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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Agyeman	(Ghana)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Spasse
	Brazil	Mrs. Aguiar Barboza
	China	Mr. Zhang Jun
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon	Mr. Biang
	India	Mrs. Kamboj
	Ireland	Mr. Mythen
	Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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

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

I give the floor to Mr. Wennesland.

Mr. Wennesland: Each month, I brief the Security Council in detail on the latest developments on the ground relevant to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Today, however, I wish to provide a broader perspective on the challenges we are facing, while highlighting some potential ways forward for the parties and the international community. A detailed update on recent incidents and developments will be provided in the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), to be issued in December.

After decades of persistent violence, illegal settlement expansion, dormant negotiations and deepening occupation, the conflict is again reaching a boiling point. High levels of violence in the occupied West Bank and Israel in recent months, including attacks against Israeli and Palestinian civilians, and the increased use of arms and settler-related violence have caused grave human suffering. I condemn last week's bombings in Jerusalem, which killed two Israelis, including a 16-year-old, and injured over a dozen more civilians. Such acts of terrorism must be clearly rejected and condemned by all. Days before, I condemned the violent attack by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in Hebron, which risks aggravating an already tense situation. We all have a responsibility to take action against extremists and to speak out against such acts of violence and incitement.

Let me reiterate that the targeting of civilians can never be justified, and the violence must stop.

This surge in violence in the occupied Palestinian territory is taking place in the context of a stalled peace

process and entrenched occupation, and amid mounting economic and institutional challenges faced by the Palestinian Authority. Global trends and declining donor support have compounded those challenges, alongside an absence of democratic renewal for the Palestinian people.

In Gaza, the fragile calm was recently interrupted by the launching of four rockets towards Israel by Palestinian militants and subsequent air strikes by Israeli Defense Forces against what it said were Hamas targets. Once again, we are reminded that the mix of militant activity, debilitating closures, the absence of a legitimate Palestinian Government and hopelessness create an ever-present risk of escalation.

I remain focused on addressing the immediate threats both to stability and the longer-term objectives of my mandate. In recent weeks my team and I have visited areas in the occupied West Bank where there has been severe violence, and I continue to hold discussions with a range of Palestinian and Israeli officials, as well as international and regional actors, to address the dangerous dynamics.

In Gaza, the United Nations worked closely, again alongside regional and international partners, to mediate and support the ceasefires in May 2021 and in August this year. The United Nations leads the humanitarian response and has helped put in place measures to support Gaza's economy, including improvements to movement and access in and out of Gaza for people and goods. Critical projects, such as providing fuel to the Gaza power plant and cash assistance to more than 100,000 needy families, are ongoing and will continue in 2023. In that regard, progress has been made. Israel has approved the highest number of permits for Palestinians from Gaza to work in Israel since 2007 and the entry of a number of dual-use materials from Israel for the first time in more than a decade. Nevertheless, restrictions and delays continue to have a negative impact on humanitarian and development efforts, as well as important sectors of the economy, and much more remains to be done. Those preventive and de-escalating measures and diplomatic engagement have helped maintain calm on the ground and provide some space for progress, but if there is no tangible movement on the political track their benefits are likely to be short-lived.

While it may seem that the events on the ground are stuck in a never-ending cycle, the truth is that nothing

in this conflict is static. Freezing the conflict or managing it permanently are not viable options. As the violence mounts, settlement expansion and restrictions continue to squeeze the economic and physical space for developing a viable Palestinian State. Meanwhile, demography is moving faster than politics. In a few years, the exponential population growth in the West Bank and Gaza will make it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to manage the economic, political and security situation. The Palestinian Authority is already facing significant institutional and financial challenges. Palestinians have not voted in general elections since 2006. More than 50 per cent of the electorate — those aged between 18 and 35 — have never had a chance to make their voices heard through a ballot. That is taking place against a backdrop of changing dynamics in the region, along with shifting international priorities and, more recently, fallout from the conflict in Ukraine, which has significantly reduced the attention paid to this conflict.

The optimism, hope, and vocal support for a negotiated political resolution that were so palpable when the peace process began have now dimmed, especially given the lack of political progress since the unsuccessful rounds of talks in 2007 and 2014. The principles that underpin the Oslo Accords are slipping away. Political leadership is required to reset a trajectory towards a two-State solution. Failure to address the underlying causes of conflict and the trends I have mentioned and to pave a clear political path forward will only escalate the conflict, causing more bloodshed and misery and resulting in a definitively destabilizing effect on the entire region. The current trends are bringing neither stability nor security to anyone. For those reasons, it is urgent that steps be taken towards a two-State solution, which still garners considerable support among Palestinians and Israelis. Through incremental but tangible steps, we can build a bridge between where we are now and the conditions necessary for a peaceful resolution of the conflict based on the resolutions of the United Nations, international law and previous agreements.

First, we must continue to engage with the parties to reduce tensions and counter negative trends, particularly those that affect final-status issues. That will involve reining in the violence and incitements and holding the perpetrators accountable. It means seeing both sides stop taking unilateral steps that undermine peace, including settlement expansion or legalization,

demolitions and displacement, and it means upholding the status quo for the holy sites, in accordance with Jordan's special and historic role.

Secondly, we must continue to improve access, movement and trade in order to create room for the Palestinian economy to grow. Specifically, steps should be taken to increase access for Palestinians to land and resources in Area C of the West Bank, enabling crucial Palestinian development, as well as to increase permits for Palestinians to work in Israel. In Gaza, a further and more comprehensive approach to easing restrictions on the movement of people and goods is needed. Relinking the Gaza economy to the West Bank should be a related critical objective. Ultimately, ending the debilitating closures and addressing Gaza's challenges require political solutions in line with resolution 1860 (2009).

