



# Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

**9400**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Monday, 21 August 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield . . . . . (United States of America)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil . . . . .	Mr. França Danese
China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. Pérez Loose
France . . . . .	Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault
Gabon . . . . .	Mr. Biang
Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Nyarku
Japan . . . . .	Mrs. Shino
Malta . . . . .	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Fernandes
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Polyanskiy
Switzerland . . . . .	Mrs. Chanda
United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mrs. Alhefeiti
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 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:** I brief the Council today as the concerning trends we have seen in recent months continue throughout the occupied Palestinian territory.

Palestinians and Israelis are killed and injured in near-daily violence, including just hours before this briefing, when another fatal shooting attack killed an Israeli in the West Bank. This violence is fuelled and exacerbated by a growing sense of despair about the future. While the parties have taken some actions towards stabilizing the situation on the ground, unilateral steps, including settlement growth and demolitions, continue, as do Israeli operations in Area C, Palestinian militant activity and settler violence. The lack of progress towards a political horizon that addresses the core issues driving the conflict has left a dangerous and volatile vacuum, filled by extremists on all sides. We are a long way from the sentiment that prevailed when the Oslo Accords were signed 30 years ago, on 19 August.

Between 25 July and 15 August, 16 Palestinians, including five children, were killed, and 59 Palestinians, including six women and 137 children, were injured by Israeli security forces in the occupied West Bank during demonstrations, clashes, search-and-arrest operations, attacks and alleged attacks against Israelis and other incidents. Another Palestinian was killed and eight others, including one child, were injured by Israeli settlers and other civilians in shooting attacks, stone-throwing and other incidents. According to Israeli sources, one member of Israeli security forces was killed, and nine Israelis, including a woman and a child, were injured by Palestinians in shooting attacks, stone-throwing and other incidents.

As in previous months, many Palestinian casualties in the West Bank occurred in the context of Israeli operations and clashes in Area A. On 26 July and from 11 to 15 August, five Palestinians, including a 16-year-old and a 17-year-old, were killed by Israeli security forces in refugee camps near Nablus, Tulkarem and Jericho.

Israeli security forces also killed three Palestinians on 6 August, including a 15-year-old boy, near Jenin, when Israeli security forces opened fire on their vehicle. According to a statement by Israeli security agencies, the three intended to carry out an imminent attack against Israelis. All were claimed as members by Palestinian militant groups. In another incident, a 13-year-old boy died by an improvised explosive device in Qalqilya on 26 July.

Palestinians also carried out attacks or alleged attacks against Israelis. On 25 July, three Palestinians claimed by Hamas opened fire towards an Israeli checkpoint near the Mount Gerizim community, in the northern West Bank, and were shot and killed by Israeli security forces. On 1 August, a Palestinian shot and injured six Israelis at a shopping mall in Ma'ale Adumim, near Jerusalem, before being killed by Israeli security forces. The same day, Israeli security forces shot and killed a 15-year-old Palestinian boy who allegedly attempted to stab two Israeli soldiers near a settlement, south of Hebron. On 5 August, a Palestinian from Jenin shot and killed a municipal patrolman in Tel Aviv, before being killed by a second patrolman.

Turning to settler violence, on 2 August an Israeli guard of the Ofra settlement fatally wounded a 17-year-old Palestinian after he reportedly threw a Molotov cocktail towards the settlement. On 4 August, armed Israeli settlers from the nearby outpost of Ramat Migron approached Burqa village near Ramallah, leading to stone-throwing confrontations with Palestinians. Settlers fired live ammunition, killing a 19-year-old Palestinian and injuring another. One Israeli was injured by Palestinians throwing stones. Israel police arrested two Israelis on suspicion of involvement in the killing. Six Palestinians were also arrested. Two days prior, settlers from the same outpost reportedly installed a tent and grazed sheep on private Palestinian land near the village.

As the violence spirals, I again reiterate that all perpetrators must be held accountable and swiftly brought to justice. Violence against civilians, including

acts of terror, are unacceptable and must be condemned and rejected by all. Security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when strictly unavoidable to protect life.

Turning to settlement-related developments, on 3 August, the Israeli Supreme Court dismissed a petition to dismantle an outpost established in the former settlement of Homesh, in the northern West Bank, evacuated as part of the 2005 Disengagement Law. The outpost had been set up following an amendment to that law by the Israeli Knesset in March, lifting the ban on Israelis entering the area. On 7 August, the Jerusalem District Planning Committee advanced plans for approximately 2,000 housing units in the settlements of Nof Zion and Ramat Alon in East Jerusalem. On 14 August, Israeli security forces demolished four structures in an outpost near Kokhav HaShahar settlement in the West Bank. I reiterate that all settlements are illegal under international law and a substantial obstacle to peace.

Israeli authorities demolished, seized or forced owners to demolish 58 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and six in East Jerusalem, displacing 28 Palestinians, including 14 children. The demolitions were carried out owing to the lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain.

On 17 August, a Palestinian elementary school in Ein Samiya serving nearly 80 pupils was demolished days before the start of the school year — the third such demolition in the past year. I call on Israeli authorities to end demolitions of Palestinian-owned property and the displacement and eviction of Palestinians and to approve additional plans that would enable Palestinians to build legally and address their development needs.

In July, Israel ended the additional monthly deductions of some \$14 million from Palestinian clearance revenues which began in February. Some \$14 million continues to be withheld each month in line with an Israeli law mandating the withholding of what Israel says the Palestinian Authority (PA) pays to perpetrators of attacks against Israelis or their families.

The PA's fiscal state remains dire with a projected deficit of more than \$370 million for 2023. Austerity measures have resulted in significant reductions to civil servant salaries and social assistance.

Meanwhile, funding shortages continue to curtail United Nations agencies' ability to provide crucial services to Palestinians. To get through the end of the year, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) needs \$35 million urgently to maintain food assistance for 1.2 million Palestinians in Gaza, while the World Food Programme requires \$41 million to restore its operations across the occupied Palestinian territory.

