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### DELEGATES WELCOME NEW IMPETUS TO RESOLVE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

#### AS SECURITY COUNCIL CONSIDERS MIDDLE EAST SITUATION

#### Speakers Underline Need to Resume Negotiations, Fulfil Road Map Obligations

Taking up the situation in the Middle East, speakers in today's Security Council debate welcomed the new international push to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, although concern over the lack of movement since the adoption of resolution 1860 (2009) more than six months ago prompted some to call for more decisive Council action.

Citing a variety of "positive developments" – such as the initiatives by Egypt and the League of Arab States to promote intra-Palestinian reconciliation and the June address to the Muslim world by United States President Barack Obama in Cairo – speakers underscored the importance of the shared responsibility of Israel, the Palestinian people and the wider Arab community to live up to terms already agreed under the [Road Map](#) for peace. Among its provisions were ending violence by extremist militants, Palestinian political reform, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Occupied Palestinian Territory and a freeze on settlement activity on those lands.

Most speakers commended Egypt's efforts to promote intra-Palestinian reconciliation, but noted that the parties must work in earnest to find common ground under the leadership of the Palestinian Authority. As explained by Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, in his briefing today, talks between Palestinian factions had been put on hold at the request of President Mahmoud Abbas in order to enable the Fatah group to focus on an upcoming party congress scheduled for 4 August in Bethlehem. The groups were due to meet again in Cairo on 25 August.

In his briefing, the Assistant Secretary-General outlined recent international efforts to create conditions under which negotiations on a two-State solution could resume. He recalled that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and members of the Middle East Quartet had met in Trieste, Italy, on 26 June. That had been followed by a meeting of the Quartet with Foreign Ministers of the Follow-up Committee of the Arab League on the Arab Peace Initiative. In those discussions, the Quartet had underscored its belief that an end to the Israeli occupation was the only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, through which it would fulfil the two peoples' aspirations for independent homelands.

He said Quartet envoys planned to meet in Jerusalem at the end of July to follow up with the parties to the conflict. There was strong agreement among Quartet members that both Israel and the Palestinians should implement their obligations under the Road Map, and they had urged the Government of Israel to freeze all settlement activity, including "natural growth". Regrettably, illegal settlement activity was reported to be continuing across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Brazil's representative, whose country was one of several calling for a halt to Israeli settlement activity, said that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's openness to the idea of a Palestinian State – as reported in the press – was encouraging, but "it must evolve to recognize the need to endow Palestine with the attributes of full statehood". For that to occur there must be sustained political will. On the other hand, militant groups in Gaza must show restraint and refrain from violence against Israeli civilians.

Addressing the larger situation in the Middle East, speakers also took the opportunity to express positive views on recent elections in Lebanon and efforts by President Michel Suleiman to build trust among the Lebanese population. However, the discovery of an arms cache in southern Lebanon had raised concern about its reported link to Hizbullah. Many States felt it was essential that the parties concerned – including Hizbullah – cooperate fully with the investigation by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the Lebanese Armed Forces.

The representative of the United States said Hizbullah had admitted that it was continuing to rearm, which was a violation of the core objective of resolution 1701 (2006). Pointing out that it was Hizbullah that had launched the war in 2006, he said that resolving that situation would reassure Israel of the security of its northern border and citizens. Until then, it was likely to persist in carrying out reconnaissance flights over Lebanon.

Speakers also voiced support for a Russian initiative to hold an international conference in Moscow, which would be devoted to the quest for a comprehensive

peace. The representative of the Russian Federation said the main objective would be to create conditions for the resumption of negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian sides, with full implementation of their obligations under the Road Map, including the fight against terrorism and freedom of movement on the West Bank.

As noted by Assistant-Secretary-General Fernandez-Taranco, there were now a total of 613 closure obstacles within the West Bank, a figure confirmed jointly for the first time following cooperation between the Israel Defense Forces Central Command and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Other speakers today were the representatives of Libya, Viet Nam, Japan, Mexico, Croatia, Austria, France, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, United Kingdom, China, Turkey, Uganda, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt (on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement), Switzerland, Indonesia, Sweden (on behalf of the European Union), Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco, Ecuador, Cuba, Bangladesh, Tunisia, Nicaragua, Norway, Iran, Pakistan, South Africa and Qatar.

Also addressing the Council was the Permanent Observer for Palestine.

The meeting began at 10:14 a.m. and suspended at 1:25 p.m. Resuming at 3:15 p.m., it ended at 5:45 p.m.

## Background

The Security Council met this morning to consider the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, and hear a briefing by the Secretariat.

## Briefing

OSCAR FERNANDEZ-TARANCO, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, said that, since the last briefing, there had been concerted efforts by the international community to create conditions for the prompt resumption and early conclusion of negotiations to reach the end-goal of a two-State solution. On 26 June, the Secretary-General had joined with the other members of the Middle East Quartet at a meeting in Trieste, Italy, which had been followed by a meeting with Foreign Ministers of the Follow-up Committee of the League of Arab States on the Arab Peace Initiative. The Quartet had underscored that the only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was one that would end the occupation and fulfil the aspirations of both parties for independent homelands for two peoples – Israel and an independent, contiguous and viable Palestine – living side by side in peace and security.

At Trieste, United States Special Envoy George Mitchell had briefed both the Quartet and the Arab Foreign Ministers on his country's intensive efforts with all parties throughout the region, he recalled. He had stressed that the objective was peace, not yet another process. Senator Mitchell would be visiting the region for the fifth time later this week, as would a number of senior United States officials. The Quartet envoys would also be meeting in Jerusalem at the end of July to follow up with the parties. There was strong agreement among Quartet members that both Israel and the Palestinians should implement their obligations under the Road Map, and they had urged the Government of Israel to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth. Regrettably, illegal settlement activity was reported to be continuing across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and there had been no evacuation of settlement outposts during the reporting period.

He said the international community had expressed its concern following the approval by the Jerusalem Municipality planning committee of 20 new housing units on the site of the Shepherd's Hotel in Sheikh Jarrah, where some 26 Palestinian refugee families faced a threat of eviction. In a significant development yesterday, settlers accompanied by Israeli security forces had taken physical possession of a house in that neighbourhood. Demolition orders for construction carried out without a permit had been carried out against three Palestinian homes during the reporting period and a further 13 orders had been issued. Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem remained closed by Israeli orders, and on 15 July, a community centre in East Jerusalem had also been closed.

Those unilateral actions increased tensions and undermined confidence in a two-State solution, he emphasized, adding that the Secretary-General's position was clear: the future of Jerusalem remained a matter for final status negotiations between the parties. There had been 51 incidents in the reporting period, in which 19 Palestinians had been injured and property vandalized by settlers, he said, adding that two Israelis had also been injured. On 20 July, settlers had injured two Palestinians and set fire to agricultural land in the village of Burin. There continued to be inadequate enforcement of the rule of law on violent settlers.

The reporting period marked five years since the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice had stated that construction of the wall within the Occupied Palestinian Territory was contrary to international law, yet some 58 per cent of the barrier, in its current planned route, had been completed and construction was ongoing.

There had been some improvements in the West Bank, he said, noting that Israel had implemented a number of measures to ease movement between Nablus, Qalqilya, Ramallah and Jericho. Initial field observations indicated that those measures had reduced significantly the amount of time required for Palestinians to access those cities. The Government of Israel had also announced that the hours for commercial crossing at the Allenby Bridge to Jordan would be increased and that it would promote the development of three key industrial zones in Bethlehem, Jenin and Jericho. Those welcome steps, if sustained and expanded, would have a significant impact on freedom of movement for Palestinians as well as economic development. There were now a total of 613 closure obstacles within the West Bank, as jointly confirmed for the first time following cooperation by the Israel Defense Forces Central Command and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The Palestinian Authority continued to pursue an ambitious reform agenda, he continued, citing the establishment of a national credit bureau, efforts to modernize the legal framework for investment and measures to strengthen the foundations for socio-economic sustainability. Important measures had also been taken to reform the security sector. He reiterated the call of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee and the Quartet for robust and sustained financial support for the Palestinian Authority, whose financial situation remained dire. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated that \$900 million in external financing was still needed for the remainder of the year, including \$300 million for the needs in Gaza.

He said the situation in the West Bank had been generally calm, although 19 Palestinians and 10 Israelis had reportedly been injured. Israeli security forces continued to arrest Palestinians, but in lower numbers. In a disturbing development on 4 July, a Palestinian Authority official had reported that Palestinian security forces had uncovered arms, explosives and \$8.5 million in cash from Hamas cells in the West Bank. He urged the Palestinian Authority to continue making every effort to fight violent extremism, consistent with its Road Map obligations.

Turning to the situation in Gaza, he said the Secretary-General had shared with the Quartet his belief that it was unsustainable and not in the interests of any of those concerned. Council resolution 1860 (2009) remained the main framework for a way forward. The welcome drop in violence reported in the last briefing had continued into the current one, but there had been four incidents of rockets or mortars being fired into Israel in the last month, and nine Israeli army incursions into Gaza, in which two Palestinian children had been killed and seven other Palestinians injured. Seven Palestinians had reportedly been killed today in the collapse of a tunnel used for smuggling. No mechanism had been put in place to prevent the illicit trafficking of arms and ammunitions into Gaza.

