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*The Bulletin can be found in the United Nations Information System
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I. SECURITY COUNCIL CONVENES URGENT MEETING

On 1 March 2008, at the request of Libya (S/2008/142) the Security Council convened an urgent meeting to consider "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". Following the meeting, the President of the Council read out an agreed summary of the discussion. The following is the statement of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon before the Council (S/PV.5847).

...

Since last Wednesday, there has been a deeply alarming escalation of violence in Gaza and southern Israel, and a terrible civilian death toll. The scenes from Gaza today have been particularly disturbing. Some 117 rockets have been fired from Gaza at southern Israel, including 26 rockets today. Those rockets have been fired at several civilian centres and have extended as far north as the Israeli city of Ashkelon. According to press reports and Israeli Government sources, the rockets fired at Ashkelon are not home-made Qassams, but rather rockets of advanced Katyusha-like design, allegedly smuggled into Gaza when the border with Egypt was breached. One Israeli civilian has been killed in Sderot and five civilians were reported injured in Ashkelon today, including women and children.

During this same period, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) have undertaken attacks from the air and by land on targets in the Gaza Strip. An estimated 90 Palestinians have been killed, among them many civilians, and injuries are in the hundreds. According to United Nations estimates, 59 Palestinians were killed today, including 39 civilians, among them three women and five minors, including an infant. Let me stress that there are many conflicting reports on the numbers of casualties, and those figures are not confirmed. Additionally, there has been heavy property damage.

Israeli land incursions are taking place near Jabaliya and the northern Gaza Strip. Two Israeli soldiers are reported to have been killed in the fighting. The IDF reports that it destroyed a truck carrying 160 rockets. United Nations sources report at least four incidents of Israeli fire against ambulances and medical personnel. The Palestinian Ministry of Health has issued a call for diesel in order to operate its ambulances. All schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) have been closed, and many families are trapped inside their houses by the violence, unable to obtain medical aid or reach safety. I call on Israel to facilitate full access to hospitals and medical centres for the injured.

At the outset of this escalation, I publicly made clear my deep concern, and I have been diplomatically engaged to press for a calming of the violence. I have spoken today to Palestinian President Abbas, Israeli Foreign Minister Livni and League of Arab States Secretary-General Amr Moussa. United Nations agencies on the ground, especially UNRWA, are continuing their efforts to assist people in grave distress.

In the light of those deeply disturbing developments, I would like to make the following clear.

I condemn Palestinian rocket attacks and call for the immediate cessation of such

acts of terrorism, which serve no purpose, endanger Israeli civilians and bring misery to the Palestinian people. I call for an end to these attacks.

While recognizing Israel's right to defend itself, I condemn the disproportionate and excessive use of force that has killed and injured so many civilians, including children. I call on Israel to cease such attacks. Israel must fully comply with international humanitarian law and exercise the utmost restraint. Incidents in which civilians have been killed or injured must be investigated and accountability must be ensured.

I am deeply concerned at the possibility of the violence escalating, and have offered our strong support for all efforts to bring about an end to the violence and a period of calm. I call on all parties to step back from the brink of even deeper and more deadly clashes.

I am also extremely concerned at the impact of these developments on the negotiation process. I call on all members of the international community, important stakeholders and Security Council members to exercise their influence on the parties to stop the violence and to allow humanitarian relief. All parties should rededicate their commitment to the peace process.

II. SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ISSUES STATEMENT ON SITUATION IN GAZA AND NEIGHBOURING ISRAEL

On 3 March 2008 John Dugard, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, issued the following statement (OHCHR Press Release HR08024):

The present situation in Gaza and neighbouring Israel cannot be allowed to continue. Palestinian rockets fired into Israel violate the rules of international humanitarian law and terrorize Israelis. Israel's excessive and disproportionate response has likewise been unlawful in terms of international humanitarian law. The failure to distinguish between civilian and military targets violates one of the most fundamental rules of humanitarian law. Collective punishment and the terrorization of an occupied people are also unlawful.

It is imperative that every effort be made to bring the violence to an end. This

can be done only by negotiation and mediation. The United Nations is the obvious body to initiate such talks between Hamas in Gaza, the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah. At present the United Nations is restrained by the United States, the European Union and Israel from speaking to Hamas and this has left it powerless to fulfil its principal duty of maintaining international peace. The Secretary-General of the United Nations must find the courage to overcome this obstacle and initiate meaningful talks between all parties. Without this the cycle of violence is doomed to continue.

III. SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT CONDEMNS ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE IN THE GAZA STRIP AND SOUTHERN ISRAEL

On 3 March 2008 Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict issued the following statement (Press release OSRSG/080303):

Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict expresses her profound concern about the upsurge in violence in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel.

She denounced the use of disproportionate force by the Israeli Defence Force, which resulted in the killing and injuring of many civilians, especially children. At least 17 children have been killed and more than 200 others injured since last week. All schools operated by UNRWA in Gaza were forced to close and a main office of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS) was severely damaged: this incident resulted in the death of a five-month-old baby.