It is worrisome that, more than halfway through 2023, the humanitarian appeal for Palestinians throughout the occupied Palestinian territory is funded at just over 30 per cent. I encourage Member States to maintain and increase their funding to United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners to ensure that they can continue delivering vital services on the ground.

On 30 July, President Mahmoud Abbas chaired a meeting of Secretaries-General of Palestinian factions in El Alamein, Egypt, which he convened following the major Israeli military operation in Jenin. Senior officials from Hamas and other Palestinian factions participated, while the Palestinian Islamic Jihad refused to attend. In a subsequent statement, President Abbas called for a follow-up committee to complete dialogue on the issues discussed to “end divisions and achieve Palestinian national unity”.

On 10 August, President Abbas issued a presidential decree, retiring 12 out of the 16 PA governors and establishing a committee to recommend candidates to the President for selection. On 14 August, following a consultative meeting organized by Hamas, the movement welcomed the call by factions to hold local elections in Gaza.

In Gaza, the cessation of hostilities continues to hold. Nevertheless, the humanitarian situation remains dire. The reporting period saw higher-than-normal electricity shortages of up to 12 hours per day, driven by a lack of capacity to meet soaring demand during the summer. On 1 August, the Gaza power plant increased electricity supply by nearly two hours a day thanks to additional funding from Qatar. The power cuts sparked popular protests directed at Hamas authorities over living conditions, with thousands of Palestinians taking to the streets on 30 July. Video images of Hamas security forces beating protesters circulated widely. The protests were matched by Hamas-led counterprotests against the Israeli closure regime.

In violation of Palestinian law and the State of Palestine's international obligations, seven civilians in Gaza were sentenced to death for collaboration with Israel after a Hamas military appeals court upheld and strengthened previous sentences. I echo the Secretary-General in highlighting that the United Nations opposes the imposition of the death penalty in all circumstances.

Turning to the region, on the Golan, the ceasefire between Israel and Syria has been generally maintained. However, the situation has remained volatile owing to continued violations of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement of Forces by both parties. In Lebanon, violent clashes in the Ein Al-Hilweh Palestine refugee camp between Fatah and Islamist factions have led to at least 13 fatalities, with over 50 people injured. I echo the messages of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon in urging all actors to exercise restraint and to avoid any further violence.

As tensions along the Blue Line continue, including with respect to the disputed Sheba'a Farms and Al-Ghajar, I urge political leaders in Lebanon and Israel to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric. I further urge the parties to continue their close engagement with the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon to defuse tensions and avoid any escalation, in addition to upholding their respective obligations under resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006).

Since my most recent briefing (see S/PV.9361), we have witnessed the continuation of the negative trajectory that has marked this conflict for far too long. Violence continues on the upswing, with over 200 Palestinian and nearly 30 Israeli fatalities in the West Bank and Israel thus far this year, already surpassing 2022's annual figures and the highest figures since 2005. Settlement expansion continues unabated. The fragility of the PA fiscal situation, compounded by funding shortages facing key United Nations agencies, threatens to worsen the plight of the most vulnerable Palestinians.

While we must urgently focus on addressing the most critical issues and on de-escalation of the situation on the ground, we cannot ignore the need to restore a political horizon. The United Nations remains firmly committed to supporting the parties to achieve an end to the occupation and the establishment of a two-State solution, in line with United Nations resolutions, international law and previous agreements.

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

I would like to draw the attention of speakers to paragraph 22 of the note contained in document S/2017/507, which encourages all participants in Council meetings to deliver their statements in five minutes or less, in line with the Security Council's commitment to making more effective use of open meetings.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing.

The United States remains deeply concerned about violence in the West Bank and Israel. And we express our condolences to those injured or killed in the past month.

We strongly condemn Palestinian terrorist attacks against Israelis, including this morning's shooting attack near Hebron, the 19 August attack outside Huwara, which killed a father and son, and the 5 August attack in Tel Aviv, which killed an Israeli police officer. We condemn the reckless launch of rockets by militants in the West Bank, a deeply troubling event, and strongly condemn the terror attacks by settlers in Burqa on 4 August, which killed a 19-year-old Palestinian. We note Israel has made several arrests and expect accountability and justice to be pursued with equal vigour in all cases of violent extremism, whether the perpetrators are Palestinian militants or extremist Israeli settlers.

The escalating violence underscores the need for the parties to take immediate steps to de-escalate and restore calm. We encourage Israeli and Palestinian security forces to increase their cooperation to improve the security situation in the West Bank.

We urge all parties to take proactive measures to counter all forms of violence and incitement to violence and to refrain from actions that inflame tensions, including settlement activity, evictions, the demolition of Palestinian homes, terrorism, incitement to violence and payments to the families of terrorists. I would also like to take a moment to urge Hamas to return the remains of Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin and release the two Israelis who are currently being held captive by Hamas in Gaza.

The United States remains deeply concerned by the damage inflicted on the Jenin camp, including the damage done to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) installations as a result of the July Israeli security force operation. At this perilous moment, it is imperative that UNRWA be able to continue its life-saving work. I would like to thank those who have generously supported the UNRWA flash appeal. We must all make meaningful and early contributions. UNRWA faces a funding shortfall, and supportive statements by Governments are all too often not accompanied by contributions. We strongly encourage Member States to join us in funding UNRWA so that people in need can receive support and cope with rising food prices, and so that UNRWA can continue to provide education and health care. At the same time, we will continue to insist that UNRWA strengthen its effectiveness and financial sustainability, and we will continue to bolster the Agency's accountability and transparency.

