



## Security Council SC/9626

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

Security Council  
6100<sup>th</sup> Meeting (AM & PM)

### UNDER-SECRETARY GENERAL, IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL, TELLS OF LITTLE

#### PROGRESS TOWARDS REBUILDING GAZA AFTER ISRAELI INVASION

##### Continuing Blockade, Closure of Border Crossings Make Humanitarian Situation Worse, Strangle Economy, Members Hear

Two months after Israel unilaterally ended its military incursion into Gaza and the international community's pledge of billions of dollars in reconstruction aid for the devastated Palestinian territory, very little concrete progress had been made towards establishing a proper ceasefire, opening Israel's border crossings into the enclave, ensuring unimpeded humanitarian access, preventing arms and ammunition smuggling, or achieving intra-Palestinian reconciliation, B. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, said this afternoon in a briefing to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East.

Instead, there was a worrying situation of impasse and uncertainty, he said, recalling that donors had pledged \$4.5 billion in humanitarian and economic relief to rebuild homes, develop agriculture and spur private sector recovery at the International Conference on the Palestinian Economy and Gaza Reconstruction, held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on 2 March. The intolerable situation at the Gaza crossings – where the entry of construction materials, spare parts and other industrial goods was almost totally banned – was a real impediment to recovery. While food and medical supplies were allowed in, they were woefully insufficient to meet the population's needs.

A new Israeli Government had yet to be formed following the recent Knesset elections, he said, expressing concern at Israel's lack of adequate steps to lift the weight of occupation. Israel had served dozens of new demolition and eviction notices, which, if implemented, would affect hundreds of Palestinian residents throughout East Jerusalem, as well as structures located in Area C of the West Bank. Israel should stop the demolitions and refrain from unilateral actions that could prejudice final-status issues.

Turning to the situation in Lebanon, he said the 23 March killing by a roadside bomb of Kamal Medhat, Deputy Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) representative in Lebanon, had shattered the prevailing relative calm in that country. The Secretary-General had condemned the terrorist attack and expressed hope that the perpetrators would be brought to justice promptly.

The Permanent Observer for Palestine said Israel's aggression had ravaged a tiny area already gravely deprived and suffering due to years of unlawful blockade. Israel had killed more than 1,400 Palestinians, mostly civilians, and injured more than 5,500 others, including 1,800 children. Monumental efforts and billions of dollars were required to rebuild Gaza, where the occupying Power had damaged and completely destroyed more than 21,000 homes and refugee shelters, thousands of businesses, agricultural farmlands and vital civilian infrastructure. The massive destruction continued to pose daunting challenges to implementation of resolution 1860 (2009).

Israel must lift its inhumane blockade of Gaza to end the imprisonment of the Palestinian people, he said. The immediate, sustained opening of all border crossings was imperative, as was the entry of all essential supplies, including sufficient food, medicine and fuel, building supplies for reconstruction, and other goods necessary for economic recovery. There was a need for serious steps to hold Israel accountable for its crimes against the Palestinian population and the Council should conduct an investigation into Israel's grave breaches of international law, bearing in mind articles 146, 147 and 148 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

In that regard, the Palestinian leadership had taken initial steps to collect evidence and explore options, he said. Uncovering the truth and delivering justice was a precondition for lasting peace and coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians, and the only way to end Israel's impunity and prevent it from committing the same crimes again. Although intra-Palestinian peace talks mediated by Egypt had stalled, there was hope that the political factions would unite to strengthen efforts to pursue their just national cause. Arrangements were being made for a Transitional Government, elections and other priority issues, and the international community should engage diplomatically with a unified, representative Palestinian leadership.

Israel's representative, agreeing that civilians on both sides, including children, had indeed suffered from the conflict, said each side had stories to tell, but they should only be used to advance the cause of peace. It was worth remembering that Hamas terrorists – rather than the citizens of Gaza – had been the true target of Israel's military operation. Hamas militants had used ordinary Gazans as human shields in heavily populated civilian areas. Far from being indifferent to the humanitarian situation, Israel had delivered more than 140,000 tons of humanitarian supplies and 13.5 million litres of fuel for Gaza's power station since 18 January. However, expanded activity at the border crossings would be discussed upon the release of Corporal Gilad Shalit, captured by Hamas in 2006.