The Quartet had called for the reopening of all crossing points to ensure the regular flow of people as well as humanitarian and commercial goods into Gaza, he said. A few categories of goods, including small quantities of cement and glass, had been allowed into Gaza on an exceptional basis. Overall, an average of 78 trucks per day had been allowed into Gaza, an increase from about 70 a day in June and a marked rise from the 18 trucks a day allowed last November. About 70 per cent of imports had been human and animal food products, while most industrial and construction materials were either prohibited or severely restricted. No exports had been allowed out of Gaza, where some 10 per cent of the population remained without electricity. The tunnel economy continued, with smuggling providing an increasingly broad range of consumer goods, black market petrol in particular.

He said the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had opened more than 150 summer camps in Gaza, attended by over 185,000 children. Under the coordination of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), efforts to clear more than 600,000 tons of rubble had begun. In support of UNDP efforts, the United Nations Mine Action Team for Gaza had received its special explosive ordnance disposal equipment, but was still waiting for delivery of special explosives to destroy unexploded ordnance. No significant amounts of materials for reconstruction had been allowed into Gaza, which was completely unacceptable. Crossings should be opened to kick-start early recovery and enable the completion of United Nations construction of housing, health and education facilities, which had been suspended since June 2007. He called on Israel for "a prompt and positive response" to that proposal.

Regarding Palestinian reconciliation, he reported that talks held in Cairo on 28 June had been put on hold at the request of President Mahmoud Abbas in order to enable Fatah to focus on an upcoming party congress scheduled for 4 August in Bethlehem. The factions were due to meet again in Cairo on 25 August. Meanwhile, Hamas continued to assert control over Gaza, maintaining a visible police presence. On 9 July, the Hamas Chief Justice in Gaza had instituted a rule that women lawyers must wear a traditional gown and cover their heads in court. Intra-Palestinian relations remained tense; on 21 July, a bomb had injured 61 people at a wedding in Khan Younis. Fatah claimed that nearly 200 of its members in Gaza had been detained, expressing concern that its membership in the enclave would be prevented from attending the congress in Bethlehem.

He said that, on 14 July, the new Israeli negotiator had met in Cairo with his Egyptian counterpart to discuss prospects for releasing Israeli captive Gilad Shalit in exchange for a number of the 11,000 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) still had not been granted access to Shalit after more than three years. On 28 June, meanwhile, Justice Richard Goldstone had returned to Gaza to conduct hearings with victims of Operation Cast Lead and their relatives. Similar hearings had been held in Geneva, where Noam Shalit, Gilad's father, had testified, among others. The mission's report would be presented to the Human Rights Council in August and discussed at its next session in September.

Elsewhere in the region, Arab League ministers had met in Cairo on 24 June, he said, noting that they had welcomed a "new beginning for United States relations with the Arab and Muslim world" and President Barack Obama's commitment to peace in the region. They had emphasized the importance of a complete settlement freeze and the need to lift the blockade on Gaza as "key elements" to create a climate for peace negotiations to resume. Taking note of the Arab League statement, the Quartet had expressed support for dialogue among all States, in the spirit of the Arab Peace Initiative. The Quartet had called on Arab States to recognize Israel's rightful place in the region and to affirm that violence could not achieve peace and security. It had called on the Arab League to help the Palestinian people build a future State by providing consistent support to the Palestinian Authority.

Turning to the occupied Syrian Golan, he reported that the situation there was quiet, though settlement activity continued. In Lebanon, investigations into violations of Council resolution 1701 (2006) in south Lebanon were ongoing, while Israeli air violations took place almost daily. In meetings with Lebanese and Israeli officials and political leaders in the past week, Michael Williams, United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, had stressed the gravity of violations of resolution 1701 (2006). To defuse the situation, the Special Coordinator had also visited Israel, where he had raised the question about the newly erected watchtower in Kfar Shouba and requested its removal.

He said the Quartet was due to meet on the margins of the General Assembly in New York in September, and the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee was also due to meet. The United Nations continued to support an international conference to be convened in Moscow in 2009. "We remain determined to seek, actively and vigorously, a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1515, 1850, the Madrid Framework, including the principle of land for peace, the Road Map", as well as previously reached agreements.

#### Statements

ABDURRAHMAN MOHAMED SHALGHAM (Libya) said the briefing showed how much the situation in the occupied territories had deteriorated and the increased danger to Palestinians. Even six months after Israel had perpetrated a massacre in the Gaza Strip, and after the adoption of resolution 1860 (2009), there were no signs that the occupying Power intended to change its behaviour and activities directed against civilians in Gaza. Israel demonstrated a lack of desire to end the blockade and open border crossings, a form of collective punishment, and to desist from committing grave violations in the occupied territories, some of which qualified as war crimes under international law. At the same time, the international community showed no signs of breaking its silence or exerting pressure on the occupying Power, which had the effect of encouraging it to commit more crimes. Against that backdrop, UNRWA was to be commended on its work, and acts of aggression against its personnel were to be condemned.

Conditions in the West Bank were no better, he continued, noting that Israeli officials continued to declare their intention to expand settlements and apply policies to "Judaize" Jerusalem in a rapid manner by withdrawing identity cards for Arabs and confiscating Arab land. Settlers continued to commit crimes against Palestinians in the West Bank, often with the support of the occupying Power, which offered settlers protection while ignoring complaints by Palestinian civilians. Some 2,703 square kilometres of land, amounting to 46 per cent of the area of the West Bank, had been taken as a result of the construction of settlements, ring roads and the separation wall. "We still talk of the establishment of a Palestinian State, yet 46 per cent of the land has been taken away," he pointed out.

Turning to the subject of Israeli detainees, he highlighted the situation of women, who were being exposed to psychological and mental pressures as well as torture, including beating and sexual harassment, according to a report by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). It affirmed that 13 per cent of the prisoners were children below 18 years. Any serious effort at peace must start by ending the international silence over Israel's actions. The international community should not be shy; it should call on Israel to freeze all settlements and to remove them. The Security Council's silence encouraged Israel to continue its policies, while condemning any discussion of the Jewish State's new rules discriminating against Arab people – possibly a new *Naqba* which could displace more than 1 million people and deny them their rights.

LE LUONG MINH (Viet Nam) noted that the situation in the Middle East remained worrisome, with Israeli military incursions continuing, while restrictions and blockages inflicted psychological, physical and humanitarian damage on the population of Gaza and hampered international and United Nations aid efforts. Meanwhile, the increased construction of settlements and the separation wall threatened to alter the legal status, demography and character of the Occupied Palestinian Territory before the resumption of final status negotiations. At the same time, rocket attacks against Israel continued.

Good-faith negotiations "could and should be the only option to help bridge the rift", he stressed, adding that his country supported the Road Map, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative. Viet Nam called for strict implementation of Council resolutions and urged the Israeli Government to "stay the course" in settling the conflict, on the basis of the two-State solution. It should freeze illegal settlement activity, dismantle outposts, allow humanitarian access, reopen border crossings and resolve the fate of Palestinian prisoners. Palestinian factions should promote national reconciliation in preparation for the establishment of a unity Government.

Commending the role played by Arab countries, he encouraged the parties to abide by humanitarian and human rights law, and give the necessary cooperation to United Nations relief operations. Regarding Lebanon, Viet Nam was concerned about recent security incidents in the south and supported investigations by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the Lebanese Armed Forces investigation. Israel should cease its flights over Lebanon and withdraw from the northern part of Ghajar village and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line.

NORHIRO OKUDA (Japan), expressing strong support for a comprehensive solution on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the land for peace principle and the Road Map, reiterated his country's call on both the Israelis and the Palestinians to fulfil their obligations and refrain from any action that could prejudice the outcome of negotiations. Israel should freeze settlement activity, including so-called natural growth, he said, voicing concern about

the construction of Jewish residences in East Jerusalem.

Improving humanitarian conditions in Gaza continued to be an important priority, he emphasized, calling on Israel to cooperate with international efforts to keep border crossings continuously open and ensure the smooth movement of people and goods. Japan also called on all parties to implement fully Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) to resolve the issues surrounding Gaza, while taking note of the removal of some of restrictions on movement and access in the West Bank. It also called on the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to strengthen security cooperation, which would enable further relaxation of restrictions on movement and access.

Stressing that Palestinian reconciliation was essential, he expressed support for Palestinian unity under the leadership of President Abbas, and called on the Palestinians to work vigorously to achieve that unity. Japan also supported Egyptian mediation efforts and asked any country in the region with influence to cooperate in that endeavour. Japan also welcomed the Obama Administration's renewed and intensified efforts to achieve a comprehensive peace, which were creating an opportunity not seen in some time to realize the long-sought comprehensive peace among all parties in the region, including Syria and Lebanon. However, the United States should not be left to take on all responsibility; the parties themselves and the international community must shoulder their own responsibilities if peace was to be achieved.

CLAUDE HELLER ( [Mexico](#) ) welcomed the initiative by United States President Obama and noted that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had acknowledged the need to establish a Palestinian State. However, significant restrictions complicated the prospects for a settlement. Meeting the objectives of the peace process should not remain wishful thinking. Decades-old tensions demanded progress as soon as possible. He condemned recent acts of violence on the border between Gaza and Israel, in particular attacks against civilians, and called on all parties to respect international humanitarian law at all times.

Living conditions in Gaza continued to worsen, he said, noting that only one fifth of total consumer goods had entered the territory in recent weeks, which was not acceptable. Restrictions on Gaza would lead to illicit trafficking in goods and food, as well as weapons. There was a need for an international monitoring mechanism to guarantee a lasting ceasefire and monitor the supply of goods. Efforts were also needed to achieve intra-Palestinian reconciliation, and it was regrettable that a recent round of negotiations had not led to significant progress in that regard.