The United States also remains deeply concerned by Hizbullah's provocative actions along the Blue Line, which represent an increasing threat to Lebanon's peace and security and to Israel's. We are committed to extending a robust United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon mission that is capable of performing its duties independently of the Lebanese Armed Forces. As part of the mandate renewal discussions, we must address the activities of Green without Borders, which has provided support and cover for Hizbullah's operations in southern Lebanon along the Blue Line. The United States Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions on Green without Borders and its leaders last week for those activities and related actions, and we made clear when announcing those sanctions that we will continue to support Lebanese civil society groups that protect Lebanon's natural environment, while also relentlessly pursuing Hizbullah and their support networks. We will remain vigilant concerning Iran's support for Hizbullah and other militia groups that carry out destabilizing activities in the region.

The United States continues to promote efforts to lower tensions and restore goodwill. We continue to support a two-State solution and to believe that good-faith dialogue is the best path to stability, and we appreciate our partners in the region that join the United States in facilitating discussions between the parties. Today I would like to acknowledge the appointment of the Saudi Arabian ambassador to Jordan as non-resident

consul general in Jerusalem. We stand ready to be supportive of any and all efforts that will bring us closer to a two-State solution. The bottom line is that Israelis and Palestinians deserve equal measures of security, prosperity and freedom, and we will continue to work towards those goals in tangible ways in the immediate term. Therefore, let us keep at it, let us work together and let us do everything in our power to advance a comprehensive, just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing.

The United Kingdom is extremely alarmed by the growth of settler violence in the occupied Palestinian territories. United Nations agencies have recorded 591 settler-related incidents resulting in Palestinian casualties, property damage or both to date in 2023 — the highest monthly average of incidents since records began. That includes the murder by settlers of Palestinian Qusai Jamal Maatan, which the United Kingdom condemns. The displacement of more than 400 Palestinians across seven communities from their land due to ongoing settler violence is unacceptable. As an occupying Power, Israel is obliged under international humanitarian law to properly provide security for the local population. Israeli authorities must do more to hold to account and hinder the efforts of those who have made the lives of Palestinians intolerable, such as in the communities of Al-Qaboun and Al-Mughayyir, including by thoroughly investigating every incident of settler violence in order to bring those responsible to justice and end the culture of impunity.

The United Kingdom condemns the abhorrent terrorist attacks perpetrated in Tel Aviv on Saturday 5 August, the West Bank town of Huwara on 19 August and the South Hebron hills just today, which took the lives of a further four innocent Israelis. The Palestinian Authority must tackle terrorism and incitement. We also see continued violations of international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territories, including evictions and demolitions. On Friday 17 August, Israel demolished a West Bank Protection Consortium school in Ein Samiya. The continued demolitions of Palestinian property and the evictions by Israeli authorities of Palestinians from their homes are contrary to international humanitarian law, put Palestinians at

risk of forcible transfer, cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians and are harmful to the peace process. Israel must also urgently provide a clear, transparent route to construction for Palestinians in Area C.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) faces a deep funding crisis. UNRWA can only be a stabilizing force in the region while it is able to deliver vital services to Palestinian refugees. We call on Security Council members and Member States to work collectively to fill the critical funding gaps.

**Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Tor Wennesland for his briefing.

France condemns the pursuit of unilateral measures that constitute an obstacle to peace. It condemns the Israeli colonization of Palestinian territories, which contravenes international law and constitutes a major obstacle to peace. France calls on the Israeli Government to stop building new housing in the settlements. The recent decisions taken by the Israeli authorities on settlement in Jerusalem are alarming. France will never recognize the illegal annexation of territories or the legalization of informal settlements. It is also deeply concerned by the continued demolitions in East Jerusalem and the West Bank and condemns Israel's destruction of humanitarian infrastructure in Area C. The demolition on 17 August of the school in Ayn Samir in Ramallah governorate, which is funded by European donors, including France, is unacceptable. International humanitarian law must be respected, and Palestinian children have the right to an education.

France is also alarmed by the forced departure of Palestinian populations in Area C in Ramallah governorate as a result of the recurring attacks carried out by settlers. It recalls that the forcible transfer of populations contravenes the Fourth Geneva Convention. France also condemns all attacks targeting civilians, which are never justified. We deplore the attacks carried out last Saturday at Huwara and last Monday near Hebron, which claimed the lives of three Israeli civilians. France also condemned in the strongest terms the terrorist attack carried out in Tel Aviv on 5 August and reiterates its steadfast commitment to the security of Israel.

The violent acts perpetrated by some Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians with a view to terrorizing them are also unjustifiable and deplorable and must not

go unpunished. Given the risk of escalation, France calls on all parties to exercise maximum restraint. The Security Council has a responsibility to ensure compliance with the resolutions it has adopted, in particular resolution 2334 (2016).

As we approach the thirtieth anniversary of the Oslo Accords, the lack of progress on the ground is fuelling the spiral of violence and jeopardizing international peace and security. Council members must work together to take concrete action to implement a two-State solution, and the first step towards that is re-establishing a credible political horizon. The United Nations has an important role to play in restoring confidence between the parties and relaunching the peace process. It is also essential for regional players to pool their efforts constructively. The normalization of relations between Israel and several States in the region has been contributing to stability and security. But that momentum will be incomplete as long as it is not accompanied by a resumption of the political process towards a solution that meets the legitimate aspirations of both Palestinians and Israelis.

France would also like to point to the vital role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), which contributes to the stability of the region by providing essential humanitarian aid to Palestinian refugees, particularly in terms of security and education. France has significantly increased its financial support to UNRWA since 2018 and calls on all Member States to do the same.

Israelis and Palestinians alike deserve to live in peace and security. France is ready to contribute to any peace initiative that advances a two-State solution.

**Mr. Fernandes** (Mozambique): I thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his update on the situation in the region.

It has been less than a month since the Security Council last met to consider this topic (see S/PV.9387). The situation on the ground remains worrisome, with continued tensions and attacks that have been causing more and more civilian deaths and injuries. Recent data from the Secretary-General's latest report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2023/345) shows that the situation in the region is critical. There are no signs of a reduction in the clashes between Israel and Palestine. Mozambique condemns the escalation of violence in the occupied Palestinian territory and

reiterates its appeal to the Israeli forces to protect and respect lives.