Ms. Coomaraswamy also condemned the Palestinian rocket attacks against Israeli civilians, which continue to destabilize the area.

“I am profoundly disappointed to see that once again children and their families are becoming targets for military activities, – Ms. Coomaraswamy said –the need for security must not ignore humanitarian concerns. We must clearly distinguish between civilians and combatants.”

Earlier this morning, several hundred school children from 20 schools took part in a Hezbollah-organized demonstration outside UN headquarters in Beirut. The Special Representative voiced her concern for the participation of children in political activities, which can expose them to further violence and insecurity.

In April 2007, the Special Representative visited the region in order to work with all sides of the conflict on ensuring special protection for children.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

On 4 March 2008 the Permanent Representative of Pakistan, acting in his capacity as Chair of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Group in New York, addressed a letter to the Secretary-General, conveying a statement by the Group on the latest situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in the Gaza Strip, adopted on 3 March 2008, which is reproduced below. (A/62/731-S/2008/153):

The members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) strongly condemn the incessant military onslaught by

Israel, the occupying Power, against the innocent, defenceless and besieged Palestinian civilian population in the

Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular the Gaza Strip.

The excessive and disproportionate use of force by the occupying Power, including strikes by warplanes and ground artillery, and targeted extrajudicial killings, constitute grave breaches of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law. OIC is deeply grieved and distressed at the heavy civilian casualties, including women, children and infants, and the trauma being endured by the Palestinian people in the face of widespread destruction. This wanton use of force, collective punishment and terrorizing of civilian populations and other illegal actions of the occupying Power, including its targeting of ambulances and medical rescue teams, have no justification whatsoever. OIC shares the international concern over further deterioration of the already dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip caused by this recent military escalation by Israel and its continuing illegal siege of the Gaza in defiance of world opinion.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference also condemns the illegal Israeli action in the West Bank, including the killing of innocent civilians, among them children, extrajudicial assassinations and the building of settlements and the wall. These actions only fuel the cycle of violence, undermine the steps taken by the Palestinian Authority to establish calm and security and threaten the prospects of peace.

The international community must hold Israel responsible for this recent escalation and its dangerous consequences for the civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and for the fragile peace process. It is high time to ensure respect for the rule of law by putting an end

to the impunity enjoyed by Israel. OIC supports the call by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that incidents in which civilians have been killed or injured must be investigated and accountability must be ensured. OIC expects urgent follow-up action in that regard.

The Security Council, in particular, must act in a credible, timely and effective manner in fulfilment of its Charter responsibilities to address the threat to international peace and security. The Council cannot remain silent and marginalized as this crisis escalates, undermining international law, the sanctity of civilian life and the vision of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace enshrined in the Council's own resolutions.

The Security Council must condemn all killing of innocent civilians and violence; take measures to bring about an immediate ceasefire and its respect by all parties; ensure full compliance by Israel, the occupying Power, with its obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law; demand an immediate end to the siege of the Gaza Strip; and call on the international community for provision of enhanced assistance to meet the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian population, particularly in the Gaza Strip. OIC looks forward to the Council's prompt consideration of these objectives.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference reaffirms its steadfast support to the Palestinian people for the realization of their inalienable right to self-determination and the establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

V. SECRETARY-GENERAL APPOINTS DEPUTY SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

On 4 March 2008 Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the appointment of Maxwell Gaylard of Australia as Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (Press Release SG/A/1122-BIO/3965):

The Secretary-General announced today the appointment of Maxwell Gaylard as Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, at the level of Assistant Secretary-General. In this capacity, Mr. Gaylard will also serve as United Nations coordinator for humanitarian and development activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Mr. Gaylard has been acting as Deputy Special Coordinator since November last year. (See Press Release SG/A/1106) He previously served as Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service, and before that spent significant periods of time as a senior United Nations humanitarian and coordination official in Somalia, Sudan and northern Iraq. In these capacities, he served

in some of the most challenging field stations for the United Nations and gained relevant expertise in coordinating the United Nations country team's response to pressing humanitarian and developmental needs.

An Australian national, Mr. Gaylard began his career with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and also served with the Commonwealth Secretariat before he joined the United Nations. Mr. Gaylard was born in 1946 in Nambour, Queensland, where he received his primary and secondary schooling, and is a graduate of the University of Queensland and the Australian National University. Mr. Gaylard also served with the Australian military forces from 1968 to 1970.