Thirdly, we need efforts by all the parties and the international community to strengthen Palestinian institutions, improve governance and shore up the fiscal health of the Palestinian Authority, whose political legitimacy and accountability must also be strengthened through democratic reforms and the opening of the civic space, holding elections across the occupied Palestinian territory and ensuring the effectiveness and credibility of the Palestinian security forces. And that will not be possible without the implementation of my first and second points. Those steps seek to enable the parties to move past ad-hoc efforts focused on security and economic matters and towards meaningful engagement on more fundamental political issues. While they are intended to have immediate concrete benefits for Palestinians and Israelis, the priorities are anchored in a broader political framework that advances us towards achieving a reality of two States.

I recognize that in the current circumstances, advancing such steps will be a formidable task. Fundamental issues have to be addressed by the parties. A common approach, with a two-State solution as the guiding political direction, is essential to halting the current negative trajectory. Also required is a redoubled commitment from the international community, encompassing both resources and engagement with the parties, despite the global challenges. The circumstances have clearly changed in the three decades since Israelis and Palestinians first embarked on the peace process. Neither side can turn away from the realities of geography and demography that are reshaping the landscape, which, combined with the fast-

expanding settlements east of the 1967 borders, reflects an increase in friction points and a deepening conflict.

Such a direction has full support from the international community. In that regard, the United Nations plays a critical role in anchoring and affirming the international consensus on how the conflict will ultimately be resolved — the establishment of two States, living side by side in peace and security, on the basis of the 1967 lines, in line with United Nations resolutions, international law and previous agreements. That consensus is based on the recognition that both Palestinians and Israelis have deep national, religious, cultural and historic ties to their homeland and that both have a right to self-determination in the form of a viable, contiguous, independent State of their own.

Ultimately, only Palestinians and Israelis can together determine their future. But the United Nations and the international community, including through regional and international frameworks, must support the parties in moving towards a political horizon that is aligned with the core principles I outlined. Despite the bleakness of the moment, and fact because of it, I encourage all of us to recommit to that ambitious, but achievable, goal.

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

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

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

I want to start by condemning in the strongest possible terms the terrorist attacks that occurred in Jerusalem last week. I echo Secretary Blinken in expressing our condolences to the families of the men who were killed and wish all those injured a speedy recovery. We stand with the Israeli people in the face of those heinous attacks.

Let me be clear: there is no justification for violence that is directed at civilians. That includes the 15 November terrorist attack in a settlement that killed three Israelis and the violence committed by settlers in Hebron on 19 November. Anyone who commits a violent act, Israeli or Palestinian, must face equal justice. It must be clear that no individual or group is above the law.

The United States is deeply concerned about the sharp escalation in violence and tension between Israelis and Palestinians. This has been the deadliest year in the West Bank since 2004. Nearly 150 Palestinians and 28 Israelis have been killed. Amid those heightened tensions, it is all the more critical that Israelis and Palestinians refrain from unilateral actions, including settlement activity, evictions and the demolition of Palestinian homes and incitement to violence, such as payments to the families of terrorists, and the disruption of the historic status quo of holy sites. Those actions serve only to take us further away from a negotiated two-State solution, which remains the best way to ensure Israel's future security and prosperity and fulfil Palestinians' desire for a State of their own.

Israelis and Palestinians equally deserve to live safely and securely and enjoy equal measures of freedom, justice, dignity and prosperity. We have said many times that there is no shortcut to the vision of two States. That can be achieved only through direct negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis. It is incumbent on both parties to work in good faith towards that goal.

While the international community cannot impose peace on the parties, it has an important role to play in improving the well-being of Palestinians, the security of Israelis and the stability of the wider region. Those efforts can help create the conditions for meaningful negotiations aimed at resolving the conflict. Unfortunately, most United Nations actions related to Israelis and Palestinians are not designed to advance direct negotiations, let alone achieve peace. They are intended only to denigrate Israel.

Indeed, the United Nations system is replete with anti-Israel actions and bodies, including biased and disproportionate resolutions against Israel, across the United Nations system. The lopsided focus on Israel at the United Nations, including the open-ended Commission of Inquiry and the recent requests for an advisory opinion at the International Court of Justice, has brought Israelis and Palestinians no closer to peace. Instead of grandstanding and pursuing unproductive measures, we hope that the United Nations will start focusing on the kinds of concrete steps that can improve the lives of Palestinians and Israelis and preserve the viability of two States, living side by side in peace and security.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his thoughtful briefing.

The United Kingdom is gravely concerned about the increasing instability in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Since 14 November, four Israelis have lost their lives in terrorist attacks in the city of Ariel and in Jerusalem, including a 16-year-old. There is no justification for such violence. During that time, two Palestinian minors were also killed in the West Bank, including a 15-year-old. One hundred and forty-two Palestinians have now been killed by Israeli security forces since 1 January — the most in a single year since United Nations records began in 2005. In the same period, 30 Israelis also lost their lives. Each life lost is a tragedy for all communities, particularly the families affected. The ongoing conflict needs to be resolved, for the sake of all Israelis and Palestinians alike.

The United Kingdom stands ready to support the new Israeli Administration and the Palestinian Authority (PA) in de-escalation efforts and in addressing the drivers of the conflict. The United Kingdom remains fully supportive of Israel's right to self-defence, but Israeli security forces should show maximum restraint in the use of force and investigate all Palestinian deaths. We urge both parties to engage in meaningful dialogue, refrain from escalatory actions and work to restore trust and a pathway towards peace and a resolution of the conflict.