The ongoing dialogue, initiatives and other proposals that may emerge must be encouraged and supported, paving the way for a solution to the crisis in the region. In that regard, the concept of a two-State solution, based on the relevant resolutions and decisions of the Council and the General Assembly, remains a good basis for ensuring the coexistence of the two neighbouring peoples and States, as well as for the peace and stability of the region. We therefore encourage all efforts aimed at a genuine dialogue for peace towards a negotiated political settlement for peaceful coexistence between Israel and Palestine based on the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

We strongly condemn the attacks on and destruction of some settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, which have not only aggravated the humanitarian situation but have led to the loss of many lives, the destruction of property and dismay for the many families affected. Another matter of concern is the limited operations and activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The Agency, whose work is vital to peace and stability, continues to face a lack of funds and resources to support all core services. There are therefore millions of Palestinian refugees at risk of not benefiting from essential services. In that regard, Mozambique urges regional actors and the international community, including the private sector at large, to work urgently to join their efforts in order to provide the Agency with the financial support it needs.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our appeal to the members of the Council to redouble their role in influencing and advocating for a sustainable solution to the Palestinian situation, in full compliance with the relevant resolutions, decisions and other instruments of the United Nations.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for his briefing today. As has been the case with many of his previous briefings recently, we have heard no encouraging news or progress. The Security Council has held innumerable meetings on this issue, too many to count. All I know is that the question of Palestine has dragged on for more than 70 years and remains unresolved. In the current circumstances, we must rely on firm political

will, effective diplomatic action and resolute collective efforts to prevent the Palestinian-Israeli situation from getting completely out of control and to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the question of Palestine.

First, it is imperative to oppose violence and incitement to violence and to earnestly uphold international law. The situation on the ground has remained tense for some time, with negative incidents happening in quick succession and leading to escalations of violence and civilian casualties. More than 40 Palestinian children have been killed since the beginning of this year, and we are deeply concerned about that. We condemn all violence against civilians and the killing and abuse of children, and we oppose the excessive use of force by security forces. All the parties concerned must exercise calm and restraint, and the occupying Power should earnestly fulfil its obligations under international law and ensure the safety and security of the population and their property in the occupied territory. The barbaric expansion of settlements continues to change the status quo in the occupied territory, in violation of international law and Council resolutions, and is further exacerbating the confrontation between Palestine and Israel. We urge for an end to all settlement activities and to the escalating settler violence. The holy sites in Jerusalem have a bearing on the religious sentiments of the followers. We must take a clear stand against irresponsible provocation and incitement and earnestly respect the historical status quo of the holy sites and Jordan's custodianship of them.

Secondly, it is essential to promote economic development and protect people's livelihoods effectively. The prolonged occupation has severely constrained Palestinian economic and social development and the volatile security situation has made Palestinians' lives worse. We call on Israel to ease and lift its unreasonable restrictions on the movement of goods and the use of land in the occupied territory, create conditions conducive to the development of the Palestinian communities in the West Bank and lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip as soon as possible. We urge the international community to pay attention to and support the needs of the Palestinian economy and its people's livelihoods, provide humanitarian assistance and help Palestinians alleviate the financial crisis. China signed an agreement last week with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near

East on an annual contribution and will continue to provide humanitarian and development assistance to Palestine and support the work of the Agency.

Thirdly, it is important to fulfil international commitments and earnestly promote the concept of a two-State solution. Managing the crisis in piecemeal fashion is unsustainable, and the fundamental solution to the Palestinian question lies in the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with full sovereignty, based on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. The international community must place the question of Palestine higher on the international agenda. The United Nations and the Security Council must take forceful action to advance the two-State solution with a sense of urgency, shoulder their responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations and earnestly uphold fairness and justice. China welcomes the recent tripartite summit held between Egypt, Jordan and Palestine and supports the convening of a larger, more authoritative and more influential international peace conference to create conditions for the resumption of peace talks.

China is ready to continue to work with the international community to make unremitting efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine at an early date and promote lasting peace and stability in the Middle East.

**Mr. Biang** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Tor Wennesland, for his briefing.

Since our previous meeting on 27 July (see S/PV.9387), security incidents involving civilians have continued. The terrible toll cited by Special Coordinator Wennesland in his briefing is particularly shocking in terms of the number of victims and deaths. We condemn all acts of violence, which hamper the construction of a lasting peace between Palestinians and Israelis and push the prospect of a two-State solution further away. The continued expansion of settlements, demolitions and expulsions — particularly in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem — constitute another major obstacle to building a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. They are clear violations of international law that must be stopped. As for the absurd practice of detaining the remains of those killed, we call for them to be returned to their families in Palestine and Israel, respectively.

It is essential to respect the status quo of Jerusalem's holy sites and the crucial role of the Hashemite Kingdom

of Jordan as their official custodian. We deplore the increase in violence targeting the Christian community in Israel, particularly in their places of worship and cemeteries. It is important for the international community to ensure that the Israeli-Palestinian crisis does not sow the seeds of antagonism between the three monotheistic religions.

The situation in Gaza remains fragile, even though the latest ceasefire is being respected to a certain extent. Despite some easing of restrictions on access to Gaza, the blockade must be lifted by Israel in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009) in order to facilitate unimpeded access for the delivery of humanitarian aid.

On 17 August, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs announced that a primary school for Palestinian children had been demolished in the West Bank region of Ein Samiya, just a few days before the start of the new school year. According to UNICEF, three schools have been demolished across the West Bank in the past 12 months. We call for schools to be sanctuaries. We also reiterate our call for maintaining funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Without that financial support, vulnerable civilian populations risk losing access to health-care services, education and food. Such a situation would only dramatically increase social unrest on the ground, as well as poverty and violence, particularly gender-based violence, including in refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

With regard to the inter-Palestinian dialogue, we welcome the decision taken by the political authorities on 30 July following a meeting in Egypt, which was attended by the President of the Palestinian Authority and the leader of Hamas, to form a committee with the aim of putting an end to the 17-year division of the occupied territories.