While some restrictions had been lifted in the West Bank, the Palestinian economy continued to suffer under numerous restrictions, he said, adding that commitments under the Road Map on colonization and settlement were yet to be fulfilled. Today, there were more than 3,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank, a number that continued to increase. In accordance with the Road Map and international law, all Israeli settlement practices, including those qualified as natural growth, must be halted as soon as possible. The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the construction of the wall should also be implemented.

Turning to Lebanon, he welcomed the peaceful and transparent holding of parliamentary elections, which showed the commitment of all actors to national reconciliation. He also welcomed the establishment of diplomatic relations between Lebanon and Syria, but noted with concern the events south of the Litani River, where the existence of weapons that did not belong to the Lebanese Armed Forces was a violation of existing provisions. Hopefully, UNIFIL would be able to carry out its mandate without any restrictions.

RANKO VILOMIĆ ( [Croatia](#) ) said the present time was a hopeful moment for achieving a two-State solution and peace in the Middle East. The international community should focus on promoting a resumption of negotiations as soon as possible to resolve all final status issues. There was no other way for the two parties to realize their legitimate aspirations. The diplomatic process was inextricably linked with the situation on the ground, and obstacles must be addressed. Both parties should refrain from actions that could undermine trust. Among other things, it was essential that Israel stop its settlement activities and refrain from unilateral actions.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza required a political solution, he said, stressing also the need to reopen border crossings, with appropriate monitoring. A renewed push for peace demanded decisive steps from both parties. The Palestinian Authority should consolidate its reforms, and Israel must be reassured that the creation of a Palestinian State would not be at the expense of its legitimate security concerns. There was a need to improve the lives of ordinary Palestinians, including through the promotion of economic development. Israel and the Arab countries would need to undertake confidence-building measures while also pursuing progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

THOMAS MAYR-HARTING ( [Austria](#) ), aligning himself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union, expressed support for discussions by the United States with parties in the region aimed at creating conditions for the prompt resumption of talks and the early conclusion of negotiations without preconditions on all permanent status issues. Prime Minister Netanyahu's announced commitment to a Palestinian State was welcome, and must be followed by an end to settlements, including natural growth. Outposts erected since 2001 must be dismantled, and demolitions and evictions in East Jerusalem should stop.

On the Palestinian side, he said, efforts to fight violent extremism and strengthen rule of law should be stepped up, including steps against the launching of rockets from Gaza into Israel. There should be more decisive efforts towards a unified leadership by all political representatives and a common renunciation of violence. The delay in the Cairo talks was a source of concern and the Austrian Government hoped that Palestinian leaders would work towards preventing even deeper separation between the West Bank and Gaza.

He said that ensuring open access to Gaza should be a priority since "controlled but comprehensive" supply to the enclave would discourage tunnelling while allowing effective measures against weapons smuggling and thereby contributing to Israel's security. All allegations of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law must be investigated. In the West Bank, Austria encouraged an easing of restrictions on movement. As for Lebanon, it was important that any new Government cooperate closely with Parliament, the President and the Armed Forces.

ALEJANDRO WOLFF ( [United States](#) ) said Special Envoy Mitchell was consulting widely with parties on a way forward, and had emphasized that a comprehensive settlement was the only way to guarantee peace in the region. All parties – Arabs and Israelis alike – had their respective responsibilities to uphold, which centred on fulfilling the provisions of the Road Map and resolving the question of settlements, outposts and movement. The Palestinian side must commit to providing effective security in areas under their control and ending incitement to violence. The Arab States must increase support for the Palestinian Authority and normalize relations with Israel.

On settlements, he said his country's consistent position had been to ask Israel to uphold its commitments, including dismantling outposts, which would entail difficult decisions. The United States had noted Israel's positive steps to ease conditions at several key checkpoints and the military withdrawal to the outskirts of four cities. If sustained, those changes should have a significant impact on movement, growth and quality of life. Those positive developments made it imperative for all to work together to support the Palestinian Authority, especially in carrying out non-partisan, transparent programmes to improve conditions for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

He said the World Bank and IMF had recently endorsed accounting controls put in place by the Palestinian Authority, noting, however, that its revenues were not enough to cover operational expenses, carry out reforms and improve security. Around \$120 million in donor assistance was needed each month to cover operational expenses, but donors had fallen \$50 million short on a monthly basis in the first quarter of 2009. The Authority had thus accumulated debt to private banks. On 24 July, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had announced \$200 million in budget support to the Palestinian Authority, and the United States called on others to join in providing additional support.

Touching on security-sector reform, he said a large number of Palestinian security personnel had completed training in Jordan and had been deployed to the West Bank. Some 500 more would begin training in August. All Member States must work together to ensure an end to arms trafficking, lest Hamas restock its arsenal and spark conflict. Border crossing should be reopened in a controlled manner, involving international and Palestinian Authority participation. Arab States should support the Palestinian Authority by demonstrating that negotiations, and not the terrorism chosen by Hamas, was the path to a viable State.

Recalling that President Obama had called for the normalization of relations in the context of significant Israeli action towards the shared goal of regional stability, he said the peace initiative supported by the Organization of the Islamic Conference was a positive step, but more was needed. Meaningful steps must be taken to contribute to a positive international backdrop for peace talks in international forums, including the United Nations. The United States would look for early signs of change in that regard, and welcomed expressions of commitment to a two-State solution by Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas.

Turning to Lebanon, he called for full implementation of Council resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006) as the only path to protecting Lebanese sovereignty and independence. As the Council had heard last week, explosions south of the Litani River indicated that a large quantity of arms had been stored there, and the evidence pointed to Hezbollah. That development demonstrated the urgent need to bring arms under State control, and for the international community to support UNIFIL's mission. Such arms posed an important threat to civilians in Lebanon and Israel.

Hezbollah had admitted that it was continuing to rearm, which was a violation of the core objective of resolution 1701 (2006), he said. Indeed, it was Hezbollah that had launched the war in 2006, which neither Lebanon nor Israel had sought. The United States called on Hezbollah to transform itself into a solely political party, and for the international community to take action on the issue of its arms stock, including by investigating the explosion of the arms cache. Resolving that situation would reassure Israel of the security of its northern border and citizens. Until then, it was likely to persist in carrying out over-flights.

JEAN-PIERRE LACROIX ( [France](#) ) welcomed the recent elections in Lebanon as a positive step towards democracy, and expressed hope that unity, stability and reform would be pursued there. However, recent events in southern Lebanon recalled the need for full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), and in that connection, France reiterated its support for UNIFIL since any attack against the mission was unacceptable.

Turning to the Israeli-Palestinian question, he said the recent declaration by the Israeli Prime Minister was a first welcome step towards a two-State solution. The challenge now was to determine the means to meet that objective. There was a need to improve the daily living conditions of Palestinians, and both parties should implement their obligations under the Road Map. The Israelis should cease all settlement activities, a point emphasized by United States President Obama and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France, who had pointed out that settlements would not contribute to Israel's security. It was also important to ensure freedom of movement and humanitarian access in Gaza. The recent lifting of some major obstacles to circulation must be taken further.

The Palestinian Authority must pursue the efforts to strengthen the security sector and enforce the rule of law, he continued. Another priority involved combating terrorism. Consolidating the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas was still a priority, and resolution 1860 (2009) set the parameters in that regard, including the reopening of border crossings and the establishment of mechanisms to prevent smuggling. He called for an immediate opening of checkpoints and the resumption of economic activity. Intra-Palestinian reconciliation was also vital, and France supported Egypt's mediation efforts in that regard. The time had also come to move forward on the Syrian track.

BONAVENTURE KOUDOGOU ( [Burkina Faso](#) ) said that ongoing settlement activities in the West Bank and the appalling humanitarian situation in Gaza were among the obstacles to resolving the conflict and compromised the momentum towards the resumption of dialogue. The parties must commit firmly and without preconditions to direct discussions. The spirit as well as the letter of the relevant Council resolutions must be respected.

He stressed the importance of a stable and prosperous Middle East, with full participation by a stable and viable Palestinian State, living side by side with its neighbours. The first step towards achieving that was to establish a genuine climate of confidence, which required the end of colonization and settlement building, guarantees of humanitarian access and an end to the firing of rockets into Israeli territory. The Palestinians must rebuild their unity, and Burkina Faso welcomed efforts to provide support for that goal.

Expressing the hope that donors would keep the promises they had made at the donor conference in Sharm el-Sheikh last March, he said humanitarian aid must be allowed to reach the Palestinian population. Peace remained a long way off, but there were grounds for hope, such as the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Lebanon and Syria. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict required ongoing attention and unflagging support from the Council to ensure compliance with all its resolutions. A comprehensive, just and lasting peace could not be contemplated without dedication on the part of all actors concerned, who must take ownership of the process.

JORGE URBINA ( [Costa Rica](#) ) said the time had come for conflict in the Middle East to be put to rest. Despite the temporary suspension of negotiations, there had never before been so many peace initiatives, and the world had never been so close to transforming the aspirations of the Israeli and Palestinian communities for peace into reality. However, the remaining tasks were not easy to resolve. They included establishing peace agreements between Israel and Lebanon as well as between Israel and Syria. The Arab Peace Initiative was a key platform for normalizing relations among all States in the region, and unity among the Palestinians was essential to their own peace with Israel. Costa Rica, recognizing the valuable mediation efforts of Egypt and the Arab League, called on all sides to recognize Israel and trust in the effectiveness of a peaceful means to peace.

Expressing hope that the Palestinians and Israelis would return to negotiations without preconditions and with the understanding that they were based on already agreed provisions, he said unilateral actions by any party would not be recognized by the international community. Israel must halt the expansion of settlements, "regardless of what it chooses to call it". Every new wall built was an obstacle to peace and Israel must therefore not ignore the international consensus on that issue. Its persistent, illegal behaviour was one of the causes -- albeit not the only one -- of the ongoing conflict, and why its other concerns were not being addressed with necessary calm.

