes the legality of the Israeli occupation as it has

“proven not to be temporary, is deliberately administered against the best interests of the occupied population and has resulted in the annexation of occupied territory” (A/77/356, p.5).

We call on Israel, the occupying Power, to adhere to its obligations, to reverse the trend towards the dispossession and forcible displacement of Palestinians and to halt the transfer of its own population to the occupied territory, which it continues to systematically carry out in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. Settlements and annexation are simply not the answer.

The Committee condemns, in the strongest terms, Israel's relentless targeting and shrinking of Palestinian civil society space. Civil society organizations are a pillar of democracy, and their ability to operate freely is a prerequisite for an inclusive society. We call on Israel, as the occupying Power, to uphold its obligations to the Palestinian people in line with international law, including their basic civil rights and right to the freedom of expression. We also call on Israel to reverse its baseless decision to outlaw six Palestinian civil society organizations for being so-called terrorist organizations.

We further call on Israel to fully lift its illegal 15-year blockade on the Gaza strip and to cease obstructing efforts to strengthen the foundations for a Palestinian State that coexists with Israel in peace and security. That includes putting an end to all policies that have resulted in the de-development of Gaza, which is paramount in reversing the steep deterioration of the socioeconomic situation in Gaza and undoing the fragmentation of the Palestinian people. A land, air and sea blockade is not the answer.

We note with appreciation the international community's generous contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); however, the Agency remains in dire need of sustainable and predictable funding to meet the urgent needs of millions of Palestinian refugees and thereby contribute to stability in the Middle East. We urge Member States to renew UNRWA's mandate when it comes to the vote during the current session of the General Assembly, as well as to continue their financial support to the Agency, including the possibility of expanded United Nations budgetary support to ensure the continuity of its vital humanitarian programmes.

Violations of international law, human rights abuses and violence push back the day when Palestinians will be able to enjoy their inalienable rights and achieve independence. It is imperative to restore calm and create the right conditions on the ground to bring about a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question — a key to sustainable peace worldwide.

We welcome the recent signing of the Algiers declaration on national reconciliation by Palestinian factions, which constitutes a step towards national unity and the holding the long-awaited legislative and presidential elections in Palestine. We thank the Algerian Government for facilitating that important agreement.

However, more work needs to be done. The status quo is unsustainable. The international community, including members of the Security Council, must act immediately to prevent the further deterioration of an already fragile situation. The only way forward is through visible progress towards a political horizon that puts an end to the Israeli occupation and brings about the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, including their rights to self-determination and independence, as well as a just solution for the plight of the Palestinian refugees.

Palestine must become a State Member of the United Nations. It must take its rightful place among the international community. The people of Palestine need our solidarity. From this Chamber, the Committee invites all Member States to attend this year's commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, to be held on 29 November in the Economic and Social Council Chamber. Let us use that solemn event to reiterate our steadfast commitment to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian

people. Seventy-five years on from the partition plan by the General Assembly, it is high time to achieve justice for the Palestinian people.

The Committee will continue to fully support all efforts to achieve the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. The injustice can be resolved only by implementing the parameters that have already been identified according to international law, United Nations resolutions and past agreements between the parties to fulfil the promise of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State, based on the 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital and where the Palestinian people can realize their freedom and live in peace, stability and dignity. A just and lasting peace is the answer.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Pedroso Cuesta (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba endorses the statements delivered by the representative of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and by the representative of Namibia in its capacity as Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

It is regrettable that the Security Council has continued to fail to address the just cause of the Palestinian people, despite the historic demands of the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and other international actors.

While this organ continues its refusal to take measures to end Israel's military aggression and occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, Israel is continuing its policy of annexation and increasing its illegal colonization practices. Homes and properties continue to be destroyed, more Palestinian families are forcibly displaced and Israeli settlements continue to be built and expanded. The blockade of the Gaza Strip is also still in place, as are plans for the annexation of Palestinian territories in the Jordan Valley and other parts of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The violence, arrests, detentions, imprisonment, human rights violations and killings of Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories continue. The Palestinian people are suffering from Israel's apartheid practices on their own territory.