I wish to conclude by reiterating Gabon's call for restraint, a cessation of hostilities and dialogue, stressing the need to respect international law, particularly international humanitarian law, and for ensuring the protection of the rights of the Palestinian people while guaranteeing Israel's security. We urge the parties to respect the relevant Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2334 (2016), and to implement the commitments made in Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh.

**Mrs. Chanda** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr Tor Wennesland, for his

briefing. In the light of his presentation, the Security Council must firmly reiterate its calls for de-escalation and the protection of the civilian population in the Middle East conflict.

The year 2022 was the deadliest year for Palestinian civilians in the West Bank since the United Nations began recording cases in the conflict, yet that tragic record has already been broken this month. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, twice as many Palestinian civilians died in the West Bank in the first seven months of 2023 than in the same period last year, either during operations carried out by Israeli security forces or due to violence committed by settlers. At the same time, 24 Israeli civilians lost their lives as a result of acts of violence perpetrated by Palestinians. Switzerland condemns all acts of violence against civilians.

It must be acknowledged that the Council's unanimous adoption of presidential statement S/PRST/2023/1 in February has not yet borne fruit. The commitments subsequently made by the parties must be followed urgently by action. Switzerland calls on the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to make an unequivocal commitment to de-escalation, address the root causes of the conflict and restore a political horizon with a view to achieving a negotiated two-State solution. With that in mind, we call on all parties to respect international law and refrain from any unilateral measures, acts of provocation or inflammatory language that could fuel the conflict and constitute an obstacle to peace.

Such obstacles include the acceleration of settlement development in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. We recall that settlements are illegal under international law, and Israel must refrain from taking measures that would introduce permanent changes, in particular demographic and administrative changes, in the occupied territory. In that context, the displacement of communities — such as the recent displacement of 89 Palestinians, including 39 children, in Ras Al-Tin following violence by settlers and coercive measures by Israel — could constitute forced transfers, which are likely to further inflame tensions. We remind Israel of its responsibility to protect the occupied population.

Switzerland encourages the continuation of discussions between the Palestinian parties aimed at restoring their political unity. Combined with other measures, such as the holding of elections at all levels,

such a process would help to reverse the continuing weakening of the Palestinian Authority, the loss of legitimacy of its institutions and the erosion of the provision of essential services to the population.

In that respect, we are concerned about the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation, particularly in the Gaza Strip. The financial difficulties of the World Food Programme and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are worrisome and must be addressed as soon as possible. We hope that the ministerial meeting on UNRWA to be held in New York in September will help to stabilize the Agency's financial situation.

**Mrs. Shino** (Japan): I thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for his briefing.

As we just heard from Mr. Wennesland, we have seen a significant surge of violence in the West Bank in the absence of a tangible peace process. Japan is deeply troubled by the operations of the Israeli forces, including the recent raid in Jericho, which led to the killing of two Palestinians, including a 16-year-old boy. At the same time, we were shocked to learn about the murder of an Israeli security guard, shot by a Palestinian gunman in Tel Aviv earlier this month. Japan strongly condemns all acts of terrorism and the targeting of innocent people and emphasizes the importance of the protection of civilians, especially children. All perpetrators of heinous crimes must be held accountable. Unilateral actions, such as Israel's illegal settlement activities and demolitions of Palestinian homes, as well as acts of terror by Palestinian militants, only fuel tensions on the ground and take us further away from a sustainable solution.

We urge all the parties to exercise maximum restraint and commit to de-escalation. As we have repeatedly stressed, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be resolved only through direct talks and negotiations between the parties. We acknowledge the recent meeting in Egypt that explored reconciliation efforts among Palestinian factions and encourage the continuation of such diplomatic engagements aimed at bringing the parties together and contributing meaningfully to the revitalization of a comprehensive peace process in the region. There is ultimately no alternative to a two-State solution whereby Israel and Palestine can coexist peacefully side by side, in line with internationally agreed parameters, including resolution 2334 (2016).

Japan will never cease its efforts to achieve peace and stability in the region.

Despite some recent generous contributions and pledges, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is still facing significant funding shortages, which may limit its ability to provide life-saving support to Palestine refugees. After last month's Israeli military incursion in Jenin, President Abbas has vowed to help rebuild the refugee camp there. Last week Japan was proud to announce its new grant of humanitarian assistance, in cooperation with UNRWA, amounting to \$1 million in the areas of sanitation, health and response to unexploded ordnance, which will contribute meaningfully to those efforts.

**Mr. França Danese** (Brazil): I thank Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing.

As previous speakers described, the security situation in Israel and Palestine has deteriorated markedly since the beginning of the year, with tensions escalating to alarming levels. Tragically, the civilian population continues to suffer the most, receiving the brunt of the conflict and paying an unacceptably heavy toll. Brazil condemns all acts of violence against civilians, whether Israeli or Palestinian, and particularly deplores the disproportionate use of force. Terrorism, in any form or manifestation, is also unacceptable and we deeply condemn and reject it.

The first step here is clear — all the parties must exercise maximum restraint and uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure. The fact that those obligations continue to be ignored is cause for profound concern and keeps fuelling the conflict. The escalating Israeli military actions have heightened tensions and left a trail of suffering and destruction in the West Bank. The frequent violent raids, such as those recently carried out in Jericho and the Tulkarem refugee camp, are deeply concerning. An ever-present risk looms, as events in the West Bank may spill into Gaza, where the humanitarian situation continues to worsen, exacerbated by the ongoing blockade. The importance of advancing confidence-building measures cannot be overstated. Regrettably, the commitments made in Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh to refraining from provocative unilateral actions and pursuing de-escalation measures remain unfulfilled.