The United Kingdom shares the concern of others about the scenes of settler violence perpetrated against Palestinians in Hebron in recent days. Settler violence must end, and we call upon Israel to hold those responsible to account.

We condemn the demolition by Israel of a primary school in Masafer Yatta. All children have a basic right to access education safely. We call on the Government of Israel to uphold those rights.

Finally, I urge Israel and the Palestinian Authority to accelerate efforts to improve the economic and humanitarian conditions in the West Bank and Gaza. I welcome ongoing dialogue to address PA clearance revenues and call on the parties to honour their recent commitments in the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians.

The United Kingdom remains a firm supporter of the two-State solution, based on 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as a shared capital, as the only way to ensure lasting peace between the parties.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing.

My delegation follows with concern the recent developments in Israel and Palestine. The analysis provided by Special Coordinator Wennesland confirms that we are faced with a very fragile situation that could escalate further. The recent incidents are reminiscent of the waves of violence seen in the last few years, so it is necessary to support everything that has a preventive or deterrent character.

Mexico condemns the attacks perpetrated on 23 November in Jerusalem, where a young Israeli was killed and more than 20 people were injured. At the same time, my country deplors any threat posed to Israeli territory and its population, including the launching of rockets from Gaza. We recognize Israel's legitimate security concerns. But, at the same time, we reiterate that Israeli security agencies must observe the principles of necessity, proportionality and distinction, in accordance with international humanitarian law. The recurrent use of lethal munitions against civilians contravenes these principles.

The withholding of the mortal remains of any person is also unacceptable, as it is a form of collective punishment that prevents families from honouring the memory of those who have died. We commend the efforts of authorities and social leaders in Jenin to return the body of the young Druze man stolen last week and urge the immediate release of all remains still being held. We also condemn the recurrent attacks perpetrated by Israeli settlers, such as those that took place in Hebron on 19 November. We echo the Special Coordinator's call and urge political and social leaders to refrain from inciting violence and inflammatory rhetoric.

Settlement construction is illegal under international law. We therefore call for a halt to settlement construction and expansion, as well as evictions and displacements of residents, and seizures and demolitions of Palestinian structures. School demolitions, such as the one that occurred in Masafer Yatta, violate the Palestinian population's right to education and increase the grievances that hinder a return to dialogue.

The renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) will undoubtedly provide certainty in planning the Agency's work. We stress that UNRWA requires predictable funding to enable it to consistently provide humanitarian assistance and basic services to more than 5 million Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine.

On the political front, we urge the incoming Israeli Government to maintain and deepen civil, fiscal and security cooperation with the Palestinian Authority. Similarly, we reiterate our call for the Palestinian Authority to convene presidential and legislative elections in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, in line with the Algiers declaration.

In conclusion, I stress that only a negotiated solution can put an end to the recurring cycles of violence that affect the stability of the entire region. The parties to the conflict have a responsibility to return to the political process to address the structural causes of violence and move towards reconciliation. For its part, the international community has the obligation to promote and support this process.

In view of the foregoing, Mexico reiterates its support for any initiative that contributes to a two-State solution, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Only in this way will it be possible to lay the foundations for reconciliation and ensure sustainable peace in the Middle East.

Mrs. Kamboj (India): I thank United Nations Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing.

India condemns the twin terror attacks that took place in Jerusalem on 23 November. We offer our condolences to the victim's family and wish the injured a speedy recovery. We reiterate that terrorism is a global threat and that only a unified and zero-tolerance approach to terrorism can eventually defeat it.

India has emphasized that only a negotiated two-State solution leading to the establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine, with Israel's legitimate security concerns being taken into consideration, can deliver lasting peace. In this regard, India continues to reiterate the need for an early resumption of direct peace negotiations between the parties on all final-status issues. The absence of such negotiations and the lack of a clear political

horizon for the peaceful resolution of the conflict has consequences for both Israel and Palestine. It risks the recurrence of the cycle of violence, which will only increase the number of civilian casualties on both sides. All parties must protect civilians, especially women and children. We urge the parties to cease violence and avoid unilateral actions on the ground, as they undercut the viability of the two-State solution. This will help to bridge the trust deficit between the parties.

For its part, India remains committed to supporting all efforts aimed at bringing about the resumption of direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians in order to achieve a two-State solution. On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, has extended his best wishes to the people of Palestine in their endeavour for Statehood, peace and prosperity. In his message, Prime Minister Modi has also reaffirmed India's long-standing relationship with the Palestinian people, based on deep-rooted historical and people-to-people ties.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing.

China is deeply concerned about the continuous deterioration of the security situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. Israeli security forces have recently been conducting increasingly frequent search-and-arrest operations, and the violent conflict in the West Bank has continued to spread, with the number of civilian casualties rising. According to United Nations statistics, this year has seen the highest number of Palestinian deaths in the West Bank since 2005 as a result of the conflict. Many Palestinian children are dying before they can blossom, for example, Fulla, who was shot dead on the day before her sixteenth birthday. The civilian casualties in Israel are equally heartbreaking. China condemns all indiscriminate attacks on civilians in the occupied territories, deplores the grave violations against children, opposes the excessive use of force by security forces and calls for investigations into the violence and for accountability.

Israel and Palestine are inseparable neighbours, whose respective security is interdependent and indivisible. If one party's security depends on the other's insecurity, the cycle of violence will not be broken, and the security dilemma will not be overcome. The international community should pay equal attention to

Palestinian and Israeli security concerns and encourage both sides to find the greatest common ground through dialogue and cooperation so as to achieve common security. At the same time, the occupying Power should also effectively fulfil its obligations under international law to protect the security of the people in the occupied territories.