VI. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CALLS FOR END TO ISRAELI MILITARY STRIKES, FIRING OF ROCKETS

On 6 March 2008, during its 7th regular session, the Human Rights Council held a general debate on the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories. On the same day, at its 10th meeting, the Council adopted resolution 7/1 entitled "Human rights violations emanating from Israeli military attacks and incursions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly the recent ones in the occupied Gaza Strip" by a vote of 33 in favour, 1 against (Canada) with 13 abstentions, which is reproduced below (as contained in document A/HRC/7/L.11):

**7/1.
Human rights violations emanating from
Israeli military attacks and
incursions in the Occupied Palestinian
Territory, particularly the recent ones in
the occupied Gaza Strip**

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the principles and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights,

Guided also by the rights of all peoples to self-determination and the inadmissibility

of the acquisition of land by the use of force, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations,

Affirming the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

Affirming also the applicability of international human rights law to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

Recognizing that the Israeli military attacks and incursions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly the recent ones in the occupied Gaza Strip, constitute violations of international humanitarian law and of the human rights of the Palestinian people therein and undermine international efforts, including the Annapolis Conference and the Paris International Donors' Conference for the Palestinian State, aimed at invigorating the peace process and establishing a viable, contiguous, sovereign and independent Palestinian State by the end of 2008,

Recognizing also that the recent Israeli attacks and incursions in the occupied Gaza Strip have led to a considerable loss of life and injuries among Palestinian civilians, including women, children and infants,

1. Condemns the persistent Israeli military attacks and incursions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly the recent ones in the occupied Gaza Strip, which resulted in the loss of more than 125 lives and hundreds of injuries among Palestinian civilians, including women, children and infants;

2. *Expresses* its shock at the Israeli bombardment of Palestinian homes and the killing of civilians therein and at the Israeli policy of inflicting collective punishment against the civilian population, which is contrary to international humanitarian law, and calls for bringing the perpetrators to justice;

3. *Calls* for the immediate cessation of all Israeli military attacks throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the firing of crude rockets, which resulted in the loss of two civilian lives and some injuries in southern Israel;

4. *Also calls* for urgent international action to put an immediate end to the grave violations committed by the occupying Power, Israel, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the series of incessant and repeated Israeli military attacks and incursions therein and the siege of the occupied Gaza Strip;

5. *Reiterates* its calls for immediate protection of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in compliance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law;

6. *Urges* all parties concerned to respect the rules of international human rights law and international humanitarian law and to refrain from violence against civilian populations;

7. *Requests* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to report to the Council, at its next session, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

VII. SECRETARY-GENERAL CONDEMNS ATTACK ON JERUSALEM SEMINARY

The following statement was issued on 6 March 2008 by the Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (Press release SG/SM/11455):

The Secretary-General condemns in the strongest terms today's savage attack on a Jewish seminary in west Jerusalem, and the deliberate killing and injuring of civilians. He extends his condolences to the families of those killed.

The Secretary-General is deeply concerned at the potential for continued acts of violence and terrorism to undermine the political process, which he believes must be pursued to achieve a secure and lasting peace for Israelis and Palestinians, based on a two-State solution.

VIII. SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT CALLS FOR PROTECTION OF SCHOOLS AND CHILDREN

The following statement was issued on 7 March 2008 by Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (Press release OSRSG/PR080307):

The Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict voices her grave concern regarding the recent targeting of schools in the Middle East, where several children and teenagers have been killed and injured in the past weeks.

Yesterday's shooting at a Jerusalem religious school resulted in the killing of 8 students, most of them 15 or 16 years of age, by an East Jerusalem gunman. It is one more

shocking violation of children's rights in the ongoing conflict there. Between 27 February and 3 March, 27 children were killed and 2 schools and 1 health facility were attacked in Gaza, as a result of incursions by the Israeli Defence Forces.

"Schools must be kept out of the conflict space - Ms. Coomaraswamy said - and all parties should respect and preserve them as zones of peace."

IX. COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN RECOMMENDS RESOLUTION ON PALESTINIAN WOMEN

At its fifty second session, held from 27 February to 7 March 2008, the Commission on the Status of Women considered the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of, and assistance to, Palestinian women, (see E/CN.6/2008/6 of 3 December 2007). On 7 March 2008, the Commission considered the draft resolution on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, introduced by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, as contained in the document E/CN.6/2008/L.3. The orally revised text of the draft resolution was

adopted, by a recorded vote of 33 in favour to 1 against (United States), with 9 abstentions, and was recommended to the Economic and Social Council for adoption. The text of the draft resolution, as contained in E/CN.6/2008/L.3, is reproduced below:

Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

The Economic and Social Council,

Having considered with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women,¹

Recalling the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,² in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women,³ and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,⁴

Recalling also its resolution 2007/7 of 24 July 2007 and other relevant United Nations resolutions,

Recalling further the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against

Women⁵ as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

Recalling the importance of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 57/337 of 3 July 2003, on the prevention of armed conflict, and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000, on women and peace and security,

Noting the resumption of bilateral negotiations within the Middle East peace process on its agreed basis, and expressing the need for the speedy achievement of a final peace settlement between the Palestinian and Israeli sides,

Concerned about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from the severe impact of ongoing illegal Israeli practices, including settlement activities and the unlawful construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, the continued imposition of closures and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods and the many severe consequences arising from Israeli military operations in and sieges of civilian areas, which have impacted detrimentally their social and economic conditions and deepened the humanitarian crisis faced by them and their families,

^{1/} E/CN.6/2008/6.