He called on Israel to contain the violence of Israeli settlers. While Costa Rica understood Israel's security concerns, they did not justify the restrictions it had placed on the Palestinian people or the creation of an "unparalleled" humanitarian situation. It must allow access for materials to rebuild the hospitals, homes and schools destroyed at the beginning of the year. In respect of international and humanitarian law, he said border-crossing activities must be normalized, and welcomed the Israeli Government's move to minimize restrictions on movement in the West Bank, while expressing hope for new conciliatory gestures. Israel's cooperation on security was a step in the right direction, which would lead to the creation of solid Palestinian institutions.

DAVID QUARREY ( [United Kingdom](#) ) said he was struck by the broad level of agreement among Council members on what must be done to achieve the ultimate goal of a two-State solution with an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders. The United Kingdom agreed fully with the Secretary-General's statement last week, which called for a freeze on Israeli settlement activity. Continued expansion, including so-called natural growth, went against the overwhelming international consensus and the Council's decisions. It created obstacles to a two-State solution, which was the only sustainable way forward.

Prime Minister Netanyahu's rejection of calls to halt work on the Shepherd's Hotel project in East Jerusalem was a source of concern, he continued. That development, in an Arab neighbourhood, would undermine prospects for a successful two-State solution with Jerusalem as the capital of both Israel and Palestine. The United Kingdom called for an immediate halt to the project and an end to house demolitions and evictions, which continued to cause resentment. The United Kingdom also encouraged Arab partners to demonstrate their readiness to move towards normalizing relations with Israel.

He went on to say that the Israeli Prime Minister's remarks on 23 July were evidence of interest in expanding peace with the Palestinians into a broader regional

peace. In addition, the Crown Prince of Bahrain had written an article in the *Washington Post* expressing his views on taking the Arab Peace Initiative forward. That kind of positive engagement was exactly the sort that would encourage Israel to believe that the region stood ready to “reach out a hand to them if they take the necessary bold steps to reach peace with the Palestinians and their neighbours in the Middle East”. Such demonstrations by Arab States were vital in showing their commitment to dialogue, in response to significant Israeli action to freeze settlements.

Firm commitments were also needed from the Palestinians, he said, noting that sporadic rocket and mortar attacks by militants continued. The people of southern Israel had the right to live free from terror, and the attacks served to embitter ordinary Israelis against the Palestinian cause. The United Kingdom called for an end to those attacks, for the immediate release of Gilad Shalit, as well as access to him by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and for an end to violence. Palestinian factions must unite to prevent further separation between the West Bank and Gaza. The United Kingdom supported Egypt’s efforts to help foster reconciliation.

VITALY CHURKIN ( [Russian Federation](#) ) said that the Council’s ministerial meeting in May, the recent Quartet meeting and the Group of Eight (G-8) Summit had all reaffirmed the international legal basis for the peace process, including the relevance of United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Road Map. Also noted was the significance of the Arab Peace Initiative and the two-State principle. All those key provisions had been reflected in President Dmitry Medvedev’s recent statement at the headquarters of the League of Arab States.

Among positive developments, he cited the readiness expressed by Prime Minister Netanyahu immediately to resume negotiations with the Palestinians and his practical acknowledgement of the two-State principle. The main objective now was to create conditions for the resumption of negotiations, with full implementation of Road Map obligations by both sides, including the fight against terrorism and free movement on the West Bank. However, settlement activity, including “natural growth”, was among the main factors preventing the resumption of negotiations. The continued blockade of Gaza was also unacceptable.

Forward movement required the restoration of unity among the Palestinians, he said, adding that a return to active diplomacy on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks was also relevant. The important thing now was to make collective efforts to eliminate obstacles to the peace process. A widely supported Russian initiative to hold an international conference on the Middle East in Moscow was devoted to that goal. The event had been discussed during the latest trip to the region by Alexander Saltanov, representative of the Russian President. The Moscow meeting should be effective and productive.

On Lebanon, he voiced support for the country’s sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. The Russian Federation was closely following the talks in Beirut among the leading political groups, and hoped for their speedy conclusion and the formation of an effective Government. At the same time, the Russian Federation was concerned about the outbreaks of tension in southern Lebanon, and he reaffirmed the need for strict compliance with resolution 1701 (2006) by all sides without exception.

LIU ZHENMIN ( [China](#) ) said the humanitarian situation in Gaza remained serious, and reconstruction slow. All parties should conscientiously implement their obligations under resolution 1860 (2009), including the reopening of border crossings. The international community should carry out its pledges to help the Palestinian people normalize their lives.

The situation in the West Bank was also a source of concern, he said, calling on Israel to respond to the appeal of the international community to stop construction of the separation wall and halt its settlement activities. Political negotiations remained the only path for the realization of lasting peace in the Middle East. Intra-Palestinian reconciliation was also important. China supported a two-State solution on the basis of relevant resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the principle of land for peace. All parties must encourage Israel and the Palestinians to persevere in their efforts to realize the two-State principle.

Turning to other important components of the Middle East peace process, he said he was pleased that the situation in Lebanon had improved somewhat, and expressed the hope that a new Government would be formed as soon as possible. China respected Lebanon’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. It was also concerned over multiple security incidents in south Lebanon, and called for full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). All parties concerned should create conditions for the resumption of negotiations between Syria and Israel. China welcomed all initiatives that were conducive to the peace process, in particular, the Russian initiative to convene an international conference on the Middle East.

FAZLI ÇORUMAN ( [Turkey](#) ), aligning himself with the European Union, said there must be a strong affirmation of the framework of peace as embodied in Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map. It was crucial to keep channels of dialogue open while maintaining commitment to the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security, the key to a permanent peace. Turkey also firmly supported the Arab Peace Initiative. In adopting a constructive and positive approach, the parties must first fulfil their obligations under the Road Map and relevant Council resolutions.

The parties must also avoid taking steps and declaring preconditions that “might empty the peace process of its contents”, he said, stressing that core issues that were subject to final status negotiations should not be undermined by unilateral acts that could lead to a crisis of confidence. He expressed concern about Israel’s settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the measures by which it could alter the character and status of Jerusalem and further isolate East Jerusalem from the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Such activities were illegal and should stop.

Underscoring the importance of decisive actions on the ground to accompany the peace process, he noted that there had been almost no progress in implementing resolution 1860 (2009). Turkey re-emphasized the importance of a full reopening of border crossings for Gaza’s socio-economic recovery and reconstruction, and for humanitarian access. In addition, reconciliation among Palestinian groups was “a must”. It was to be hoped that talks to that end would succeed, and that presidential and legislative elections would be held at the appropriate time.

Turning to Lebanon, he reaffirmed his country’s strong support for resolution 1701 (2006) and its full implementation by all parties. Hopefully Lebanon would form a Government that embraced all segments of society as soon as possible. It was essential for all Lebanese parties to act in conformity with the national dialogue initiated by President Michel Suleiman. Lasting stability was important not only for Lebanon itself, but for the entire region. Some developments in the Middle East provided hope, but such opportunity did not remain for long. “It is the right time to seize it,” he emphasized.

Council President RUHAKANARUGUNDA ( [Uganda](#) ), speaking in his national capacity, called for the early resumption and conclusion of negotiations between the parties for a lasting and comprehensive peace in the region, premised on a two-State solution, including the creation of an independent, democratic and viable Palestine living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

Welcoming Israel’s recent removal of some checkpoints and roadblocks in the West Bank, he also commended recent steps to boost the Palestinian economy in the West Bank. However, the blockade on Gaza clearly continued to have a negative impact on the fabric of civilian life, and Uganda called for its immediate end. There was also cause for concern about the significant rise in settler activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which continued to take a toll on the population.

There must be a freeze on all settlement activity, including “natural growth”, he said, also expressing his country’s concern that persisting divisions among Palestinian groups were having a detrimental effect on the overall negotiations on the Middle East question. They had adversely affected the reconstruction and development of Gaza, he said, calling on Palestinians to resolve their differences peacefully.

RIYAD MANSOUR, Permanent Observer of [Palestine](#), reminded the Council of the 21 March Summit of the League of Arab States, held in Doha, Qatar, which had reaffirmed the Arab Peace Initiative and had emerged as the key component of regional and international efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive

settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the wider Arab-Israeli one. That Initiative had been renewed in spite of the deep anger, mistrust and tensions permeating the region following the criminal Israeli military onslaught against the Gaza Strip earlier in the year. The opportunity the Initiative provided for advancing peace should not be allowed to slip away, he said.

Another encouraging development had been the reaffirmation of the international consensus on the necessity and parameters of a peace settlement and the reassertion of the Security Council's central role, he said. That was reflected in the Council's presidential statement adopted on 11 May during the ministerial meeting held under the presidency of the Russian Federation. In follow-up to resolution 1850 (2008), the Council had reaffirmed, inter alia, the two-State solution, the irreversibility of the peace process and support for an international conference on the Middle East peace process in Moscow, which could constitute an important forum for the resumption of peace negotiations.

He said he had been encouraged by the "more active, balanced approach" by the Obama Administration, based on a clear commitment to the two-State solution for peace and justice. "President Obama's speech in Cairo last month, as well as the diplomatic efforts of his Special Envoy, George Mitchell, have renewed hopes in the vast potential of responsible, fair [United States] leadership to positively contribute towards realization of a solution that will make peace and security a reality for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, as well as the Middle East region as a whole."