Improving the humanitarian and economic situation in Palestine is urgently needed. This month, a serious fire in the Jabalia refugee camp in the Gaza Strip claimed the lives of more than 20 people. Under Israel's 15-year blockade, Gaza suffers from poor infrastructure, electricity and energy shortages and a lack of medical resources, leaving more than 2 million people in Gaza living in poverty. In the West Bank, large areas of land have been designated by Israel as military training areas or for other purposes, thereby excluding Palestinian construction, economic and development activities.

We call on Israel to ease restrictions on the entry and exit of people and humanitarian and reconstruction materials in the Gaza Strip, lift the blockade on Gaza as soon as possible and create conditions conducive to the development of Palestinian communities in the West Bank. The international community should provide assistance to Palestine through multiple channels to help the Palestinian people to alleviate the financial crisis, ensure public services, develop the economy and improve people's livelihoods. China welcomes the draft resolution adopted by the Fourth Committee to renew the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/C.4/77/L.9). We support the Agency's ongoing relief and assistance to Palestinian refugees.

The continued expansion of settlement activities, which encroach on Palestinian land, embezzle Palestinian resources and violate the Palestinians' right to self-determination, have made an independent, sovereign and contiguous Palestinian State even more elusive. We urge Israel to cease all settlement activities, in accordance with resolution 2334 (2016), including the demolition of Palestinian homes and the threat to evict people from areas such as Masafer Yatta, and return to the right track of the two-State solution.

In November 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which provided for the establishment of a Jewish State and an Arab State in Palestine. Seventy-five years later, the question of Palestine

remains unresolved, and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, independence and statehood remain unfulfilled. The reasons for that require in-depth reflection. The most essential support to the Palestinian people is to give them long-overdue justice.

The international community should always put the question of Palestine at the top of the international agenda, continue to adhere to the two-State solution and provide more support for the resumption of dialogue between Palestine and Israel on an equal footing. China supports the United Nations, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and countries with influence in playing a more active role and undertaking broader and more effective efforts to promote peace. The Security Council must urgently take substantive steps to advance the two-State solution and support the Palestinian people in restoring and exercising their inalienable rights. No one has the right of veto in matters that affect the future destiny of the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate China's support for the establishment of a fully sovereign and independent Palestine State on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, the peaceful coexistence of Palestine and Israel, and the common development of the Arab and Jewish peoples. China is ready to work with the international community to practise genuine multilateralism, promote a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question, and achieve security, stability, development and prosperity in the Middle East as soon as possible.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process for his briefing.

As the Special Coordinator said, the risk of escalation on the ground is real, and France calls on the parties to exercise restraint. We condemn in the strongest terms the two attacks that struck Jerusalem on 23 November. We reiterate our continued support for Israel's security and our determination to remain committed to the fight against terrorism. We also condemn the deaths of many Palestinian civilians this year, including the journalist Shireen Abu Akleh and several children. We recall that the protection of civilians during military operations is an obligation under international humanitarian law.

The unacceptable continuation of unilateral measures is making the prospect of a two-State solution more remote every day. France condemns the Israeli settlement policy, including the ongoing demolitions and evictions of Palestinian families, despite the repeated appeals by members of the Security Council. We condemn Israel's destruction of a school in Masafer Yatta last week. Palestinian children have a right to education.

As the new Israeli Government is being formed, France calls on it not to relaunch plans to expand or create settlements, particularly in and around East Jerusalem, and not to proceed with the legalization of unauthorized settlements. In 2020, France and its European partners repeatedly warned against the annexation of parts of the West Bank and the settlements. Our position remains unchanged. France recalls that the settlements are illegal and that they undermine the two-State solution, for which both parties reaffirmed their support before the General Assembly last September (see A/77/PV.8 and A/77/PV.10).

In order to emerge from this situation, we must recreate a political horizon in order to give new hope to Israelis and Palestinians, who aspire to live in peace and security. We know that only a two-State solution, in which both States live side by side in peace and security and have Jerusalem as their capital, will make it possible to bring about a just and lasting peace for the Israelis, the Palestinians and the entire region. France recalls its commitment to the historic status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem.

We therefore call on the Security Council to work towards the launching of peace talks as soon as possible. The Israeli elections took place. Direct negotiations between the parties must now be rapidly relaunched. France is determined to act in that direction. As President Emmanuel Macron said, we have no alternative but to relaunch the peace efforts. France will support any initiative aimed at bringing the parties back to the negotiating table.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Tor Wennesland for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the occupied Palestinian territories. It is fitting that our discussion today is taking place on the eve of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Another escalation of violence in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict area shows that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories will remain volatile until the parties find mutually acceptable solutions to all final-status issues on the basis of the universally recognized international legal framework of the Middle East peace process, including the two-State solution.

Against the background of the relative stabilization of the situation in the Gaza Strip after the Israeli military operation in August this year, which killed at least 49 Palestinians, including 17 children, the unrest in the West Bank has not abated. Following the Israeli blockade and military raids in Jenin, the cleansing of Nablus and the Shu'fat refugee camp in East Jerusalem began. According to reports, more than 130 people have already died as a result of Israeli military action in the West Bank this year, making it the bloodiest since 2005.

Amid that disproportionate use of force in the occupied Palestinian territories, unilateral actions continue to create irreversible facts on the ground — the construction of settlements, the expropriation of Palestinian property, the demolition of homes, arbitrary arrests and the disruption of the status quo of Jerusalem's holy sites.

At the same time, Israel's arbitrary illegal actions have extended beyond the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and have affected neighbouring Arab countries, with many incidents involving the violation of their sovereignty, including strikes against Syria and Lebanon. We oppose the defence of national security at the cost of creating threats to other countries and turning the Middle East region into an arena for proxy confrontation with Iran. We also strongly condemn the attacks on Israeli civilians in Jerusalem last week.