^{2/} Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

^{3/} Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

^{4/} General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

^{5/} See General Assembly resolution 48/104.

Expressing the importance of providing assistance, especially emergency assistance, to alleviate the dire socio-economic and humanitarian situation being faced by Palestinian women and their families,

Taking note of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights⁶ of 31 August 2005, regarding Palestinian women giving birth at Israeli checkpoints owing to denial of access to hospitals, and stressing the need to call for an end to this practice,

Recalling the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory⁷ and recalling also General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004,

Recalling also the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,⁸ the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights⁸ and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,⁹ and affirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

Expressing its condemnation of all acts of violence, including all acts of terror, provocation, incitement and destruction, especially the excessive use of force against Palestinian civilians, many of them women and children, resulting in injury and loss of human life,

^{6/} A/60/324.

^{7/} See A/ES-10/273 and Corr.1.

^{8/} General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

^{9/} United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

Emphasizing the importance of increasing the role of women in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region,

1. *Calls upon* the concerned parties, as well as the international community, to exert all the necessary efforts to support the resumption of the peace process on its agreed basis, taking into account the common ground already gained, and calls for intensified measures to be taken for tangible improvement of the difficult situation on the ground and the living conditions faced by Palestinian women and their families;

2. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development of their society, and encourages all women in the region to take an active role in supporting the peace process;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,¹⁰ the Regulations annexed to The Hague Convention IV of 18 October 1907¹¹ and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949,¹² in order to

^{10/} General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

^{11/} See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

^{12/} United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

5. *Calls upon* the international community to continue to provide urgently needed assistance and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,² in particular paragraph 260

concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action³ and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”;⁴

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out in the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-third session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

X. SECRETARY-GENERAL CALLS ON ISRAEL TO HALT SETTLEMENT EXPANSION

The following statement was issued on 10 March 2008 by the Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (Press release SG/SM/11458):

The Secretary-General expresses his concern over the Government of Israel’s approval of a resumption of construction of 750 housing units in the West Bank settlement of Givat Zeev. Any settlement expansion is contrary to Israel’s obligations under the Road Map and to international

law. The Secretary-General calls on the Government of Israel to halt settlement expansion and reiterates that the fulfilment of Road Map obligations by both parties is an important measure underpinning the political process between them.

XI. SECRETARY-GENERAL, UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS ADDRESS SECURITY COUNCIL

On 25 March 2008, the Security Council met to consider “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addressed the Council, and Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe briefed the Council on the latest developments in the region. The following are the Secretary-General’s statement and excerpts of the briefing (S/PV.5859):

The Secretary-General: I am grateful for this opportunity to address the Council on what is undoubtedly one of the most important items on its agenda and on mine: the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

Three weeks ago, I briefed you on the tragic developments then under way in Gaza and southern Israel. While I am glad that the violence has abated somewhat since then, tensions remain high. I am deeply concerned about the prospect of renewed violence and what that would mean for both the civilian populations in the conflict zone and for the peace process we are all trying to advance.

Despite many difficulties on the ground, difficulties that must be addressed, I commend the commitment of President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert to the political process. I am personally and profoundly committed to supporting this process in every way I can and I admire both leaders for their tenacity in the face of much scepticism.

Let us remember that negotiations are the only means to achieve the legitimate Palestinian aspirations to an end to occupation and independent sovereign statehood and legitimate Israeli aspirations for sustainable security and an end to conflict.

At Annapolis, the international community bore witness and expressed its support as Israeli and Palestinian leaders set themselves the target of reaching an agreement by the end of the year. It is my hope that we can achieve this ambitious goal. I believe that all of us must ask ourselves and the parties two simple questions. If not this, what? If not now, when?

This process is too important to be allowed to lose momentum through inaction or indifference, or to be overwhelmed by violence. It is essential that it receive the support of the international community, including this Council.

I remain personally determined and committed to working towards peace within the framework agreed upon: an end to the occupation that began in 1967, based on the foundations of the Madrid Conference, the principle of land for peace, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003) and the Arab Peace Initiative. This framework will lead to an end of conflict, the creation of a Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with Israel, and a comprehensive regional peace. I assure the Council that my senior advisers and myself are making unceasing efforts to press forward this agenda in all contacts and forums available

to us, including dialogue with the parties and the regional parties, the Quartet and, of course, this Council itself.

Mr. Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, will now report on the developments that have taken place over the past month.

Mr. Pascoe: Since the last monthly briefing to the Security Council, I regret that the continuing efforts to advance the political process were once again overshadowed by violence, high numbers of civilian casualties and a lack of concrete improvements on the ground.