The expansion of settlements, especially following recent decisions by the Israeli Government, obstructs peace, fuels violence and aggravates humanitarian needs. Displacement resulting from settler violence has been increasing, according to reports from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Israeli settlements are illegal under international law, as outlined in resolution 2334 (2016), which condemns all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian territory. What we are witnessing is a complete disregard for the Council's resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations. Brazil calls on the Government of Israel to end all settlement activities and concentrate on building lasting peace in the region, based firmly on international law.

On the other hand, intra-Palestinian reconciliation, together with efforts aimed at improving living conditions in the West Bank and Gaza, is crucial to advancing a path to peace. Success in that area is tied to sustainable economic growth. We must recognize the significant role that poverty, food insecurity and widespread despair play in creating fertile ground for extremist forces. Addressing those outstanding issues is essential. The low funding levels for United Nations appeals underscore that there has been a decline in the capacity of international humanitarian assistance, even amid severe crises on multiple fronts. Yet the humanitarian situation of Palestinian refugees remains critical. Restoring the capabilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is vital to enabling it to continue its indispensable work.

In the end, only a two-State solution, based on international law and supported by the whole international community, will bring the peace and progress that Israelis and Palestinians deserve, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security, within mutually agreed and internationally recognized borders. It is about time that we accomplished that and moved on to other pressing and ever-growing challenges. But in the current volatile scenario, it will be crucial to exercise restraint and avoid any actions that might escalate tensions or provoke further violence. Despite the formidable challenges, we must redouble our efforts to advance the cause of peace and reconciliation.

**Mrs. Alhefeiti** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Tor Wennesland for his valuable briefing.

The deteriorating conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including events that have occurred in the past few days, are an inevitable result of the lack of a political settlement between Palestinians and Israelis. The ongoing clashes, incursions and acts of violence have become a bitter daily reality for Palestinians. We are increasingly worried about the consequences of the ongoing escalation, not just for the security and stability of the two peoples immediately concerned but for the entire region.

The United Arab Emirates is of the view that it is high time for the international community to bring its full weight to bear in dealing with the Palestinian question as a priority dossier. We must intensify the efforts to rebuild confidence among the parties and resume serious and effective negotiations based on the agreed international terms of reference, foremost among them the concept of a two-State solution. We stress that a just, comprehensive and lasting peace cannot be achieved by inciting violence and hate speech. It requires the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence that we have called for many times, particularly in this Chamber, with a view to ending the enmity and establishing a safe and stable future that responds to the aspirations of present and future generations.

We also call for an end to all illegal and repressive practices against Palestinians and Palestinian towns and villages, especially the growing aggressions in the occupied West Bank, including incursions, forced displacement and the demolition of homes. That serves only to increase tensions and undermine peace efforts.

With the return of students to their schools, we stress the rights of Palestinian children's rights to a safe education, which means putting an end to the terrorism and violence that are perpetrated by Israeli authorities and settlers against students while they are on their way to school, present in school and returning home from school. We also stress the need to stop unjust demolitions of schools, such as the demolition conducted last week at Ain Samiya in the West Bank a few days before the beginning of the school year. Demolition notices for scores of other schools must also be cancelled, as we all believe that the role of education is essential for building stable and prosperous communities, in particular those affected by conflicts.

The violence perpetrated by settlers has reached unprecedented levels, with the dangerous patterns seen in Ramallah, Nablus and surrounding villages this year that led to the killing and injuring of Palestinians and damage to property as well. Meanwhile, settlers enjoy immunity, which encourages them to continue to carry out such appalling and unacceptable crimes. The continued attacks threaten to provoke more dangerous clashes and a state of total chaos, with uncontrollable consequences. That is why it is essential for Israel to take genuine steps to put an end to settlers' violence and deter their acts of aggression. We once again reiterate the need to preserve the current legal and historical status of the city of Jerusalem and its holy sites. Repeated incursions into Al-Aqsa Mosque must end, and it must be ensured full protection. The role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan must be respected as the custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem. In that context, we express our concern over the repeated attempts to change the demographic constitution of Jerusalem. Israel continues to build illegal settlements in East Jerusalem, while Palestinians there continue to be subjected to attempts to expel them. As for the laws that are imposed on them, they must be repealed.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates reiterates its support for the fraternal Palestinian people, including through providing them with humanitarian needs and alleviating the harsh living conditions of refugees. We continue our solidarity with Palestinians in terms of their right to self-determination and the creation of an independent Palestinian State along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace, security and mutual recognition.

**Mr. Nyarku** (Ghana): I thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East, which gives much cause for concern.

We regret that the period under consideration witnessed some of the worst violent clashes in recent times and that, despite the overwhelming desire around the world for peace in the Middle East, especially in the occupied Palestinian territories, the actions on the ground manifest the contrary. We join others in condemning the surge in acts of violence by both sides against civilians, including acts of terror. As we look forward to the thirtieth anniversary of the Oslo Accords on 13 September, Ghana remains deeply concerned about the lack of progress in finding a just and lasting

solution to the protracted dispute and the achievement of a two-State solution. It is regrettable that 30 years after the Oslo Accords, Israelis and Palestinians are farther apart on reaching an agreement than ever before.

We hold that the two-State solution remains the only realistic path for a lasting peace between Israel and Palestine and urge action to address three issues that undermine the viability of the two-State solution.

First, we must help stop the interminable cycle of violence and the increase in settler-related clashes, which have been the norm over the past eight months. As reported by the United Nations, the past eight months have seen the highest number of settler-related incidents across the Middle East, compared to all of last year. As the United Nations indicates, 591 settler-related incidents resulting in Palestinian casualties, property damage or both were recorded in the first half of 2023. Furthermore, we share the concern of UNICEF about the demolition of Palestinian-owned properties across the West Bank in the past 12 months, and we also reiterate our call for Israel to stop the advancement of settlement activities, halt all evictions from and demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures and respect Palestinian children's right to education.