Neither do we see any prospects for revitalizing the peace process, which has been at a standstill since 2015. The Palestinian issue has become a bargaining chip in a long series of election campaigns in Israel, as it has actively been pushed to the bottom of the international agenda by the United States, which has blocked the efforts of the Middle East Quartet and the Security Council's adoption of any substantive decision. Furthermore, as we heard today from the Special Coordinator, a Middle East settlement is also suffering from the United States and its allies prioritizing the Ukrainian crisis. The continuing rift between Fatah and Hamas allows for exploiting the idea that Israel lacks a distinct partner capable of representing the Palestinian

side. In that regard, we welcome the signing of the Algiers declaration, under which Palestinian factions jointly decided to continue on the path of national unity. We believe that it is an important step towards confirming the Palestinians' intention to launch negotiations based on a common position.

Despite Israel's stated intention to promote the improvement of the economic situation of Palestinians, the overall socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories continues to deteriorate. In that regard, we attach great importance to the provision of comprehensive humanitarian assistance to those in need in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as to Palestinian refugees in neighbouring Arab countries. We are dismayed by the lack of an adequate response on the part of United Nations specialized agencies, first and foremost among them the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which must cope with a paralysing financial shortfall. The Agency's activities have not only a humanitarian, but also a political, dimension, while playing an important stabilizing role in the Palestinian territories and Middle East countries. We unrelentingly continue to provide the Agency with our support in the renewal of its mandate in the General Assembly and reaffirm our readiness to continue our voluntary one-time contributions. Unfortunately, owing to unilateral anti-Russian sanctions, we have as yet been unable to make a financial contribution to the UNRWA budget. Nevertheless, Russia will continue to support the Agency, and we call on the international community to do the same.

Mr. Kiboino (Kenya): I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing on the recent developments on the ground.

The trajectory of events, including the heightened tensions and escalating violence, leading to fatalities among both Israeli and Palestinian civilians, including children, is deeply concerning. In particular, the deteriorating security situation in Nablus, Jenin, the West Bank in general and Jerusalem is alarming. Kenya strongly condemns the 23 November two-bomb terrorist attacks in Jerusalem. Such acts, including the rocket launches from Gaza early this month, further reinforce the fact that the pursuit of armed and militia groups, including Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and their affiliates, fall outside the path and principles of peace. We reiterate that no cause can justify the deliberate targeting of civilians. All efforts must be

geared towards ensuring that such acts of terror come to a stop.

Reports, including those from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, are clear that, beyond security concerns, the current situation continues to have implications on the economy and humanitarian aid in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. As such, it is critical that the evolving situation be urgently addressed, including the underlying issues fuelling the instability, before it reverberates to other areas. Kenya calls for enhanced analysis and contextualized reports to emanate from the good offices of the Secretary-General to enable a better appreciation of the implications of such incidents in the maintenance of peace and security in the region in the immediate and long term. That would assist the Security Council in formulating a concrete and practical political pathway to end the protracted conflict.

As we look towards commemorating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Council needs to urgently work on the needed building blocks to actualize the long-held goal of a region where two democratic States — Israel and Palestine — live side by side in peace, within secure and recognized borders, based on the 1967 lines. The objective of a two-State solution will require of both parties a meaningful commitment to the peace process under international law, the Charter of the United Nations, the Council's resolutions and regional peace initiatives and frameworks. It also requires a willingness to compromise, a step-by-step approach that ensures real gains for both Israelis and Palestinians and a commitment to confidence-building measures that create the space to tackle the harder final-status issues.

Despite years of an elusive peace process, years of on-again/off-again negotiation efforts and real and formidable obstacles, my delegation believes that there is still a chance to make real progress. Kenya has regularly taken note of and welcomed the efforts to lower tensions, end provocations and restore calm at the grass-roots, official and regional levels. Such efforts must be reinforced by the cessation of Israeli settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as demanded by the comprehensive pillars of resolution 2334 (2016) and the provisions of resolution 1860 (2009). The mediation efforts of the countries of the region will remain critical. The Council should remain seized of the implementation

of the 13 October 2022 Algiers declaration, signed by 14 Palestinian factions, and support its translation into actual reconciliation that paves the way for elections to establish a national unity Government.

As I conclude, Kenya once again urges both parties to avoid unilateral steps that stand in the way of a resumption of a political process, as well as peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing.

We are concerned about the persistent insecurity vis-à-vis Israel and Palestine. I would like to focus on the following three aspects: the security, humanitarian and political dimensions.

With regard to the security situation, violence has intensified in recent months in the occupied West Bank and Israel. Tensions and stresses are mounting in Jerusalem, and the positions of the parties are becoming more extreme. Children and women are paying a heavy price in terms of the indiscriminate violence affecting civilian populations. A 15-year-old Palestinian was killed on 9 November during an Israeli army operation to secure a visit by Israeli politicians to a religious site in the occupied West Bank. On 14 November, a young Palestinian woman near Ramallah, in the occupied West Bank, also lost her life. More recently, an elementary school was demolished by Israeli forces in Masafer Yatta.

Those are real tragedies that should not be trivialized. Refusing to trivialize the cycles of violence also applies to attacks suffered by Israelis, such as that which resulted in the death of three Israelis on 15 November in the industrial area of the Ariel settlement, as well as the two bombing attacks in Jerusalem on 23 November. We condemn all such attacks and acts of violence. The cycle of violence and bloodshed is unsustainable, and the perpetrators must be held accountable before the law. We call on all the parties to exercise restraint and refrain from bellicose rhetoric that impedes the quest for peace. The settlement activities, evictions and demolitions of Palestinian homes must stop.