We condemn the double standards, selectivity, incoherence and political manipulation that harm the cause of international peace and security and undermine the legitimacy of the Security Council. As a self-proclaimed defender of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international peace and security, the United States is trying to erase from our Organization's historical memory its repeated obstruction of Security Council action aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, along with the impunity it has guaranteed Israel. We want to recall once again that the current Government of the United States has not reversed other unilateral and unjustified decisions that run counter to the Arab nations' legitimate interests and maintain the potential danger of escalation in the Middle East, thereby further delaying the possibility of reaching the proclaimed solution to the conflict. We reiterate our condemnation of the United States Government's unilateral decisions to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and establish its diplomatic representation in that city, thereby disrespecting Jerusalem's historical status, as well as the decision to recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Syrian Golan, which all constitute grave violations of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

We reaffirm our strong support for a two-State solution that will enable the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and to live in an independent and sovereign State within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, and that also guarantees the right of return of refugees. Cuba welcomed the recent reconciliation agreement between Palestinian factions signed in Algiers under the auspices of Algeria's President Abdelmadjid Tebboune. We hope that the new arrangement will consolidate Palestinian unity and enable steps to be taken towards a solution to the conflict through a serious and respectful negotiating process that takes into account the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. We will continue to strongly support the State of Palestine becoming a full member of the United Nations and its President's call for an international peace conference.

We reiterate our demand for Israel's full and unconditional withdrawal from the Syrian Golan and all the occupied Arab territories. We demand an end to foreign interference in Syria and full respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity, while supporting

the quest for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the situation imposed on our sister Arab nation. We reiterate our support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran and for the inalienable right of States to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. We reiterate our condemnation of the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from that agreement. And we demand an immediate and unconditional end to the arbitrary and illegal unilateral coercive measures that the United States has imposed on sovereign nations in the Middle East.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Musayev (Azerbaijan): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the 120 member States of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Gabon on its successful presidency of the Security Council this month and express the Movement's appreciation for the opportunity to present its position on the question of Palestine.

During the NAM ministerial meeting on 21 September on the sidelines of the high-level week of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, the Ministers adopted a political declaration that, among other things, stressed that a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine in all its aspects — based on the internationally endorsed parameters enshrined in the relevant United Nations resolutions — must remain a priority on the Movement's agenda and a permanent responsibility of the United Nations until it is satisfactorily resolved in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. In that regard, the member States of the Movement once again reaffirmed that the ongoing historic injustice, with the 55-year-long Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory and other Arab territories at its core, continues to pose a serious threat to regional and international peace and security. As the Palestinian people continue to be deprived of their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and independence, the prolonged international paralysis on the issue is inexcusable, as are dismissive arguments that the issue is intractable or that peace is not possible at this time.

The international consensus on a just solution is firm and clear, and there are abundant multilateral political and diplomatic tools for promoting the achievement of

a peaceful settlement in accordance with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations. We must use them responsibly and urgently. We in NAM are ready to do so, and we urge the Security Council to act forthwith to shoulder its responsibilities in that regard. The Council must uphold its duty under the Charter to maintain international peace and security and act to implement its own resolutions. The question of Palestine cannot be the exception to international law or to the authority of the Council. In particular, the Movement remains deeply concerned about the fact that for too long the Council has been unable to fulfil its mandate on this important question, owing to the use of the veto by one permanent member. The members of the Movement call on the Security Council to overcome its paralysis on the Palestinian question by upholding its obligations with regard to the achievement of a just and peaceful solution to this protracted conflict and tragic injustice. That will not only open a new era for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and the region but will also restore credibility to this organ and our international system as a whole.

In that regard, NAM still believes that resolution 2334 (2016) provides the most effective and viable path to peace. It sets forth the essential requirements and parameters for the realization of a just outcome through a two-State solution, based on the lines of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the long-standing terms of reference of peace endorsed by the international community, which are the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map. It also ensures the fulfilment of the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, including that of self-determination, and the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, together with a joint solution to the plight of Palestinian refugees, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

NAM therefore reiterates its call for full respect for resolution 2334 (2016) and for the effective implementation of its provisions and obligations, particularly by the occupying Power, and including in terms of States' obligations with regard to distinction, which is a matter that is central to ensuring accountability.