The reporting period saw major escalations in violence, with a heavy Israeli air and land military assault in Gaza; the firing of rockets and mortars at Israel - over 390 during the reporting period - including the use this month of longer-range rockets; an attack on a Jewish school in West Jerusalem; Israel Defense Forces (IDF) operations throughout the West Bank targeting alleged militants; and clashes between the IDF and protesting Palestinians in West Bank cities, including in East Jerusalem. In total, 124 Palestinians, including 36 children, were killed in IDF operations, and 359 were injured. Thirteen Israelis, including 4 children, were killed by Palestinian militants, and 55 were injured. Tensions remain high, despite an observable reduction in violence in and around Gaza in the past few weeks.

The Council will recall that when it met in emergency session on 1 March, the violence in and around Gaza was at its height. IDF operation Hot Winter lasted five days and caused dozens of civilian casualties, including the deaths of 31 children, while Hamas rocket attacks

extended as far as the Israeli city of Ashkelon, bringing nearly a quarter of a million Israeli civilians within rocket range of Gaza. The Secretary-General condemned the excessive and disproportionate use of force and the killing of civilians and also condemned indiscriminate rocket fire and called for an immediate cessation of such rocket attacks. We reiterate that all parties must comply with international humanitarian law. Regrettably, no party has conducted law-based, independent, transparent and accessible investigations into the killings of civilians and other human rights violations, made the findings public and held perpetrators accountable, as called for by the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Since that briefing, violence has also spread to Jerusalem and the West Bank. On 2 March, a Palestinian child was shot and killed by the IDF during a protest against the situation in Gaza. On 6 March, eight Israeli students, including four children, were killed in a savage shooting attack at a Jewish seminary in West Jerusalem by a Palestinian from East Jerusalem. That was the first major attack in Jerusalem in almost four years and was strongly condemned by the Secretary-General. On 16 March, dozens of Israelis rioted in the neighbourhood of the killer's home in East Jerusalem. The stabbing of an Israeli in the Old City on 18 March further contributed to the tense atmosphere.

During the reporting period, IDF incursions took place in several West Bank towns, resulting in the arrests of dozens of Palestinians for alleged militant activity. In two separate incidents targeting Islamic Jihad on 12 March, four militants were killed in Bethlehem and another militant was killed in Tulkarem. These incidents were

followed by a barrage of rockets fired by Islamic Jihad from Gaza into southern Israel.

We support Egyptian efforts to bring about a cessation of violence, particularly in Gaza, and to facilitate a gradual reopening of crossings into Gaza in coordination with the parties. In this regard, we have taken note of the recent reduction in violence in and around Gaza and the more regular import of supplies across the crossings. That is a positive but extremely fragile development. We are acutely conscious of the potential for even more deadly episodes of violence to occur very quickly and of the danger that that poses for the security of the Palestinians, Israel and Egypt and for the political process. We urge all parties to act with a sense of responsibility and to cooperate with the Egyptian efforts. We also welcome Egyptian efforts to complete construction of a new border boundary. We encourage intensified cooperation among relevant parties to ensure that legitimate traffic into and out of Gaza at all crossing points takes place, and that concerns regarding alleged smuggling are addressed.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains of grave concern, although there has been an improvement in the volume of goods entering the Strip. In the past month, over 1,400 trucks have crossed into Gaza, 95 per cent of them carrying commercial supplies of basic items. That is an improvement from previous months, and we hope for further easing in the near future. Fuel imports have continued to enter from Israel, although shortages remain in key sectors such as health. On any given day between 30 and 50 per cent of ambulances cannot be used due to lack of fuel. Sanitation authorities continue to dump 60,000 cubic metres of raw and partially

treated sewage into the sea each day as a result of fuel, electrical and spare parts shortages. Fuel shortages have prevented 63 per cent of Gaza's regular fishing trips, further exacerbating what is already a dire socio-economic scenario. Food insecurity is increasing as salaries dry up, and at least 50,000 additional beneficiaries have been added to food assistance distribution lists.

We also note that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has still not gained access to captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, and that one of the more than 10,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails died earlier this month, bringing the number of Palestinian prisoners who have died in Israeli prisons to seven since the beginning of 2007.

In the West Bank, 580 IDF-imposed obstacles continue to block Palestinian movement. The levels of restrictions, in both quantity and character, have steadily increased each year since 2005, and are at the root of Palestinian economic decline. The restrictions have continued despite the security efforts of the Palestinian Authority since mid-2007. Recent International Monetary Fund (IMF) projections show that under current conditions gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2008 will not exceed population growth. Action to ease closure inside the West Bank is essential if a viable Palestinian economy is to develop as the basis for a viable Palestinian State.

In addition to restrictions on Palestinian movement, restrictions of movement of United Nations staff in the West Bank and between the West Bank and East Jerusalem also continue to increase, making delivery of programmes increasingly difficult.

Israeli settlement activity has continued in the reporting period in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Tenders and construction permits for hundreds of housing units were announced this month, and construction continues in many settlements as well as on infrastructure such as roads for settler use. The Israeli Government stated publicly that settlement expansion in East Jerusalem will continue.