Despite those developments, however, the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, remained grave and the peace process was still frozen, he continued. That was because Israel rejected calls to stop its violations and instead truly pursue peace on the basis of Security Council resolutions, and the principle of land for peace underpinning all tracks of the peace process.

By contrast, the Palestinian leadership had consistently endeavoured to uphold its obligations under international law, previous agreements and the Road Map, he said. Whereas the Palestinian leadership had made "historic concessions" and repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to a two-State solution, Israel had repeatedly undermined confidence by refusing to refrain from illegal, destructive and unilateral measures prejudicing the outcome of negotiations on the core final status issues — Jerusalem, settlements, refugees, borders, security and water.

It was widely recognized that the current situation with regard to settlements was abnormal, unjust and untenable, he continued. Yet, regrettably, no real collective action had been taken in response. A "settlement freeze" and the dismantling of all "outposts" was therefore a priority. All settlement activities, including so-called natural growth, were unlawful, unnatural and contradictory to the principle of land for peace and the main objective of the peace process — the establishment of an independent Palestine living side by side with Israel in peace and security on the basis of the 1967 borders.

Attempts to characterize Israeli acceptance of a two-State solution as a "concession" should be rejected, he emphasized. The two-State concept not only found its basis in Security Council resolutions, but dated back to the General Assembly's partition resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, to which Israel owed its very existence. The international community must remain active and consistent in its efforts to advance the international consensus vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the core of the wider Arab-Israeli conflict.

GABRIELA SHALEV ( [Israel](#) ) read an excerpt from a letter appearing in the Lebanese paper *Al-Mustaqbal* on 16 July on the explosion of an arms depot in the town of Khirbat Silim. Written by residents of the town, the letter addressed the President of Lebanon and the leaders of Hizbullah. A line from the letter stated: "If you, as you claim, tie your activity with the religion and with Allah, then you must empty the residential areas of weaponry and ammunition, and of all else that threatens our lives".

She said the explosion had demonstrated that the Hizbullah terrorist organization, together with its two sponsors, who were members of the United Nations, continued to operate south of the Litani River in overt violation of Council resolution 1701 (2006). It had demonstrated the volatile reality on the ground and that there were challenges to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), including an un-enforced arms embargo along the Lebanon-Syria border and the presence of Hizbullah on the ground. The group threatened Israel, Lebanon and the wider region, while continuing to build its military infrastructure north and south of the Litani River.

Hizbullah's repeated breaches of the Council's demands indicated the danger posed by Iran, she continued. From southern Lebanon to Gaza, the arming, training and financing of terrorists bore the same certificate of origin: Tehran. Moreover, Iran continued to pursue the development of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles, which was a clear threat to peace and security. Israel called on the Council to act urgently and effectively to end the Iranian nuclear threat and stem Iran's terrorist interference. The Council must consider more effective ways to impose its arms embargo along the Lebanon-Syria border, strengthen UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces and establish clear benchmarks to disarm and dismantle Hizbullah.

Similarly, she said, the Council could not ignore the second terrorist front confronting Israel: Hamas in Gaza. Israel had advised, in a report by Robert Serry [United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process], that it had detected the smuggling into Gaza of weapons comprising mortars, rockets, anti-tank weapons, anti-aircraft missiles and several tons of explosives. They reflected a military build-up by Hamas and its desire to provoke conflict. So far, Hamas continued to reject the terms established by the international community, including recognition of Israel.

Underscoring her country's desire for peace, she said its partners must recognize that Israel had always been and would continue to be the eternal homeland of the Jewish people. In 2009, Israel had taken a number of successful security coordination steps, extending freedom of movement for Palestinians, strengthening Palestinian security forces and improving the Palestinian economy. Some 152 roadblocks had been dismantled or had their hours of passage extended.

She went on to note that Israel had established a special ministerial committee, headed by the Prime Minister, to facilitate economic projects and integration between Israel and the West Bank. Those projects included an industrial zone of confidence in Jenin, an agricultural export venture in Jericho and tourist infrastructure along the Jordan River. Tony Blair, Envoy of the Middle East Quartet, had noted the international community had not appropriately commended or acknowledged those steps.

Israel continued to call for the immediate resumption of political dialogue with the Palestinian Authority, she said. It would continue to build a foundation for peace that would promote progress on economic, political and security-related matters. Israel called on its neighbours to translate the spirit of the Arab Peace Initiative into action. While Israeli and Palestinian security forces had successfully curbed terrorist activities, they had not yet significantly diminished the threat at hand. At the present critical junction, Israel had chosen to pursue peace, over terrorism and hatred.

CAROLINE ZIADE ( [Lebanon](#) ) said that for each call for peace, Israel was building a settlement. For each step by the international community towards the establishment of a Palestinian State, Israel introduced its own definition of that State and imposed its own conditions — no control over the air, the sea and the crossing points; no army, no contiguous territory, no sovereignty, no Jerusalem; and no return of refugees. There was only one yes — the responsibility of that so-called State to ensure Israel's security. In that context, one might ask, who would defend Palestine and the Palestinian people? Who would defend Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem? Who would defend the peace process?

She said that President Michel Suleiman of Lebanon had reiterated the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative as an opportunity to achieve a just and comprehensive peace, and urged the United States and Europe to exert more pressure on Israel to accept a fair peace. The Secretary-General, in his latest report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), had stated that it remained the best blueprint for the parties to move from the current cessation of hostilities towards a permanent ceasefire. Almost three years after the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), Lebanon was still suffering Israel's violations on a daily basis.

She pointed out that Israel's occupation of the northern part of Ghajar continued, in violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and resolution 1701 (2006). It also continued to occupy Sheba'a Farms and Kfarshouba Hills, obstructing the Secretary-General's diplomatic process to restore Lebanon's sovereignty over its land. As if all that was not enough, Lebanese authorities had dismantled an Israeli spy network. In addition to its delay in providing information on the location of millions of cluster munitions with which it had pounded Lebanon during the 2006 war, notwithstanding the hundreds of Lebanese civilians killed and maimed, Israeli officials were bombarding Lebanon with public threats to launch a massive and destructive war.

The aim of all those violations was to destabilize Lebanon and threaten its security, she said. They also threatened peace and security throughout the region. As recent incidents in the south of Lebanon, a joint investigation by the Lebanese army and UNIFIL was still under way, but preliminary information showed that the arms and ammunition found were remnants from the 2006 war. "While we are still waiting for the conclusion of the investigation, we refuse any anticipation of the outcome [...], as well as any accusations launched by Israel of arms smuggling into UNIFIL's area of operation, she said."

The international community, and the Council in particular, needed to be fully aware of Israel's intentions to change the status quo through attempts to create new facts along the Blue Line and provocations aimed at establishing new realities on the ground. That was the reason for Lebanon's repeated calls for real and sustainable progress, and for a shift away from the precarious cessation of hostilities to a permanent ceasefire. On 4 July, the Government of Lebanon had addressed a letter to the United Nations requesting the renewal of UNIFIL's mandate for an additional year, without any amendments.

LOUAY FALOUH ( [Syria](#) ) said there was only one positive element of the peace process — it showed the truth about Israel as the principal obstacle to the achievement of peace. While Arab States tried to achieve peace through the Arab Peace Initiative, Israel — instead of responding positively — committed more crimes, expanded its settlements and continued its aggression against the Palestinians, the Lebanese and the Syrians, not to mention its provocative military manoeuvres along the borders and repeated use of threats. In his latest speech, the head of the Israeli Government had rejected all the bases of the peace process set by the international community. That rejection of the need for peace at all levels constituted a reaffirmation of Israel's lack of will to create peace in the region.

He said the Palestinians were still living under occupation, facing the worst forms of injustice, as Israel continued its aggression by confiscating land, building the separation barrier and expanding settlements. Despite all that, Israel benefited from an immunity that was incomprehensible to Arab public opinion. Jerusalem was undergoing the most difficult time in its history, as Israel's activities threatened its Christian and Muslim identity. Among other things, the city's Judaization had meant the expulsion of more than 2,000 Palestinians in an act of new ethnic cleansing. Meanwhile, the inhabitants of Gaza continued to suffer a blockade in the wake of Israel's assault, during which war crimes had been committed. The international community must call for the immediate lifting of that unjust blockade, demand the reopening of all crossing points and international guarantees that Israel would not destroy what had been rebuilt.

Israel continued to refuse to return the occupied Golan Heights to Syria and to reject decisions of the international community, including Security Council resolutions, he said. It continued to pursue policies of terrorism against Syrian citizens, confiscating land, increasing the number of settlements and placing mines in the Syrian Golan. Many Syrian prisoners had been in jail for more than a quarter of a century. Declarations by Israeli leaders were contrary to the goal of peace. Could the Israeli Government, which blocked any possibility of success for the peace process, be a partner in that process?

He described the statement by Israel's delegate on the need to end arms trafficking at the Syrian-Lebanese border as an attempt to distract the attention of the international community from the crimes it had committed in the occupied territories and to hide its repeated documented violations of the Lebanon's sovereignty and resolution 1701 (2006). The Council must hold Israel responsible and demand an end to those violations. Syria had opted for peace, on the basis of well-known references to international legitimacy, including the restitution of all occupied Arab lands, among them the Syrian Golan, and the creation of an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital.

MAGED ABDELAZIZ ( [Egypt](#) ), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, expressed regret for the lack of progress, despite increased efforts at the international and regional levels, to achieve a just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict. Israel obstructed efforts to resume peace negotiations by its violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people, including their daily humiliation, in addition to its constant actions to impose unilateral solutions by illegally creating new facts on the ground. Among other things, Israel had failed to commit to a freeze on all settlement activities. The international community, including the Security Council, must use all practical means available under the Charter and international law to bring Israel into compliance.