Underscoring her country's commitment to the peace process – which must be based on the Quartet principles of recognition of Israel, renunciation of terrorism and violence, and adherence to previous agreements – she said that any future Palestinian Government must abide by those basic conditions. Relations between the two continued to advance in real terms. Israel had recently removed some 10 roadblocks and 130 temporary barriers in the West Bank and kept them open despite the ruthless murder by terrorists of two Israeli police officers and the discovery of a car bomb at a Haifa shopping mall. Moreover, the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority had stepped up security cooperation. Such positive developments were proof that confidence-building steps could bring the parties closer to their common goal. By contrast, the situation in Gaza remained problematic, with more than 100 rockets and 60 mortars having been launched from the enclave into Israel since 18 January.

She said that, while moderates in the region worked towards peace, extremists of the Hamas and Hizbullah terrorist organizations, backed by their Iranian and Syrian patrons, were using every opportunity to sabotage progress. Iran's threats to wipe Israel off the map and develop nuclear capabilities should sound alarms across the globe. Regarding the situation in Lebanon, Israel had witnessed the most serious violations of resolution 1701 (2006) since its adoption when rockets had been fired into its territory, wounding civilians. Israel had been alerting the Council to Hizbullah's ongoing military build-up in southern Lebanon.

Lebanon's representative retorted by saying that Israel continued to postpone implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), occupy parts of southern Lebanon and commit violations of Lebanese airspace. Israel also refused to provide maps showing the location of the cluster bombs its warplanes had dropped during the 2006 war. Lebanon appealed to the Secretary-General to work towards solutions that would guarantee Israel's withdrawal from the Sheba'a Farms and the Council to implement its resolutions on the question of Palestine. Every day in which implementation of those resolutions was delayed would escalate the risk of crises in the region and threats to international peace and security, while undermining the Council's credibility.

Malaysia's representative expressed similar concerns, saying there was no guarantee that Israel would not launch another strike, as it had done many times, including in Lebanon in 2006. Malaysia reiterated its call for the creation of a war crimes tribunal to investigate and prosecute those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza. The international community was morally obligated to give the survivors at least a sense of closure and failure to do so could create a generation of even more radicalized Palestinians. While Malaysia welcomed the Secretary-General's creation of the Board of Inquiry to investigate attacks on United Nations premises and staff in Gaza, its mandate did not include investigating attacks on Palestinian civilians and homes, both of which were in clear violation of international law. The Council should act accordingly, otherwise it would signal that it condoned such actions and justified criminality.

Also addressing the Council was Paul Badji (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, who said that the most troubling aspects of the invasion were the brutality and gross disregard for human life with which the Israeli military had carried out the operation. Recent accounts by Israeli soldiers now made it clear that there had been "unbridled contempt for, and forcefulness against the Palestinians". As reported in *Haaretz*, an Israeli squad leader had said that most of the men under his command had felt that the lives of Palestinians were far less important than those of Israeli soldiers. While visiting Palestine Hospital in Cairo, Committee members had been horrified by the severity of the wounded Gazans' injuries and shocked to learn from medical personnel that several of those cases, for unknown reasons, had not responded to the customary treatment protocols. That was something the international community should examine seriously.

Other speakers addressing the Council were representatives of Uganda, Turkey, Viet Nam, China, Costa Rica, Russian Federation, Austria, Burkina Faso, United Kingdom, France, Japan, Mexico, United States, Croatia, Libya, Egypt, Cuba (on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement), Syria, Czech Republic (on behalf of the European Union), Brazil, Morocco, Qatar, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Ecuador, Algeria, Mauritania, South Africa, Norway, Iran, Nicaragua, Jordan, Australia, Republic of Korea, Mali, Pakistan and Venezuela.

The meeting began at 10:20 a.m. and suspended at 1:35 p.m. Resuming at 3:15 p.m., it ended at 6:20 p.m.

## Background

The Security Council met today to consider the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

## Briefing

B. LYNN PASCOE, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, said that two months since the declaration of unilateral ceasefires in Gaza, a worrying situation of impasse and uncertainty existed. Despite international engagement and support, very little concrete progress had been made on key issues outlined in Council resolution 1860 (2009), including the establishment of a proper ceasefire regime in Gaza, unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance, opening of the crossings, prevention of illicit trafficking in arms and ammunitions, and intra-Palestinian reconciliation.

Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad had announced on 7 March his intention to resign at the end of the month in order to bolster efforts to form a national conciliation Government, he said, noting that President Mahmoud Abbas had asked the Prime Minister to remain in office until the reconciliation dialogue was concluded. Talks among Palestinian factions and independents, held in Cairo between 10 and 19 March, had achieved progress in certain aspects, namely the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), elections, government, security and reconciliation. But they had adjourned without agreement and were expected to reconvene on 1 April. He reiterated support for that process, as called for in resolution 1860 (2009).

He said donors had pledged some \$4.5 billion for humanitarian and economic relief during the International Conference on the Palestinian Economy and Gaza Reconstruction, held on 2 March in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. At the Conference, Prime Minister Fayyad had initiated three large-scale interventions for Gaza's recovery, targeting the rebuilding houses, agricultural development and private-sector recovery. The United Nations supported the Palestinian Authority's relief and recovery efforts and continued to implement projects under the flash appeal, while trying at the same time to restart projects dormant for months prior to the military operation due to the lack of materials prevented by Israel from coming in.

The need for more money to support the Palestinian Authority's budget and more clarity on how to channel pledged funds were challenges, he said, but the intolerable situation at the Gaza crossings was the key impediment to bringing help and hope to Gazans. From 15 February to 21 March, a total of 3,633 truckloads – a weekly average of 727 – had entered Gaza through various crossing points from Israel and from the Egyptian crossing point at Rafah. Some 85 per cent of the imports were foodstuffs and medical supplies, whereas construction materials, spare parts and other industrial goods were almost totally banned. While the amount of goods entering Gaza had risen, and despite the Israeli Cabinet's announcement on 22 March that foodstuffs would be allowed into Gaza without restriction, the quality and quantity of imports was insufficient compared to needs.

Calling upon Israel to abide by its obligations under international humanitarian law and to open the crossings for emergency supplies and reconstruction materials, he said only 70 per cent of the industrial fuel and 25 per cent of the cooking gas needed weekly entered Gaza. Imports of petrol and diesel were

totally banned except for small quantities delivered to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the continued restrictions on the entry of cash and the inability of many, including Palestinian Authority employees, to withdraw salaries from banks, affected the livelihoods of approximately half a million Gazans.

He expressed concern about the absence of a ceasefire regime and the lack of a breakthrough in efforts to secure the release of Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit and several hundred Palestinian prisoners. During the reporting period, more than 100 rockets and mortars had been fired into Israel from Gaza, while 12 Israeli air strikes had killed 5 Palestinians and injured 30. Four United Nations Mine Action teams continued to remove and deactivate unexploded ordnance work in Gaza.

He said members of the Board of Inquiry set up by the Secretary-General to look into incidents in the territory between 27 December and 18 January had returned from the region and they were working on their report, which they would submit when the Secretary-General returned in early April. A number of allegations had emerged from soldiers of the Israel Defence Forces about improper conduct towards civilians during Operation "Cast Lead". On 19 March, the Israel Defence Forces Military Advocate General had instructed the military police to probe those allegations.

A new Israeli Government had yet to be formed following the recent Knesset elections, he said, adding that he continued to follow with concern negative actions in the West Bank, where insufficient steps were being taken to lift the weight of occupation and implement commitments. Israeli authorities had served dozens of new demolition and eviction notices, which, if implemented, would affect hundreds of Palestinian residents throughout East Jerusalem, as well as structures located in Area C of the West Bank. The Government of Israel must stop house demolitions in East Jerusalem and generally refrain from unilateral actions that may prejudice final status issues.

The construction of illegal settlements continued in Jerusalem and throughout the West Bank, and no action had been taken to remove outposts, he said. Settlement activity, including in the highly sensitive E-1 area, continued to deprive Palestinians of land for development and agriculture and to create facts on the ground that severely prejudiced final status issues. "Let me reiterate before this Council that Israel's obligations under the [Road Map](#) are clear: settlement activity, including so-called "natural growth", must be frozen and outposts must be removed." Elsewhere in the West Bank, more than 600 obstacles continued to make normal social and economic interactions impossible, while construction of the barrier continued on Occupied Palestinian Territory.