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has raised concerns about Israeli archaeological excavations in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Silwan in East Jerusalem, bordering the Haram Al-Sharif/ Temple Mount. The PLO raised additional concerns about alleged plans to bring more Israeli settlers to Ras al-Amud in East Jerusalem while transferring Israeli police personnel to the police station constructed at the centre of the proposed E-1 settlement area between Israel and the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim to the east.

All settlement activity in East Jerusalem or elsewhere in the West Bank is contrary to international law and Security Council resolutions. Israel's failure to cease settlement activity including natural growth or to dismantle the outposts erected after March 2001 is contrary to the Road Map. The Secretary-General has made public his concerns that urgent action must be taken on this issue.

Construction work on the barrier continues within occupied Palestinian territory, in deviation from the Green Line and contrary to the International Court of Justice advisory opinion. Meanwhile, the number of house demolitions in the West Bank has increased noticeably. Since the beginning of this year, over 100 structures -

at least half of them residential - have been demolished, displacing nearly 400 Palestinians.

There is little I am able to report about the state of bilateral negotiations. This is a positive reflection of the confidentiality that is being maintained, enabling Israeli and Palestinian leaders to be candid in their discussions. As a result of the significant Palestinian casualties in Gaza, Palestinian President Abbas suspended bilateral negotiations with Israel for a period.

However, meetings between the heads of the two negotiating teams resumed recently and the work of a number of technical groups formed between the parties is being pursued. Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad and a senior official in the Israeli Ministry of Defence also attended the first trilateral meeting on monitoring of the implementation of Phase 1 Road Map commitments, hosted by the United States Lieutenant General Fraser.

We support the continuing reform efforts of the Government of Prime Minister Fayyad. A recent IMF mission confirmed that, despite the difficult environment, impressive financial reform measures have been taken, including the reestablishment of cash control procedures and a new accounting system for fiscal reporting.

The Palestinian Development Plan is still being finalized and will shortly be shared with the international community in order to enlist support. The financing needs for recurrent costs in 2008 stand at \$1.7 billion. So far, \$1.2 billion have been pledged, and about half of the pledges will be disbursed by the end of March. Hence, there is a shortfall of \$500 million for recurrent expenditure.

A meeting of the co-chairs of the Paris donors' conference, Foreign Minister Kouchner of France, Commissioner Ferrero Waldner of the European Commission, Foreign Minister Støhre of Norway and Quartet Representative Tony Blair, took place today to assess the situation since the Paris Conference. The next meeting of the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee will take place on 2 May in London hosted by the United Kingdom and Norway.

Efforts to reform, train and equip the Palestinian security forces in the West Bank continued during the reporting period. Some 1000 officers are currently being trained in Jordan, with the support of the United States Security Coordinator, for deployment in the West Bank in April and May. President Abbas issued a decree aimed at reforming the Palestinian Authority intelligence apparatus. The Interior Minister has submitted a comprehensive report about security in the West Bank. Palestinian security forces have undertaken operations disarming and arresting militants in the West Bank.

However, there is more work to do for the Palestinian Authority to reassert law and order across the cities of the West Bank and meet its Road Map obligations to effectively combat terrorism. If these obligations are to be met, greater Israeli-Palestinian Authority security cooperation is essential.

The Quartet continues to be in close contact at the principal and envoy levels. There are ongoing discussions over the idea of a renewed international meeting in Moscow in the coming period. We are supportive of the idea of such a meeting.

We also continue to stress the vital role of Arab States in support of the peace

process, the central importance of the Arab Peace Initiative and the ultimate need for a comprehensive regional peace. Foreign Ministers from the League of Arab States met in Cairo on 5 March ahead of the annual summit planned for 29-30 March in Damascus.

We note their support for the seven-point plan announced by Yemeni President Saleh, calling for a return of the situation in Gaza to the situation before the Hamas takeover in last June, the holding of early elections and a resumption of dialogue on the basis of previous internal Palestinian agreements.

Fatah and Hamas representatives reportedly held constructive discussions on the plan in Sana'a. As a matter of principle, we believe that the unity of the legitimate Palestinian Authority must be restored through peaceful means in support of the political process for a peacefully negotiated two-State solution, and we believe that Arab countries have a leading role to play in supporting such efforts.

...

With regard to the Palestinian camp of Nahr el-Bared, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), in cooperation with the Lebanese Army and the office of the Prime Minister, has finalized the Master Plan for the reconstruction of the camp. The reconstruction effort will be a long and complex undertaking that will require the full support of the international donor community.

...

XII. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ADOPTS RESOLUTIONS ON PALESTINIAN RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION, ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS

On 27 March 2008, during the 40th meeting of its 7th regular session, the Human Rights Council adopted without a vote resolution 7/17 entitled “Right of the Palestinian people to self-determination”. At the same meeting, the Council adopted, by a vote of 46 to 1 (Canada) a resolution 7/18 entitled “Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan”. The resolutions are reproduced below (as contained in document A/HRC/7/L.11):

7/17.