He said the Non-Aligned Movement was deeply concerned about the extensive damage caused by the Israeli settlements, the wall and the spread of checkpoints, which were severing the Palestinian territory into separate cantons, isolating East Jerusalem, undermining the continuity, integrity, viability and unity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and jeopardizing the prospects for a two-State solution. Meanwhile, the unresolved crisis in Gaza continued to have negative repercussions on all efforts to advance the peace process. The Movement demanded that Israel lift immediately its illegal blockade by allowing the immediate and sustained opening of all border crossings. There was no legal, political or moral justification for the Israeli imprisonment of the Palestinian population in Gaza. That unlawful collective punishment must end.

Turning to Lebanon, he expressed deep concern about Israel's ongoing air and land violations of that country's sovereignty, in breach of resolution 1701 (2006). The Non-Aligned Movement called on Israel to withdraw fully from the remaining occupied Lebanese land in the Sheba'a Farms, the Karafshouba Hills and the northern part of Al Ghajar village. It also reaffirmed that all measures by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical and demographic status and institutional structure of the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as its measures to impose its own jurisdiction and administration there, were null and void, and without legal effect. The Non-Aligned Movement demanded that Israel abide by Security Council resolution 497 and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967.

The Arab side had reiterated time after time its readiness and willingness for peace, as stipulated in the Arab Peace Initiative, based on the concept of full land for full peace, he said. It was now Israel's responsibility to seize the opportunity to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace by stopping its illegal settlement activities, bringing an end to its occupation and clearly committing to the two-State solution, which should be achieved peacefully through negotiations on all core issues, on the basis of international law and the relevant resolutions.

Making a statement in his national capacity, he went on to say that his country had participated in efforts to re-launch the peace process, but Israel's escalation of its settlement policy, particularly in and around East Jerusalem, did not serve the purposes of peace, but sought to change realities on the ground and prejudice final status negotiations. Egypt wished in particular to warn the international community about Israel's intensifying endeavours to change the features of occupied East Jerusalem and to isolate and separate it from its Arab-Palestinian surroundings by confiscating land, demolishing Palestinian homes and constructing new settlement units. It also sought to prejudice Islamic holy shrines in the city and to claim that Jerusalem, with all its neighbourhoods, was its united capital. It was also important to intensify international efforts on the long-term problem of Palestinian refugees.

Encouraging the efforts of the United States, and supporting those of the Quartet, he said his country would spare no effort to achieve Palestinian reconciliation through the Cairo dialogue, leading to the reunification of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza under the legitimate leadership of the Palestinian Authority, represented by President Abbas. Egypt was also working to find arrangements that would allow the sustainable reopening of Gaza crossing points on the basis of the Movement and Access Agreement of 2005, to end Israel's collective punishment of the Palestinian civilian population of Gaza and to achieve an honest and full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009).

PETER MAURER ( [Switzerland](#) ) expressed his country's deep concern over the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, saying the recent war and its severe consequences had made living conditions in that confined and densely populated territory increasingly precarious. It had confronted the international community



with a real emergency. The near impossibility of providing basic needs, the lack of electricity, the limited supply of drinking water and the breakdown of the used-water treatment system were serious causes for alarm.

In conformity with international humanitarian law, he said that Israel, as the occupying Power, must ensure access for humanitarian organizations to the civilian population as well as the supply of goods for basic needs. "Sixty years after the adoption of the Geneva Convention, respect for international humanitarian law remains our best response to the needs of the victims of conflict," he added.

He pointed out that, while respecting Israel's security imperatives, his country considered it necessary to make a concerted effort to put in place a mechanism for humanitarian access and reconstruction. The development of such a mechanism was stipulated in resolution 1860 (2006), and should be based on the Framework for the Provision of Minimum Humanitarian Assistance in Gaza, proposed by the United Nations, and coordinated by a technical committee to ensure that humanitarian access was both adequately large and sustainable.

In the aftermath of a conflict, he said, fact-finding missions to investigate allegations of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law were the necessary response to the needs of the victims. Such missions ultimately helped to bring about a lasting settlement to the conflict in question and prevented future violations. To achieve both objectives, they must operate on the basis of a balanced mandate which took into account the concerns of all parties to the conflict as well as all kinds of violations. That was the intention of the Goldstone mission mandated by the Human Rights Council.

Welcoming the renewed commitment of the international community, particularly the United States Administration, to actively promote a global solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, he said that the Arab Peace Initiative and Israel's desire to reach a lasting peace with its neighbours were encouraging signs. The parameters of a settlement were already known and the strong involvement of the international community was essential in helping to end the agonizing and protracted conflict.

A total freeze on the extension of all settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was a determining factor for guaranteeing the peace process, he said. The destruction of Palestinian houses in East Jerusalem's old city and the planned eviction of Palestinian families must not happen. At the same time, and in order to launch a truly political process, it was essential to renounce violence. Thus the halt in rocket attacks against Israel's civilian population should be maintained. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict could not be resolved by military means.

REGINA MARIA CORDEIRO DUNLOP ( [Brazil](#) ) stressed the urgent need to gear international efforts towards Gaza's reconstruction and to meet the humanitarian needs of its population. Meanwhile, Israel must maintain open passages by abiding fully by the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access. At the same time, militant groups in Gaza must show restraint and refrain from violence against Israeli civilians. As for the West Bank, Israel must freeze all settlement activities, including those aimed at accommodating "natural growth", and dismantle existing ones, mainly those built after 2000. That was particularly relevant in East Jerusalem, where attempts to redraw the demographics complicated an already difficult situation. Work on the wall, which was illegal according to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, must stop.

She said her country had contributed to efforts to foster socio-economic development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in ways that helped defuse tension and lessen dissatisfaction. For example, it was currently building a sports centre in Ramallah with various partners, and would bring two of the most prestigious Brazilian soccer teams to play there. In the diplomatic arena, Brazil's envoy to the Middle East had recently toured the region, where he had extended support for peace through a wide range of contacts.

The Brazilian Government was currently hosting a media seminar on peace in the Middle East with the United Nations Department of Public Information, which had brought together politicians, journalists, intellectuals and civil society groups from Israel, Palestine, Brazil and other South American countries. Finally, given that 7 million Brazilians were of Lebanese descent, the country was understandably interested in developments in that country. While encouraged by the recent elections and President Suleiman's efforts to build trust, the discovery of an arms cache in southern Lebanon was a source of concern. It was essential that the parties cooperate fully with UNIFIL's investigation.

MARTY M. NATALEGAWA ( [Indonesia](#) ), associating himself with the Non-Aligned Movement, said the debate provided a reminder of the continuing hardships in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Indonesia was profoundly concerned about the depth of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The worst of the military action had ended, but the flow of food, medicine and reconstruction material was grossly inadequate, a situation that the international community could not allow to continue. It should speak as one in demanding that Israel reopen the border crossings to allow reconstruction efforts to take place and the entry of humanitarian supplies to ease the crisis.

Of Israel's illegal practices, its settlements were among the great affronts to peace, he said. Despite repeated protests by the international community, Israel persisted in its efforts to change the character and legal status of East Jerusalem. Indonesia condemned its settlement policies, which gravely undermined the contiguity, integrity, viability and unity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and jeopardized the prospects for a two-State solution. However, Indonesia was encouraged by the ever-strengthening international consensus in rejecting the settlements and demanding their dismantling.

While Israel remained impervious to international exhortation to live up to its commitment to a two-State solution, there were a number of significant developments from which to draw encouragement, he said. There was a renewed sense of urgency in the intra-Palestinian reconciliation talks facilitated by Egypt; the international community had demonstrated its commitment to the cause of peace in Palestine through pledges of material assistance, as seen at Sharm el-Sheikh in March; and there was a stepping up of diplomatic activity aimed at restarting negotiations, with the United States and the Quartet making particularly vigorous efforts. Indonesia, for its part, was steadfast in its support for Palestinian statehood, and called for a settlement based on Council resolutions, the Madrid terms and the Arab Peace Initiative. Also, because comprehensive and lasting peace required progress on the Israel-Lebanon and Israel-Syria tracks, Indonesia demanded that Israel comply with the relevant Council resolutions and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the 1967 lines.

ANDERS LIDÉN ( [Sweden](#) ), speaking on behalf of the European Union and associated States, said that continued settlement activities, house demolitions and evictions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, remained a serious concern. Israel should end its settlement activities immediately, including so-called natural growth, and dismantle all outposts erected since March 2001. The settlements were illegal under international law and constituted an obstacle to peace. If there was to be genuine peace, a way must be found to share Jerusalem as the capital of two States. The European Union would not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties.

Turning to the Gaza crisis, he emphasized the need to implement resolution 1860 (2009) in full. The European Union remained gravely concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza and called for the immediate and unconditional reopening of crossings to allow the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and people into and out of Gaza. Reconstruction and economic recovery must be allowed in and the current humanitarian crisis must be resolved. He called for an end to all violence, including rocket attacks into Israel. There was also a need for an effective mechanism to prevent the smuggling of arms and ammunition into the Gaza Strip, and those holding the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit should release him without delay.

He called on Israel to work unequivocally towards a two-State solution, and welcomed Prime Minister Netanyahu's initial announcement of commitment to a peace that would include a Palestinian State. The Palestinian Authority should continue to make every effort to improve law and order in the territories under its control, and he welcomed the steps taken so far. All parties must stop incitement to violence against civilians and respect international humanitarian law and human rights. The European Union would continue to follow closely the investigation into alleged violations of international humanitarian law and human rights.