The Movement also underscores the need for the intensification of international and regional diplomatic

efforts aimed at ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive solution, as also called for in resolution 2334 (2016), and calls on the Security Council to urgently examine all practical ways and means to ensure its implementation, as it has pledged to do. Similarly, the member States of the Movement continue to call for full respect for, and the implementation of, all other relevant resolutions, including with regard to the complete cessation of all Israeli settlement activities and the status of occupied East Jerusalem.

Respect for United Nations resolutions and international law would inherently create the necessary conditions for de-escalating the volatile situation on the ground, which has been marked by rising violence, particularly settler violence and terror, and has led to more tragic loss of life among civilians, including children. That would also create the necessary conditions for ultimately ending the occupation — a matter of urgency in order to justly resolve the conflict in all its aspects and make Palestinian-Israeli peace and security a reality for the benefit of both peoples, the region and the international community as a whole.

It is imperative that action be taken immediately to help de-escalate the volatile situation on the ground. That must include a halt to all unilateral and unlawful measures by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. Actions that violate Security Council resolutions, including violations of the historic and legal status quo of Jerusalem and its holy sites, are provocative and dangerous, destroy the prospects for peace and should not be supported or celebrated by anyone.

In that regard, we reiterate the call for full respect of the historic and legal status quo of Jerusalem and the historical Hashemite custodianship over the Christian and Muslim holy sites in the city, as well as for safeguarding their sanctity. In that context, the Movement stresses that the Jordanian administration of the Jerusalem Awqaf and Al-Aqsa Mosque affairs is the only entity authorized under the provisions of international humanitarian law to manage all the affairs of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, in the entirety of its 144,000 square metres. It also stresses that maintaining comprehensive calm requires Israel to respect the legal and historical status quo of the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif and to find a real political horizon that guarantees the fulfilment of all the legitimate

rights of the brotherly Palestinian people on the basis of a two-State solution.

In that regard, the Movement also stresses the important role of and welcomes the call for Al-Quds/Jerusalem signed in Rabat on 30 March 2019 by His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco and His Holiness Pope Francis to stress the important role that Al-Quds/Jerusalem plays as a city of tolerance and mutual respect among the people of the three monotheist religions and the need to preserve its specificities and features as a city of peaceful coexistence.

NAM reiterates its rejection of the purported annexation by Israel of occupied East Jerusalem and underscores that the continued threats of annexation by Israeli officials, the continued settlement activities and the forced displacement of Palestinian families from their homes and lands must be unequivocally condemned. Any measures taken in that regard must be forthwith rejected as null and void, without any legal effect, and must be met with firm measures of accountability for such grave breaches, including by lawful counter-measures.

With regard to the Gaza Strip, the situation remains a great concern of the Movement, particularly the grave humanitarian situation. NAM reiterates its call for the complete lifting of the illegal Israeli blockade, which continues to impose untold humanitarian, social and economic suffering on more than 2 million Palestinian children, women and men in Gaza. The crisis must be comprehensively addressed in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 1860 (2009), and in the context of the unequivocal calls and overriding responsibility for ending the illegitimate belligerent Israeli foreign occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, since 1967.

In the absence of a just solution, NAM member States reiterate their call for the continued provision of the needed humanitarian, social and economic assistance to the Palestinian people, including the Palestinian refugees. The Movement therefore reaffirms the continued importance of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), together with other United Nations agencies and international organizations, in alleviating their plight, and calls for full support for the extension of UNRWA's mandate until 30 June 2026, without

prejudice to the provisions of paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

In the light of the continuing financial shortfalls, NAM urges the international community to provide UNRWA with sufficient and predictable funding, including through enhanced support from the United Nations regular budget, as recommended by the Secretary-General, in order to ensure the continuity of all its indispensable humanitarian development programmes and to make a significant contribution to regional stability.

As Israel has clearly abdicated its obligations as the occupying Power to protect the Palestinian civilian population as prescribed by the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, the Movement also reiterates its long-standing call for international protection for the Palestinian people. That is urgent in order to alleviate the dire state of insecurity of the occupied population and to prevent the loss of additional innocent human lives. Failure to do so can lead only to further escalation and the tragic loss of more civilian lives, as we are witnessing now at this critical time.

In that connection, the Movement reiterates its grave concern at the lack of accountability for all violations committed by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, many of which may amount to war crimes. Israel must comply with international law and be held to account if it continues its blatant contempt of this organ and its international legal obligations. The absence of justice only fosters greater impunity, leads to the recurrence of crimes and destabilizes the situation on the ground, thereby further diminishing the prospects for peace.