Secondly, the increasing frequency and intensity of security operations by Israeli security forces using sophisticated weapons and live ammunition have been accompanied by the widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure and private property and the arbitrary arrest and detention of mostly Palestinian young people in Gaza, Jenin and other refugee camps in the occupied Palestinian territories. That mode of operation, while aimed at ensuring the security of Israel, has led to the greatest number of Palestinian fatalities and injuries to children and unarmed civilians and has contributed to the current situation of insecurity in the region. We therefore call on the Israeli security forces to undertake all security operations in a transparent manner, exercise restraint and adhere to the principles of proportionality and distinction during their security operations in the West Bank and other parts of the occupied Palestinian territories. We are equally concerned about the sharp increase in violent attacks on unarmed Israeli civilians, which have resulted in fatalities, the kidnapping of innocent Israelis in Jerusalem and other Israeli settlements, and the regular firing of rockets into Israeli communities that have harmed innocent Israeli citizens. We would like to reiterate our position that attacks by terrorist or militant groups against innocent

Israeli citizens will not advance the cause of Palestine. The Security Council must act to protect all civilians.

Last but not least, we urge for an abatement of the increasing number of provocative remarks and acts and the adoption of radical policies on matters that affect the well-being of both Israeli and Palestinian citizens. We encourage the direct engagement of the parties in order to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights, while ensuring the security of the State of Israel. We hold that any agreement that settles the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will ultimately require the leaders in Jerusalem and Ramallah to engage with one another. We therefore urge the parties to sustain communications and de-escalate the situation on the ground.

Finally, as we have stated before, the fate of Palestine and Israel has been woven together by history and the Council's previous decisions. It is evident that the only acceptable solution continues to be a two-State solution based on bilateral Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, as envisioned by the Oslo Accords. The Council therefore has an enduring responsibility to support Israel and Palestine to find the peace that will enable them to live side by side, with their interests protected by their adherence to international law.

**Ms. Gatt** (Malta): I thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for briefing us on the current situation.

Malta remains deeply concerned about the increasing frequency of violence, provocations and unilateral decisions, which continue to cause civilian suffering in both the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel. Statistics from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs underline that the scale of violence affecting civilians has resulted in a monthly average of fatalities in the West Bank and Israel that is 85 per cent higher than the monthly average for all of 2022. In that context, we again reiterate that the protection of civilians in conflict and respect for international humanitarian law are fundamental. We also strongly reiterate our call for relevant parties to safeguard lives and in particular the well-being of children who continue to bear too many negative repercussions of the prolonged conflict.

Malta unreservedly condemns all acts of terrorism and extremist violence, which have regrettably continued to take place in recent days and weeks. That also includes extremist settler-related violence, which has intensified in an alarming manner this year.

Furthermore, we remain concerned about the high incidence of Palestinian deaths following military operations in the West Bank and urge the concerned parties to fully respect their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Persistent unilateral actions continue to fuel instability and instigate recognized flash points to the detriment of any real prospects for peace. Malta recalls that settlements are illegal under international law and dangerously imperil the viability of the two-State solution based along the pre-1967 borders. Additionally, demolitions, forced evictions and settler violence have a marked humanitarian toll on Palestinian communities, particularly on herder communities. Within that context, we call for the cessation of settlement expansion and legalization.

Continued provocations and threats to the historic status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem must also cease, as they threaten to ignite tensions with regional repercussions. We emphasize, in that regard, the importance of the special custodianship role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

We welcome attempts being made by Israel's Security Cabinet to introduce economic measures aimed at bolstering the Palestinian Authority.

The Palestinian Authority is also facing internal challenges with increasingly negative trends with regard to the rule of law and fundamental freedoms in areas where the Palestinian Authority is in control and in Gaza. In that regard, we are encouraged to note steps in the context of intra-Palestinian reconciliation, including through the formation of a dedicated committee, as discussed in talks between Palestinian factions on 30 July in Egypt. A stronger and more credible Palestinian Authority as a partner is in everyone's interest. We continue to urge the authorities in Palestine to hold the overdue national elections as soon as possible, as that will be an important sign of strengthening the legitimacy of the Palestinian Authority for the Palestinian people.

Furthermore, we call on Israel and the Palestinian Authority to return to good-faith dialogue and uphold their commitments made related to security coordination.

In the absence of a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East continues to be the strongest pillar of support

for the growing needs of the Palestinian people. In that regard, we remain concerned about the Agency's precarious financial situation, and we highlight the need for the Agency to be provided with predictable and sustained funding.

Recent negative trends clearly indicate that steps towards restoring a political horizon should be the focus of our efforts. Israelis and Palestinians deserve to coexist in freedom, peace and security.

Malta remains committed to the two-State solution as the only just and comprehensive resolution that addresses the legitimate aspirations of both sides.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, for his comprehensive briefing on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Based on what we have heard, it is clear that the ongoing lack of a resolution to the Palestinian issue continues to provoke regular bloody outbreaks of violence in the area of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, creating growing threats to stability and security in the entire Middle East region.

The long-term stagnation of the Middle East peace process is compounded by Israel's ongoing illegal unilateral actions to create irreversible facts on the ground, which negates the prospects for reviving direct negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis on a universally recognized international legal basis with the two-State formula as its central element, which we have consistently supported.