Calling upon the Palestinians to step up intra-Palestinian reconciliation efforts behind President Abbas, he said the European Union supported the mediation by Egypt and the Arab League. The European Union would promote Palestinian State-building and intensify work in partnership with the Palestinian Authority on reforms. Civilian police and the judicial sector would continue to be a focus of that support. The declared readiness of the Government of Israel to promote Palestinian economic development was a positive sign, and it should be carried out within the framework of the broader perspective of a two-State solution.

Welcoming the positive steps recently taken by the Israeli authorities to ease restrictions on movement in the West Bank, he said the European Union looked forward to sustained improvements on movement and access in all the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It was ready to work closely with Israel, the Palestinian Authority and international donors to achieve sustainable development of the Palestinian economy. It would also contribute substantially to post-conflict arrangements aimed at ensuring the sustainability of peace agreements, addressing also the regional economic and security dimensions.

In line with the spirit of the Arab Peace Initiative, the European Union invited Israel and all Arab countries to take confidence-building measures to stimulate mutual trust and create an atmosphere conducive to conflict resolution. The European Union expected Syria and Israel to resume peace negotiations, and congratulated the people of Lebanon on the successful holding of parliamentary elections. In the light of worrying recent developments in south Lebanon, it reiterated its call to all the parties to fully abide by resolution 1701 (2006).

ZAINOL RAHIMZAINUDDIN ( Malaysia ) said words must be matched by actions to reflect a genuine desire for progress in the quest for a just and lasting solution on Palestine, as well as a comprehensive peace, based on a two-State solution, relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. Unfortunately, Israel's negative signals, the statements of its leaders and its actions on the ground indicated that Israel had no intention or desire to find a durable and lasting solution. "It baffles us all that, while on the one hand seeming to agree to a two-State solution, on the other hand, illegal Israeli settlements continue to be built in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem," he said.

Palestinian lands were being illegally confiscated, including through the building of the separation wall, despite the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, he noted. Not only had settlement construction not been halted, there was even a caveat for allowing its expansion due to "natural growth". Clearly, the calls by the international community, including by major partners, to stop that illegal activity had not been heeded.

Turing to Gaza, he said the Council should take the necessary action to end the siege of that enclave. The Council should also take all necessary and appropriate action to ensure that all parties resumed the peace negotiations, he said in conclusion. Malaysia supported a recent proposal by the European Union High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy that the Council set a deadline for resolving the question of Palestine and the eventual creation of a Palestinian State.

KHALID AL NAFISEE ( Saudi Arabia ) said the Arab-Israeli conflict had overshadowed all other issues in the Middle East for the past six decades, creating a climate conducive to the development of extremism and the spread of terrorism. Saudi Arabia, along with other Arab countries, had made its commitment to peace in the Arab Peace Initiative, but unfortunately there had been no reciprocal commitment from Israel. It was crucial to stress the importance of reviving the peace process and for Israel to demonstrate its seriousness, including through an immediate cessation of settlement building and expansion.

The status quo in Gaza also exacerbated the problem, he said, calling on Israel also to withdraw its forces from all occupied lands, including the Golan in Syria and the Sheba'a Farms and Kafreshuba Hills in Lebanon. That must go hand in hand with the overall peace plan in the region. Saudi Arabia welcomed the efforts by the Obama Administration for a comprehensive peace plan and the establishment of a sovereign State for the Palestinian people, living side by side with the State of Israel.

MOHAMMED AL-ALLAF ( Jordan ), associating himself with the Non-Aligned Movement, said recent developments provided a favourable backdrop for tangible progress. "If we let slip this opportunity, this will have catastrophic consequences for the region." Since a lasting solution to Palestine was of key importance to resolving the conflict in the Middle East, the international community must intensify its efforts to achieve such a solution on the basis of a clear plan that also rendered Israel secure.

He said his country was prepared to make every effort to support negotiations towards a viable Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, according to international accords and provisions of the Arab Peace Initiative. The type of international and regional effort being expended currently made the present "a good time" to act. Yet, Israel continued its unilateral policies, such as plans to create new settlements in East Jerusalem.

He said that even the expansion of existing settlements was unacceptable, because they had the effect of creating a new situation on the ground, in violation of international humanitarian law and Israel's own commitments under the Road Map. It increased tension in the region and imperilled prospects for a just and lasting solution. If Israel wished to prove its sincerity, it must halt all such activity and dismantle illegal settlements. It must also stop the "Judaization" of Jerusalem (Al Quds), the destruction of houses, the construction of barriers and the confiscation of land.

President Obama's message in Cairo had had a positive impact in the Arab world, and the international community must give the United States Special Envoy every chance for success, he said. The international community must act immediately to stop the humanitarian suffering in Gaza, which was increasing the despair in the region and throughout the Arab and Muslim world. Jordan was working to encourage international stakeholders to halt the suffering of the Palestinian people, and Jordanian volunteer organizations would continue to deliver aid.

MOHAMMED LOULICHKI ( Morocco ) said that, despite a range of initiatives, the Palestinian question and the Middle East crisis still awaited a comprehensive settlement. All the relevant resolutions stressed the right of the Palestinian people to a viable and independent State and the need for Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. However, the situation of the Palestinian people remained unchanged and their suffering continued. The Palestinian Authority had demonstrated its sincere willingness to fulfil all its commitments, yet Israel had countered that willingness with procrastination and continued oppressive practices.

He said all recent United Nations reports and an investigation conducted on behalf of the Human Rights Council following the conflict in Gaza demonstrated Israel's deliberate targeting of Palestinian civilians, confirmed by some Israeli soldiers. Israel also continued the Judaization of the holy city of Jerusalem, destroying convergence among the religions. The international community and the Security Council should deploy intensive efforts to make Israel prove its seriousness through tangible steps, including the cessation of settlements. As for the Arab side, it had continued to express its willingness to seek a comprehensive peace, in particular through the Arab Peace Initiative. Morocco appreciated the stance expressed by the Obama Administration and appreciated Washington's endeavours to urge the parties returned to the negotiation table. It was time for the international community to demonstrate its responsibility towards the Palestinian people.

MARIA FERNANDA ESPINOSA ( Ecuador ), associating herself with the Non-Aligned Movement, condemned the serious humanitarian situation resulting from Israel's aggression against the Palestinian people. Seven months had passed since the last massive military intervention, and despite the adoption of resolution 1860 (2009), there had been no complete and lasting ceasefire, nor a complete withdrawal from Gaza. There was no unimpeded supply of humanitarian assistance into the enclave. No sanctions had been imposed as a result of investigations of the serious human rights violations committed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in January. More than half a year had passed, yet the blockade on food, energy, medicine, energy and building materials persisted. Sick people were not free to move, and Israel continued to practise selective destruction of public and private property.

She said reiterated her country's solidarity with the innocent victims of ongoing Israeli aggression, and appealed urgently to the Council for an immediate solution to the humanitarian crisis and the search for a durable solution, through full compliance with the relevant Council resolutions. A comprehensive solution could

not possibly be reached through military means. Rather, it must be achieved through dialogue, while showing respect for international law, an effective commitment to non-aggression, Israel's withdrawal and the establishment of a Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. It was the responsibility of the United Nations to implement the measures available to it under the Charter, to ensure that the occupying Power stopped violating international law and human rights.

ANET PINO RIVERO ( Cuba ) expressed regret for the lack of progress, despite growing international efforts to deal with essential issues regarding Palestine. Cuba was also greatly disturbed by the critical conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as a result of the actions of the occupying Power, and underscored the importance of a lasting ceasefire in Gaza, to be extended to the West Bank. Cuba supported the efforts of Egypt in that regard.

She condemned inhuman and illegal closures by Israel, which had resulted in the imprisonment of the Palestinian population and hampered access for humanitarian assistance and basic necessities. It was time for Israel to end its blockade of Gaza. She also condemned Israel's continuing settlement activities, the confiscation of land, the construction of the wall, the demolition of homes and the imposition of arbitrary and racist restrictions on residents through a system of permits and checkpoints, in serious violation of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

Peace negotiations were incompatible with illegal settlement activities, aimed at the de facto annexation of Palestinian territory and the imposition of a forced, unilateral solution. Cuba also urged a quick resolution of the Sheba'a Farms issue, and called on all parties to cooperate in protecting the sovereign rights of the Lebanese people. There was also no legal effect for any measure by Israel aimed at changing the legal, physical and demographic condition in the occupied Syrian Golan. It was time for Israel to comply with relevant resolutions and withdraw completely from the Syrian Golan to the borders of 1967.

ISMAT JAHAN ( Bangladesh ) said her country's solidarity with the Palestinian cause and support for their inalienable rights was constant and unwavering. Israel's continuing occupation was the root cause of violence, unrest and destabilization in the region. Bangladesh condemned the illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which undermined its unity and contiguity. All concerned parties should call for an immediate freeze on the expansion of Israeli settlements and for the dismantling of existing ones.

Israel's blockade on Gaza was a major cause for concern, she said, stressing that such injustice could not be allowed to continue and must be rolled back. While welcoming various initiatives and efforts taken so far, Bangladesh emphasized that the lack of progress on those issues should not deter the international community from renewing its commitment and intensifying its efforts for a permanent solution to the conflict. It was necessary to seize every opportunity to take measures to make Israel and its patrons comply with the relevant resolutions. The United Nations, and particularly the Security Council, must ensure full and effective implementation of resolution 1860 (2009).