Right of the Palestinian people to self-determination

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the provisions of Articles 1 and 55 thereof, which affirm the right of peoples to self-determination, and reaffirming the need for the scrupulous respect of the principle of refraining in international relations from the threat or use of force, as specified in the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970,

Guided also by the provisions of article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which affirm that all peoples have the right to self-determination,

Guided further by the International Covenants on Human Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and

Peoples and by the provisions of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted on 25 June 1993 by the World Conference on Human Rights (A/CONF.157/23), and in particular Part I, paragraphs 2 and 3, relating to the right of self-determination of all peoples and especially those subject to foreign occupation,

Recalling General Assembly resolutions 181 A and B (II) of 29 November 1947 and 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, as well as all other resolutions which confirm and define the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, particularly their right to self-determination,

Recalling also Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967, 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973, 1397 (2002) of 12 March 2002 and 1402 (2002) of 30 March 2002,

Recalling further the conclusion of the International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion of 9 July 2004, that the construction of the wall by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, along with measures previously taken, severely impedes the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination,

Recalling the resolutions adopted in this regard by the Commission on Human Rights, the last of which was resolution 2005/1 of 7 April 2005,

Reaffirming the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant United Nations resolutions and declarations, and the provisions of international covenants and instruments relating to the right to self-determination as an international principle and as a right of all peoples in the world, as it is a *jus cogens* in international law and a basic condition for achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region of the Middle East,

1. *Reaffirms* the inalienable, permanent and unqualified right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including their right to live in freedom, justice and dignity and to establish a sovereign, independent, democratic and viable contiguous State;

2. *Also reaffirms* its support for the solution of two States living side by side in peace and security, Palestine and Israel;

3. *Stresses* the need for respect for and preservation of the territorial unity, contiguity and integrity of all of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem;

4. *Urges* all Member States and relevant bodies of the United Nations system to support and assist the Palestinian people in the early realization of their right to self-determination;

5. *Decides* to continue the consideration of this question at its session of March 2009.

7/18.

Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and affirming the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force,

Reaffirming that all States have an obligation to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, as stated in the Charter of the United Nations and as elaborated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,¹ the International Covenants on Human Rights and other applicable instruments,

Recalling relevant resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights, the Human Rights Council, the Security Council and the General Assembly, most recently General Assembly resolution 62/108 of 17 December 2007 in which the Assembly reaffirmed, *inter alia*, the illegality of the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories,

Mindful that Israel is a party to the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,² which is applicable *de jure* to Palestinian and all Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, and recalling the declaration adopted by the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva

^{1/} General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

^{2/} United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

Convention, held in Geneva on 5 December 2001,

Considering that the transfer by the occupying Power of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies constitutes a breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and relevant provisions of customary law, including those codified in Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I),³

Recalling the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice on the *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*,⁴ and its conclusion that “the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (including East Jerusalem) have been established in breach of international law”,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004,

Affirming that the Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory constitute very serious violations of international humanitarian law and of the human rights of the Palestinian people therein and undermine international efforts, including the Annapolis Peace Conference and the Paris International Donors’ Conference for the Palestinian State, aimed at invigorating the peace process and establishing a viable, contiguous, sovereign and independent Palestinian State by the end of 2008,

^{3/} Ibid., vol. 1125, No. 17512.

^{4/} See A/ES-10/273 and Corr.1.

Recalling its attachment to the implementation by both parties of their obligations under the Quartet road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,⁵ and noting specifically its call for a freeze on all settlement activity,

Expressing its grave concern at the continuation by Israel, the occupying Power, of settlement building and expansion in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including plans to expand and connect Israeli settlements around Occupied East Jerusalem, thus threatening the creation of a contiguous Palestinian State, in violation of international humanitarian law and relevant United Nations resolutions,

Expressing its concern that continuing Israeli settlement activity undermines the realization of a two-State solution,

Expressing grave concern at the continuing construction, contrary to international law, by Israel of the wall inside the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, and expressing its concern in particular about the route of the wall in departure from the Armistice Line of 1949, which could prejudice future negotiations and make the two-State solution physically impossible to implement and which is causing the Palestinian people further humanitarian hardship,

Deeply concerned that the route of the wall has been traced in such a way as to include the great majority of the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

^{5/} S/2003/529, annex.