On the thorny issue of the return of human remains to their families, we call on the parties to prioritize a solution that can create a climate of confidence for a lasting peace.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, we remain concerned about the risk of disruption to aid

from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), as civilian populations remain highly dependent on it, particularly in the Gaza Strip, due to the blockade. In that regard we urge that the blockade be lifted, in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009), and that the international community continue its efforts to fund UNRWA.

On the political front, Gabon reaffirms its commitment to a two-State solution whereby Palestine can live in peace and security along secure and recognized borders, based on the 1967 lines, and with East Jerusalem as its capital. We call on the parties to resume negotiations in good faith with a view to restoring confidence and giving the Palestinian and Israeli peoples a chance in their aspirations to live in peace.

We recall the crucial role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as the official custodian of the Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem and reiterate our support for the King of Morocco, as Chair of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, in preserving the special status of the holy city as a symbol of the common heritage of humankind and the three monotheistic religions, as well as a place of dialogue and mutual respect. Respect for the status quo of the holy sites is also a requirement for the peaceful coexistence of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

Finally, we commend the efforts of Mr. Tor Wennesland, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. The diplomatic efforts to revive a sustainable peace process in the region must continue.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his thought-provoking briefing today and especially for being here with us in person, as I know he has a very hectic schedule on the ground.

Norway is concerned about the continuing violence in Israel and Palestine. The ongoing tensions are having major consequences. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2022 has been the deadliest year since 2005 for Palestinians in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. We are particularly concerned about the increasing numbers of settler attacks, most recently in Hebron. Such violent attacks are unacceptable and fuel tensions. Daily life has become unbearable for many Palestinians, who no longer dare to access their land. Over time, that coercive environment may force the local population to

leave. We urge the Israeli authorities to take stronger measures to prevent settler violence and bring those responsible to account. Norway condemns all violence against civilians, including acts of terrorism. The recent terror attacks in Jerusalem are indefensible. We call on both Israeli and Palestinian political leaders to take the necessary steps to protect civilians and de-escalate the situation. It is also essential to ensure that the historic status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem is upheld and respected.

Let me reiterate our concern regarding the situation in Masafer Yatta. The restrictions on movement are having severe consequences for residents in the area. Just last week the Israeli authorities demolished a school, seriously undermining Palestinian children's access to education. We once again urge Israel to revoke all eviction and demolition orders and to comply with its obligations under international humanitarian law.

We were encouraged by the Palestinian factions' commitment to reconciliation, expressed once again in the agreement reached in Algiers last month. Palestinian reconciliation and unification are essential to stability and to advancing a two-State solution. The legitimacy of the Palestinian Authority and its institutions must be ensured. We therefore urge all actors to continue with concrete steps to enable Palestinian unity and the holding of elections.

In conclusion, let me remind the Council that many of the negative developments on the ground are symptoms of a lack of political solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As we heard from the Special Coordinator, the status quo is not an option. There is a pressing need for a political horizon and a restart of the peace process. We urge the incoming Israeli Government to contribute to creating a horizon for peace and to engage with the Palestinian leadership. Norway continues to support the Palestinian State-building effort and a two-State solution, and we will continue to work for that goal. We are convinced that a two-State solution, based on the 1967 borders, is the best way to ensure the rights and safety of both Israelis and Palestinians.

Mr. Spasse (Albania): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing.

Let me start by expressing Albania's firm condemnation of the terrorist attacks that occurred on Wednesday against Israeli civilians in Jerusalem. Those coordinated and sophisticated attacks take us back to darker times and are yet another troubling reminder that

terrorists never change, but are ready to use all available means to sow terror. Their despicable acts should be met with strong resolve. Albania stands with Israel and its legitimate right to self-defence to protect its own people and country from all who have chosen death over life. We further condemn the rockets launched from the Gaza Strip towards Israel at the beginning of November. Everyone must understand that the fight against terror is not a choice, but a right and a necessity for any country so that it can provide its own people with safety and security. The international community must be united in condemning terrorist attacks.

We remain deeply worried about the escalation of violence on the ground, especially the heightened situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. We reiterate our call on the parties to de-escalate and refrain from unilateral steps and actions that as we know only fuel tensions further in an already hostile context. We know where tensions lead — we have seen it many times. We are well aware of the deplorable consequences. The lives of Israelis and Palestinians, including young civilians and children, must be preserved, and both sides must do their utmost to prevent any further escalation. What is needed and what we would like to see is therefore concrete engagement, aimed at lowering tensions through tangible steps that lead to understanding and dialogue. Immediate and full investigations are needed to hold those responsible for the deaths of innocent victims to account.

Albania believes that in any conflict the implementation of international law and international humanitarian law must be fully observed. The protection of civilians is an obligation at all times. We believe that the full implementation of resolution 2601 (2021), on safeguarding the right to education in conflicts, is an obligation of all the parties to a conflict. Children everywhere have a right to tuition. Attacks on schools, children and teachers are deplorable. We are concerned about the fact that increased demolitions and evictions, as well as the expansion of settlements, do not comply with international law or contribute to a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Neither do incitements to violence, inflammatory rhetoric against Israelis, hate speech and anti-Semitism. For a political horizon to be restored — and which is so desperately needed for the security of the people on both sides — the parties should fully withdraw from counterproductive unilateral actions.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Albania's full support for a just and negotiated two-State solution, with a safe Israel, where the security of its own people is fully guaranteed, and with a viable, independent and democratic Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition, with Jerusalem as their future shared capital. It is our understanding and belief that this is the only way forward. Anything else is a path to insecurity, violence and conflict, something we have been witnessing for more than seven decades.