Israel's continuing defiance and blatant disregard for international law should be addressed by all concerned, including the Council and the wider international community, she said. Greater responsibility should be required of the Quartet in steering the peace process and ensuring Israel's compliance with all relevant resolutions and principles of international law. The unity of and solidarity among the Palestinians should be retained by all means. Otherwise, the whole effort to establish an independent Palestinian State would be delayed.

GHAZI JOMAA ( Tunisia ) said his country would stand by the Palestinian people in their just struggle to reclaim their legitimate national rights and establish an independent State. Tunisia welcomed the positive stance of the United States regarding the peace process and a two-State vision. It called on the international community and the Quartet to intensify its efforts to help restart negotiations on the basis of international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, which was now a major term of reference for peace.

He said the international community was duty-bound to draw attention to dangerous Israeli practices against the Palestinian people, by which it deprived them of their legitimate rights through settlements and the blockade. Those practices exacerbated the situation and stood in the way of resumed negotiations, which ought to be built on trust.

Resolving the situation in the Middle East required Israel to withdraw from Syrian and Lebanese territories as well, he said. Today, however, the international community must focus on comprehensive and effective action, particularly following Israel's aggression against Gaza, which had led to immense loss of life and destruction of infrastructure. Member States should seize the opportunity to end the suffering of Palestinians, which had continued for more than six decades.

JAIME HERMDA CASTILLO ( Nicaragua ) said the right of conquest was supposed to have ceased with the end of colonization and the drafting of the United Nations Charter. Yet Israel continued to practise it even today. Under conquest, the natural inhabitants of a territory went from being owners to living in precarious conditions after having survived genocide by the occupiers. That was what had happened in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Furthermore, the Israeli Government had recently confirmed that the question of Jerusalem was not up for discussion. In 1967, Israel had seized East Jerusalem and in 1980 it had proclaimed the eastern and western parts of the city as its indivisible capital, which was illegal according to the Council and the General Assembly.

Despite United Nations resolutions declaring Israeli actions illegal, tensions continued to grow after 40 years of occupation, he said. Settlement campaigns had resulted in the isolation of East Jerusalem from the rest of the Palestinian Territory and in the breakdown of the city's original demographic composition and cultural heritage. The occupation had worsened after the construction of the separation wall, which the International Court of Justice had declared to be in contravention of international law.

In Gaza, there had been no progress since the Israeli military operation seven months ago, he continued. Seriously ill people could not receive treatment, children suffered from psychological problems, yet the blockade continued while the United Nations did nothing. To enable people to rebuild their lives, restrictions on movements and goods must be lifted. Unfortunately, the Council had not adopted effective measures to end Israel's illegal actions. The universal consensus was that the Israeli colonization must end, and that the Palestinian people must be allowed to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination.

BERIT ENGE ( Norway ) said a political framework for a two-State solution – based on the Road Map – was needed to mobilize broad international support for Palestinian State-building. The time had come to hold the parties to account, and to demand that they honour their commitments under the Road Map and other key obligations. Without tangible improvements on the ground, the work of the negotiators would be undermined and public support for a two-State solution would evaporate. Norway strongly supported Egyptian efforts to heal the internal division among the Palestinians.

The import and export of goods must be restored to revive the economy of Gaza, she said, urging Israel to reconsider its policy towards the civilian population in the enclave. As Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, a donor group supporting the Palestinian Authority, Norway believed that economic progress in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was essential to ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Through timely budgetary support from major donors, Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad had staved off the impending crisis for now, but a considerable gap must be filled.

Western and Arab donors alike should honour their pledges, she said. On the other hand, the parties were ill-advised to take the donors for granted. The aim was to facilitate an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel. Without a political endgame in clear view, donor commitment at current levels could hardly be sustained. Dependency was not a solution, while private value generation was. The roadblocks that literally stood in the way of economic development must be removed, in accordance with Israel's international obligations.

ESHAGH AL HABIB ( Iran ) said that statements by officials of the Israeli regime, together with that regime's policies and practices in the past several months, had

yet again put on display the fact that it had neither believed in or respected peace. Under the slogan of peace it only tried to mislead others in order to buy time and pave the way for further aggressive policies. Israel's intransigent insistence on illegal colonization campaign and settlement construction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, under the absurd pretext of "natural growth", showed its vicious intention to expand its occupation, rather than heed the international community's calls to end it.

The international community's failure to stop Israeli crimes against Palestinians and others in the region had only emboldened the regime to continue its inhumane and criminal behaviour, he continued. There should be no doubt that occupation lay at the centre of the Palestinian conflict as well as the overall tension and instability in the Middle East. The Security Council was expected to shoulder its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security by putting an end to the inhumane and aggressive actions of the Israeli regime. It should force Israel to cease completely and permanently its settlement activities, lift the blockade against the Gaza Strip, cease and desist from its violation of Palestinian rights and end its occupation of all Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian lands.

Reiterating his country's rejection of the baseless and absurd allegations by the representative of the Israeli regime today, he said they were another tired attempt to divert attention from its crimes. That wicked play had not worked in the past, and it would not work in the future. It was preposterous that a criminal regime possessing nuclear weapons, and which was not a party to international treaties on weapons of mass destruction, accused others without grounds. Nothing could be more dangerous than nuclear weapons in the hands of the terrorist Israeli regime that had been proven to have no respect for human rights or international regulations. That danger should be countered resolutely and urgently.

ABDULLAH HUSSAIN HAROON ( Pakistan ) said there was a clear sense that the current state of affairs was untenable. The situation of the Palestinian people was intolerable and their legitimate aspirations for freedom and dignity, as well as an independent and sovereign State of their own, could not be held back any longer. The international community must create the conditions for the early resumption of negotiations. Little optimism was offered by political developments in the region and the continuing grave situation on the ground, but the international consensus and the call for peace were growing stronger in the new global political scenario. The priority accorded to the issue by President Obama was welcome.

He said there was full recognition of the fact that a just settlement of the Palestinian question was central to ending the cycle of suspicion and discord that had undermined peace and security in the Middle East. But a transformative shift was needed in the political process and the situation on the ground, which were interdependent. The futility of using force and unilateral action was beyond doubt, and efforts to create new facts on the ground that would prejudice the outcome of negotiations were unacceptable. In addition, greater political will was required to bring the parties together in good faith and without preconditions, with the aim of achieving a comprehensive agreement within a reasonable time frame.

However, any progress would be difficult without full implementation by the parties of their respective obligations, particularly those under the Road Map, he stressed. Regrettably, the world was witnessing the contrary. The construction of the illegal separation wall continued, as did the suffocating complex of roadblocks and permits, which remained in place. Thousands of Palestinians, including women and children, remained incarcerated in Israeli prisons and there was no accountability for the human suffering resulting from the Gaza blockade. Illegal settlement activities continued, as well, in the West Bank. The international community was right to call on Israel to freeze all settlement activities, including "natural growth", dismantle outposts and refrain from home demolitions and evictions in East Jerusalem. The Council had a crucial role in supporting efforts at renewed negotiations. It was also essential to achieve parallel progress on the Israel-Syria and Israel-Lebanon fronts.

BASO SANGQU ( South Africa ), associating himself with the Non-Aligned Movement, said positive developments included the successful elections in Lebanon and the Arab League's regional initiatives to promote intra-Palestinian reconciliation and unity. The 4 June address by President Obama and recent meetings between senior United States officials and leaders in the Middle East had also raised hopes. However, those developments had yet to translate into progress. Palestinians continued to face daily hardships under occupation and violent Israeli military incursions into Palestinian areas continued unabated, while the Israelis expanded settlements and the separation wall despite international condemnation. South Africa condemned the continued Israeli blockade and the construction and expansion of illegal settlements.

He said his country's unwavering position of support for the establishment of a viable Palestinian State was based on a firm belief that only a two-State solution could bring lasting peace to the region. Negotiations were the only way to end the conflict and bring about an end to the occupation of Palestinian and other Arab lands. The Council should not neglect its Charter mandate to assist in the attainment of peace. It must act decisively in the matter. For its part, South Africa continued to support a negotiated solution, in line with international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, which called for the establishment of a Palestinian State existing alongside Israel. South Africa also commended the Government of Lebanon for its efforts to stabilize the country in the aftermath of Israel's aggression and its violations of Lebanese territory.

SALEM MUBARAK SHAFI AL-SHAFI ( Qatar ) said the world was still witnessing the effects of Israel's recent aggression against Gaza, where disproportionate force and illegal substances, such as white phosphorous, had been used. Those actions represented war crimes, and those responsible should be held accountable. Israel was also obstructing the provision of humanitarian aid to the population of Gaza. The Security Council routinely discussed the protection of civilians in armed conflict and the General Assembly was currently examining the question of the responsibility to protect. That notwithstanding, Palestinian suffering resulting from illegal Israeli practices continued unabated.

Israel's actions on the ground threatened the contiguity and unity of the Palestinian Territory, he continued. That was a blow to the efforts of the international community, especially those of the Quartet. The situation could be resolved through a two-State solution, but Israeli actions, especially around East Jerusalem, undermined the efforts to end the occupation. Qatar rejected Israel's attempts to justify its activities by citing "natural growth", because settlement activity was illegal to begin with.

He also addressed Israel's violations in Lebanon and the occupied Syrian Golan, saying that a lasting, comprehensive and just peace in the region could only be based on the principle of land for peace, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, which had been reaffirmed in Doha in March. Continued offering of the Initiative was related to Israel's acceptance of it. The new Israeli Government should take advantage of the genuine Arab desire to end the crisis in the Middle East. In conclusion, he also affirmed the need for further participation of all Palestinian factions in the peace process.

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