The greatest threats remain the unprecedented pace of Israeli settlement construction and the legalization of outposts in the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as violent Israeli military raids in the West Bank — in Nablus, Jericho and Jenin — as well as systematic violations of the status quo of the holy sites of Jerusalem, in particular through provocative visits by representatives of the Israeli leadership to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

This year, the Israeli authorities used a simplified procedure to approve plans to build more than 12,000 housing units, accompanied by the forced eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in East Jerusalem and Area C in the West Bank, including as a result of illegal actions by settlers. Against that backdrop, the Israeli Government reportedly has approved and

financed a plan to preserve Israeli archaeological sites in Area C in the West Bank in order to “strengthen roots in Judea and Samaria”. Those plans are in direct violation of the Oslo Accords, as well as a number of international treaties on the protection of cultural property in the context of occupation.

This year also risks becoming one of the bloodiest on record, with more than 200 Palestinians already killed, including women and minors, and thousands more wounded. The July Israeli operation in Jenin alone resulted in more than 140 casualties.

Another new threat on the ground is the unprecedented spiral of violence against both Palestinian and Israeli civilians. In that regard, the Israeli Air Force continues to carry out arbitrary strikes on the territory of Syria, including the outskirts of Damascus.

In such explosive conditions, a proper response from the international community is especially needed. In that connection, we are convinced that the planned visit of Secretary-General António Guterres to the area of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is very timely. At the same time, we would like to recall that for many years we have supported all relevant initiatives, including the idea of organizing a Council mission to the Palestinian territories and Israel.

For our part, we have consistently stated that there is no alternative to continuing the necessary efforts, including in the framework of the Middle East Quartet of international mediators, to revive the peace process and direct Palestinian-Israeli negotiations on all final status issues.

In that context, the key element remains the restoration of inter-Palestinian unity on the basis of the Palestine Liberation Organization’s platform. A significant step to that end was made at the 30 July meeting in El Alamein, Egypt, which resulted in a proposal to establish a special committee to continue the dialogue and monitor the implementation of previously reached agreements.

In conclusion, I would like to once again highlight the need to continue to provide comprehensive support to the Palestinians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and neighbouring countries through international humanitarian agencies, led by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, whose activities have not only a humanitarian but

also a political dimension and make a major contribution to stabilizing the situation in the Middle East.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania): I thank you, Madam President, and thank Special Coordinator Wennesland for the update.

It is very disheartening to start, as has occurred many other times, by acknowledging that the situation for civilians in the West Bank and Israel in the past three weeks has not improved. The situation on the ground keeps deteriorating with no end in sight.

It is indeed alarming that the death toll for the past seven months equals the number of deaths that occurred during the entire year of 2022. That represents a heavy and painful toll for both sides, and it is unsustainable.

Albania condemns the killing of an Israeli patrolman, as well as the deadly terror attacks committed in recent days, and reiterates its support for the right of Israel to defend itself in a proportionate manner.

There cannot be any justification for terror, and everyone, in particular the youth, should distance themselves from instigating violence and extremism and condemn terrorism. Terror attacks cannot advance any cause; they only empower extremists, which is the last thing the Middle East peace process needs now or ever.

The events in the Tulkarm refugee camp risk escalating tensions in other areas in the West Bank. The protection of civilians must always be the primary concern, and international humanitarian law must be respected. We condemn the violence of Israeli extremist settlers in the very same way. The lives of Palestinian and Israeli civilians are of equal worth. We welcome the steps taken by the Israel Defense Forces to address settler violence against Palestinians and call for full investigation and for those responsible to be held accountable.

We also reiterate our concern about the plans to expand settlements. We call for the full implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) and the strict observance of international law. All unilateral steps that obstruct peace and the viability of a two-State solution must be withdrawn. We reiterate our call on the parties to commit to de-escalation in deeds as well as words, and to avoid unilateral steps that lead to tension and violence on the ground. In the context of hope for a political horizon, however remote it may seem, violence is not and cannot be a solution, nor can it be a substitute for

justice. The parties must abide by their commitments regarding the implementation of the Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh communiqués, as the best way to bridge the deep and deepening divide.

Albania remains a firm supporter of freedom of religion and belief and of the historic status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem. We commend Jordan in its special custodianship role and call on the parties to refrain from provocative actions that could affect an already tense situation. Let me conclude by joining the call of the Special Coordinator for the political horizon to be restored, as crucial to breaking the current cycle of deadly violence. That perspective is in the hands of both sides. It lies in their will to move ahead, and in their vision for the future — a future that speaks in the same way to Israelis and Palestinians alike, a future in which a viable and democratic Palestine exists alongside a secure Israel and a future that encompasses two States for two peoples, fully entitled to equal safety, security and prosperity.

**Mr. Pérez Loose** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland for the briefing he delivered this morning on the situation in the region and reiterate our support for his important work.

For the fifteenth time this year, the Council has heard a troubling report. Violence, provocation and destruction persist. Earlier this month, for instance, we mourned the death of a Palestinian at the hands of armed Israeli settlers in the West Bank town of Burqa, in addition to that of an Israeli police officer shot by a Palestinian in Tel Aviv. Two arrests were made following the events in Burqa. Last Saturday two Israelis were

killed in Huwara. We condemn those deaths and all acts of terror and violence, regardless of their origin, and we hope to see the perpetrators prosecuted and punished. Responsible political leaders must also clearly and bluntly condemn such acts. Remaining silent about them is reprehensible, and justifying them even more so.

According to information provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 165 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli military forces and 22 Israelis have been killed by Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem between 1 January and 7 August 2023. In the same period and geographic area, seven Palestinians have been killed by Israeli settlers. In that context, if we are to prevent further violence, it is imperative to uphold the Council's demand that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, a demand expressed in 2016 in resolution 2334 (2016). For the same reason, in February the Council once again strongly opposed all unilateral measures that impede peace, including the construction and expansion of settlements, the confiscation of land and the legalization of settlement outposts, the demolition of homes and the displacement of civilians (S/PRST/2023/1). Today we reiterate those calls in the belief that an enduring peace, which is the common goal of all of us in this Chamber, will come about only through a political, peaceful and just solution between the parties, within the framework of international law, with the existence of two States, Palestine and Israel, on the basis of the 1967 borders.

*The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.*