Mrs. Aguiar Barboza (Brazil): We have been following with distress the recent escalation of violence in the region. Brazil strongly condemns the most recent terrorist attack, on 23 November, on bus stops in Jerusalem and expresses its solidarity with the families of the victims. We are alarmed at the high number of civilians killed and injured in the region in 2022, including many Israeli and Palestinian children.

Mounting violence continues to be exacerbated by provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric. Brazil urges all parties to maintain the ceasefire and to exercise maximum restraint. We renew our call on all parties to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure and to abide by all legal and moral obligations to spare children from the consequences of hostilities. Acts of terrorism are never justifiable and must halt immediately.

Brazil also remains very concerned that places of worship have, on repeated occasions, turned into battlegrounds. We stress that the safety and security of religious sites is an essential component of freedom of religion or belief and should be preserved and respected.

Brazil thanks the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process for his comprehensive briefing. We agree that the fragility of the situation underscores the urgency of changing dynamics on the ground while addressing the underlying security and political issues that are fuelling the current instability. Concerted efforts are needed to restore a political horizon and resume meaningful negotiations.

Brazil remains convinced that a two-State solution, within the framework of international law and the resolutions of the Council, is still the only way to meet the aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians, ensuring the security of all. But we need to work together towards that goal, instead of moving away from it. All actions that reduce the possibility of achieving that objective must be rethought.

The Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Mr. Philippe Lazzarini, recently recalled that desperation mounts when people, especially young people, are confronted with poverty, unemployment and a general lack of prospects, which could bring serious destabilizing effects to the region.

The recent outbreaks of cholera in camps are just another consequence of the deteriorating conditions on the ground. In Gaza, Lebanon and Syria, over 80 per cent live below the poverty line. Brazil echoes the calls for renewed efforts to restore UNRWA's capabilities so that it can continue to deliver assistance and services in this moment of crisis. The Agency's stabilization role in the region should not be undermined.

We also stress the importance of international cooperation in assisting Palestinian authorities in their efforts to build stronger institutions and to foster economic growth. That will not only improve people's lives, but may also contribute to intra-Palestinian reconciliation, which is a crucial step towards stabilization and the resumption of a genuine dialogue.

In conclusion, Brazil once more thanks Mr. Wennesland for his continued efforts to de-escalate tensions throughout repeated cycles of violence in 2022. We urgently need to find ways to break those terrible cycles and promote an effective political process towards sustainable peace in the region.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Tor Wennesland for his invaluable briefing.

We meet today at a time when the Middle East peace process is going through a delicate phase that requires special attention from the international community. While a sharp rise in violence and tensions is being witnessed in the occupied Palestinian territory, there are also increasing concerns at the local and international level about the future of the two-State solution, especially in the light of current events and the absence of serious negotiations among the parties.

In the context of heightened tensions in the political and security situations, which we are following closely, I would like to emphasize the following issues.

First, there is an urgent need to de-escalate and prevent tensions from reaching a point of no return. Inciting extremism and violence will never be in the interest of any party. Diplomacy and dialogue remain

the only ways to end the conflict. That primarily means refraining from rhetoric or provocations that may fuel tensions in an already fragile situation. We remind all parties to abide by their responsibilities under international law and international humanitarian law, especially regarding the protection of civilians.

In that context, there is a need to stop settlers' repeated incursions into holy sites and residential areas, as well as the accompanying acts of violence, such as those seen in conjunction with the incursion of tens of thousands of settlers into the old city of Hebron this month. We also reiterate our condemnation of the terrorist attacks that took place in Jerusalem last week.

Secondly, the upcoming period requires wise leadership that sees the path of peace and the two-State solution as an indispensable strategic option to end the violence and ensure a future based on security and prosperity for both peoples. Accordingly, we urge both sides to intensify constructive communication and cooperation. We affirm that creating an environment conducive to peace requires reversing the negative trends on the ground, foremost of which is stopping the construction and expansion of settlements that violate international law and the Council's resolutions.

Thirdly, the Security Council must send a clear message that we remain committed to the agreed-upon international terms of reference to end the conflict. That includes the need for the parties to return to serious negotiations that lead to a two-State solution, in which a Palestinian State lives side by side with Israel in peace, security and mutual recognition. That solution remains one of the demands of the Arab States, as reaffirmed at the Arab Summit held earlier this month in Algeria, along with adherence to the Arab Peace Initiative.

The difficult humanitarian conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in Gaza Strip, require constant international attention and support. That is critical, as the level of unemployment is approaching nearly 40 per cent. We stress the importance of providing economic and educational opportunities for Palestinian youth in order to enable them to build and develop their societies. We also welcome the recent agreement to bring dual-use materials to repair fishing boats into the Gaza Strip for the first time since 2007. We appreciate the efforts of the United Nations in facilitating that important step, which we hope to build upon.

In conclusion, and as we mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People tomorrow, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, emphasized in his statement on that occasion the firm and historic commitment of the United Arab Emirates to support the brotherly Palestinian people and their aspiration to establish an independent and sovereign Palestinian State based on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. Mythen (Ireland): I thank Mr. Wennesland for his briefing, which, as he said, sets out a very bleak picture of the situation on the ground. Last month (see S/PV.9174), he warned that 2022 was on course to become the deadliest year for Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory since the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) began documenting in 2005. Unfortunately, as the situation in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continues to deteriorate, we are moving quickly and closer to that sobering reality.