The member States of the Movement therefore continue to call for international action, particularly by the Security Council, to ensure the cessation of, and accountability for, the violations systematically committed by Israel against the Palestinian civilian population under its occupation.

With regard to the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, the Movement reaffirms that all measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, such as its illegal decision of 14 December 1981 that purports to alter the legal, physical and demographic status and the institutional structure, as well as Israeli measures to apply its jurisdiction and administration there, are null and void and have no legal effect. In that regard, and in line with NAM's principled position,

the Movement once again demands that Israel abide by resolution 497 (1981) and fully withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967, in line with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

In addition, NAM reiterates its condemnation of the unilateral and arbitrary proclamation by the United States of America on recognizing the Golan Heights as part of Israel. Moreover, NAM member States emphasize that Israel must withdraw from all Lebanese territories, including Sheba'a Farms, the Kfar Shouba hills and the northern part of Al-Ghajar village and adjacent area north of the Blue Line, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006).

In conclusion, the Movement seizes the opportunity to reiterate its call for the international community to act collectively, with responsibility, to uphold international law and to exert and intensify all necessary efforts in support of the just Palestinian cause, the ultimate goal of which is to bring an end to that historic and grave injustice. NAM member States reaffirm their commitment to promoting a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine in all its aspects, including the plight of the Palestinian refugees, and reaffirm their support for the Palestinian people in their struggle to achieve justice and fulfil their inalienable rights and legitimate national aspirations, including to self-determination, freedom and independence in the sovereign and independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brunei Darussalam.

Ms. Sulaiman (Brunei Darussalam): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Gabon on its presidency of the Security Council for the month of October and thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his comprehensive briefing this morning.

The question of Palestine is almost as old as the United Nations itself. The suffering and struggles of the Palestinian people living under occupation for more than seven decades must not be ignored. Despite the countless debates held and numerous resolutions adopted, the question of Palestine remains unanswered. Efforts towards a peaceful solution have not been as productive as desired, and the realization of the two-State solution has failed to materialize.

As reported to the General Assembly, the Middle East peace process did not resume, and the Middle East Quartet has not created opportunities for negotiation between the two parties concerned in the past year. In that regard, we call on the international community to sustain its attention and its efforts to ensure that Palestinians' rights and freedoms continue to be addressed, including at the United Nations, with utmost priority.

As we have seen in the past few years, the world has faced challenge after challenge, from battling the pandemic and its impacts, to geopolitical conflicts and climate change effects resulting in energy and food insecurity. Those challenges have greatly affected those who are most vulnerable and at risk, adversely affecting in particular countries in conflict such as Palestine. It is therefore of utmost importance for us to ensure that the grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, remains at the forefront of the United Nations agenda.

Brunei Darussalam is gravely concerned with the deteriorating security situation and escalating instability in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. We continue to witness persistent acts of violence by the occupying Power that have resulted in the loss of innocent lives, including of children. We reiterate our condemnation in the strongest terms of the repeated blatant violations of Palestinian human rights and dignity, as well as the continuing deplorable actions by the occupying Power that go against international law and resolutions adopted by the Council.

The international community must remain resolute in safeguarding its commitments, including upholding the two-State solution towards achieving an independent State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. With respect to that endeavour, Brunei Darussalam expresses its serious concerns regarding any change in the status quo of Jerusalem. We join the international community in calling on the occupying Power to cease all forms of aggression, atrocities and unfair practices against the Palestinians.

Brunei Darussalam reiterates its full support for all international efforts aimed at achieving comprehensive and lasting peace and security in the Middle East, in accordance with the rule of law, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and all relevant United Nations resolutions.

For more than half a century, foreign occupation has tremendously hindered the ability of Palestinians to exercise their basic human rights, including access to education, preventing them from achieving their full potential in contributing towards global development. As we reach the halfway mark in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, we should not forget how much wider the development gap is becoming between the rest of us and Palestine. Palestine deserves

the same opportunities that all of us in this family of nations enjoy, to pursue a better future for its people.

On that note, Brunei Darussalam supports efforts to promote Palestine's full membership at the United Nations as a step towards a sovereign and independent State of Palestine.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.