Expressing its concern at the failure of the Government of Israel to cooperate fully with the relevant United Nations mechanisms, in particular the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967,

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967⁶ and calls upon the Government of Israel to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur to allow him to discharge his mandate fully;

2. *Deplores* the recent Israeli announcements of the construction of new housing units for Israeli settlers in and around occupied East Jerusalem, as they undermine the peace process and the creation of a contiguous, sovereign and independent Palestinian State, and are in violation of international law and pledges made by Israel at the Annapolis Peace Conference of 27 November 2007;

3. *Expresses its grave concern* at:

(a) The continuing Israeli settlement and related activities, in violation of international law, including the expansion of settlements, the expropriation of land, the demolition of houses, the confiscation and destruction of property, the expulsion of Palestinians and the construction of bypass roads, which change the physical character and demographic composition of the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, and constitute a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of

War of 12 August 1949,⁷ and in particular article 49 of that Convention; settlements are a major obstacle to the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace and to the creation of an independent, viable, sovereign and democratic Palestinian State;

(b) The Israeli so-called E-1 plan aimed at expanding the Israeli settlement of Maale Adumim and building the wall around it, thereby further disconnecting occupied East Jerusalem from the northern and southern parts of the West Bank and isolating its Palestinian population;

(c) The implications for the final status negotiations of the announcement by Israel that it will retain the major settlement blocks in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including settlements located in the Jordan Valley;

(d) The expansion of Israeli settlements and the construction of new ones on the Occupied Palestinian Territory rendered inaccessible behind the wall, which create a *fait accompli* on the ground that could well be permanent and would be tantamount to *de facto* annexation;

(e) The Israeli decision to establish and operate a tramway between West Jerusalem and the Israeli settlement of Pisgat Zeev, in violation of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions;

(f) The continued closures of and within the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the restriction of the freedom of movement of people and goods, including the repeated closure of the crossing points of the Gaza Strip, which have created an

^{6/} A/HRC/7/17.

^{7/} United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

extremely precarious humanitarian situation for the civilian population and impaired the economic and social rights of the Palestinian people;

(g) The continued construction, contrary to international law, of the wall inside the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem;

4. *Urges* Israel, the occupying Power:

(a) To reverse the settlement policy in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, and, as a first step towards their dismantlement, to stop immediately the expansion of the existing settlements, including “natural growth” and related activities;

(b) To prevent any new installation of settlers in the occupied territories;

5. *Urges* the full implementation of the Access and Movement Agreement of 15 November 2005, particularly the urgent reopening of the Rafah and Karni crossings, which are crucial to the passage of foodstuffs and essential supplies, as well as the access of United Nations agencies to and within the Occupied Palestinian Territory;

6. *Demands* that Israel implement the recommendations regarding the settlements made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in her report to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-seventh session on her visit to the occupied Palestinian territories, Israel, Egypt and Jordan;⁸

7. *Calls upon* Israel to take and implement serious measures, including confiscation of arms and enforcement of criminal sanctions, with the aim of preventing acts of violence by Israeli settlers, and other measures to guarantee the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians and Palestinian properties in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem;

8. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with its legal obligations, as mentioned in the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice;

9. *Urges* the parties to give renewed impetus to the peace process in line with the Annapolis Peace Conference and the Paris International Donors’ Conference for the Palestinian State and to implement fully the road map endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 1515 (2003) of 19 November 2003, with the aim of reaching a comprehensive political settlement in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council, including resolutions 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967 and 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973, and other relevant United Nations resolutions, the principles of the Peace Conference on the Middle East, held in Madrid on 30 October 1991, the Oslo Accords and subsequent agreements, which will allow two States, Israel and Palestine, to live in peace and security;

10. *Decides* to continue the consideration of this question at its session of March 2009.

^{8/} E/CN.4/2001/114.

XIII. SECRETARY-GENERAL SENDS MESSAGE TO ARAB SUMMIT

Following are excerpts from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message to the League of Arab States Summit, delivered by B. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, in Damascus, on 29 March 2008 (Press Release SG/SM/11484):

...

Lasting peace and progress in the Middle East hinges on a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. You have already made a bold and collective commitment to this goal through the Arab Peace Initiative, which remains a key element in our efforts to achieve peace. I hope you will all work to sustain and enhance this commitment in the coming weeks and months. Let me assure you of my support in achieving the goal of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Your engagement is particularly crucial for the fragile political process currently under way between President [Mahmoud] Abbas and Prime Minister [Ehud] Olmert. They have expressed their desire to reach an agreement by the end of this year. Yet, the path to peace remains littered with daunting challenges.

In particular, I share Arab concerns that continued Israeli settlement activity and manifold restrictions on access and movement undermine the credibility of the political process. I once again urge Israel to live up to its obligations by halting settlement construction, rolling back checkpoints and enabling access and movement. We must work to ease the

suffering of the Palestinian people and give them hope for the future.

I have called for a different and more positive strategy for Gaza. I encourage all Arab countries to act responsibly and exercise whatever influence they have to support a cessation of violence in and around Gaza, a reopening of crossings, secure borders and the fulfilment of Palestinian obligations under the Road Map. This is essential for the welfare of the population of Gaza, the security of the Palestinians and Egypt, as well as of Israel, and prospects for a peaceful reunification of the West Bank and Gaza within the framework of the Palestinian Authority.

Our goal must remain a just, lasting and comprehensive peace, the end of occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian State which will live side by side in peace and security with Israel. As Secretary-General, I will also continue to look for opportunities to encourage a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which requires the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks to be addressed and resolved. This vision is consistent with Security Council resolutions as well as the Arab Peace Initiative.

...