We are deeply disturbed by the continued reports of the use of excessive force by Israeli security forces. OCHA has reported that, between 25 October and 7 November alone, 15 Palestinians, including three children, were killed by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank. The continued killing of children is reprehensible. Ireland deplores all attacks against civilians, both in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territory. We condemn in the strongest terms the attacks on civilians with explosive devices in Jerusalem last week, in which two people were killed, as well as the recent stabbings in which three Israeli citizens were killed near the settlement of Ariel. Terrorism and violence are never justified and serve only to increase tensions at a time when urgent de-escalation should be the priority.

Every month for the past two years in this Chamber, Ireland has reiterated the urgent need for a just, inclusive and lasting solution to the conflict. Regrettably, the prospects for meaningful negotiations between the parties on realizing a two-State solution are as remote today as when we joined the Security Council two years ago. It is equally clear that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory is unsustainable and is likely to deteriorate further if we do not establish a genuine political horizon. I would like to emphasize a number of issues that undermine prospects for resumed negotiations that would enable the realization of a

two-State solution and the right of Palestinians to self-determination.

In particular, today we wish to stress the urgent need for accountability in the occupied Palestinian territory. Accountability is a cornerstone of a political horizon and a meaningful peace process. The pervasive culture of impunity in response to the excessive use of force by Israeli security forces, as well as to incidents of settler violence, is deeply concerning. As long as that culture of impunity persists and the root causes of conflict remain unaddressed, conflict and violence will continue throughout the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel.

Ireland calls for accountability in respect of all civilian deaths. We reiterate our call for an independent investigation into the killing of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. We note the decision by the United States to conduct its own investigation into Abu Akleh's death and that it has been welcomed by the Palestinian Authority and by her family. We also underline the need for a full, independent investigation into the death of Palestinian human rights defender and activist Nizar Banat, following his arrest by Palestinian Authority security forces.

Moreover, against the backdrop of the deteriorating situation on the ground, it is important that the international community support Palestinian efforts in seeking legal responses to the occupation. In that regard, Ireland welcomed the adoption by the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly of draft resolution A/C.4/77/L.12/Rev.1, which included a request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

The issue of Israeli settlements is also a fundamental concern, and I know that we will have the opportunity to address it in more detail next month. Ireland remains deeply concerned about the developments in Masafer Yatta, including the recent demolition by Israeli security forces of a donor-funded school. Let me reiterate that Ireland urges Israel to cease evictions and demolitions, including of donor-funded structures, in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law.

The ongoing Israeli blockade continues to exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. UNICEF has reported that more than 1 million children in Gaza today have constrained access to essential services, including food, water, education and health care. We renew our call on Israel to lift the blockade of Gaza.

We deplore Israel's continued refusal to grant visas for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other United Nations staff, which further restricts vital human rights and humanitarian engagement. We also remain alarmed by the reduced space for civil society and non-governmental organizations in the occupied Palestinian territory.

We commend the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for its vital support to Palestine refugees throughout the region and strongly welcome the recent renewal of its mandate for three years, until 30 June 2026.

Finally, let me reiterate that — for the rest of its Council term and beyond — Ireland will continue to call for accountability for all civilian deaths. Ireland stands ready to support all efforts to achieve a just and lasting two-State solution based on international law. That represents the only sustainable prospect for enabling Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace — a peace that is both urgent and very long overdue.

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

I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East relating to the question of Palestine and commend him for his efforts in fulfilling his mandate.

It is regrettable that, after many decades of the Security Council's engagement on this question, today's briefing continues to show that we are far from meeting our aspirations. Ghana remains deeply concerned about the lack of progress in finding a just and lasting solution to the protracted conflict and the deteriorating security situation in the West Bank and other towns in the occupied Palestinian territories, caused by communal violence, arbitrary arrests and detentions — mostly of young Palestinians — as well as demolitions and the building of new settlements by Israeli settlers, and political and social unrest in the occupied Palestinian territory. We are equally concerned about the sharp increase in violent attacks on unarmed Israeli civilians, which has resulted in fatalities and the kidnapping of innocent Israelis in Jerusalem and other Israeli settlements.

The current situation in the region negatively affects not only the lives of Israelis and Palestinians, but also millions of people in the Middle East region and many others all over the world who are denied the

benefits of the natural and human resources the region is blessed with.

Ghana remains concerned about the dire humanitarian situation faced by Palestinian refugees across the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. It is regrettable that children, women and the aged continue to suffer the most devastating impact of protracted conflicts. We join others in condemning the recent increase in the spate of violent clashes across the Middle East region, which, according to UNICEF, has caused untold suffering and fatalities of children in the region. We emphasize the need to ease humanitarian access in order to enable inhabitants in the occupied Palestinian territories to access basic supplies and a dignified life, as a shared international responsibility, pending a just and durable solution in accordance with international law, including the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

We commend the efforts of all the humanitarian agencies on the ground, particularly the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and its staff, for working under difficult circumstances to provide critical assistance to the Palestinian refugees, especially the elderly, women and children, who constitute those most vulnerable in the Agency's area of operations.

We express our solidarity with the families of at least 21 persons who were killed and injured when a fire tore through an apartment complex in the crowded Jabaliya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. In that regard, we welcome the Israeli authorities' offer, in response to a request from the Palestinian Authority, to lift Gaza's normal travel restrictions in order to allow survivors to seek medical treatment in Israel.

We call on the leadership of Israel and of Palestine and on all stakeholders in the region to work towards good-neighbourliness and to continue to engage in a meaningful and transparent manner for significant policy changes on both sides.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Ghana's commitment to the Council's collective aspiration for Israel and Palestine to live peacefully, side by side and as two sovereign States, with East Jerusalem as the shared capital. We look forward to renewed and constructive dialogue on a political horizon that can ultimately lead to the two-State solution.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite the Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.