In the context of Palestinian Road Map obligations, he said Palestinian security forces remained highly visible in West Bank urban centres, preventing militants from conducting activities or displaying illegal weapons. No major operations or new deployments had taken place since the beginning of reconciliation talks and more than 100 Hamas prisoners had been released from Palestinian Authority jails. There had also been gradual improvement in cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian security forces. The Israel Defense Forces, however, continued to raid the West Bank on a daily basis and those operations had doubled in frequency since the end of the Gaza crisis.

Four Israeli policemen had been killed by Palestinians during the reporting period, he said. On 21 March, Israeli police had reported that a large bomb had been found and defused in the car park of a Haifa shopping mall. Two Palestinians had been killed by Israeli security forces and 82 Palestinians injured, mostly during protests against the barrier and settlement expansion. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had recorded 26 incidents involving Israeli settlers targeting Palestinians, which had resulted in seven injuries.

He said the Secretary-General looked forward to attending the Summit of the League of Arab States on 30 March and continued to support the convening of an international conference in Moscow in the near future. United States officials had visited Damascus, and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad had indicated his country's readiness to renew indirect negotiations with a new Israeli Government. Meanwhile, Israeli settlement activity continued in the occupied Syrian Golan.

Turning to Lebanon, he said that on 23 March, the prevailing relative calm had been interrupted when Kamal Medhat, Deputy PLO representative in Lebanon, had been killed by a roadside bomb. The Secretary-General had condemned that terrorist attack and expressed his hope that the perpetrators would be brought to justice promptly. In other developments, the Lebanese embassy in Damascus had been inaugurated on 16 March, the overall situation in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) area of operations had remained generally quiet during the past month, progress was continuing on visibly marking the Blue Line and Israeli air violations continued on an almost daily basis.

In conclusion, he stressed the importance of unity of purpose on the part of the Quartet and the international community to help stabilize Gaza and reinvigorate the peace process. Both the Israeli and Palestinian Governments must be clearly committed to the two-State solution. There was a need to continue negotiations, implementation of commitments on the ground, and a strategy for de-escalating tensions and addressing the urgent humanitarian needs in Gaza.

RIYAD MANSOUR, Permanent Observer for [Palestine](#), said there had been a dramatic deterioration of the situation on all fronts since December. Despite the reserved optimism that had followed the adoption of resolution 1850 (2008), which reaffirmed the commitment to the two-State solution and declared support for the peace negotiations begun at Annapolis in November, peace seemed more remote than ever. Resolution 1850 (2008) was the first adopted by the Council on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in more than four-and-a-half years, despite recurrent crises and turmoil requiring urgent Council action. Shortly after its adoption, instead of measures to build the confidence and trust needed to make peace, the world had again witnessed Israel's blatant disrespect for the Council, the peace process and all legal norms in its savage war against the Gaza Strip, waged in contravention of all standards of military conduct and human decency, and with disastrous humanitarian and political consequences.

That aggression had ravaged a tiny area already gravely deprived and suffering as a result of years of unlawful Israeli blockade, he said. Everyone was now aware of the human and physical tolls of destruction deliberately inflicted by the occupying Power over three weeks, the magnitude of which was unprecedented since the beginning of the occupation in 1967. The vast destruction had made recovery a gruelling experience and reconstruction immensely daunting. It continued to pose challenges for the implementation of resolution 1860 (2009), adopted by the Council at the height of the Gaza crisis. More than 1,400 Palestinians had been killed, mostly civilians, including hundreds of children and women. More than 5,500 others, including more than 1,800 children, had been injured, many of them permanently, as a result of the occupying Power's use of excessive, indiscriminate force, as well as lethal and even prohibited weaponry and ammunition.

The physical toll of destruction was equally immense, he said. Billions of dollars were required to rebuild Gaza, where the occupying Power had damaged and completely destroyed more than 21,000 homes and refugee shelters, thousands of businesses, including agricultural farmlands and vital civilian infrastructure. The task of recovery had now begun, including attempts to heal the wounds of families whose lives had been shattered and forever altered. The situation was as abnormal and unstable as imaginable. "Monumental efforts, not only funding, will be needed to help repair the physical, psychological and societal damage and the searing sense of injustice caused by this latest Israeli assault on the Palestinian people, half of whom are children, whose hopes and dreams for the future have been severely impaired."

He underscored the urgent need for a political solution that would address all outstanding issues and lead to a just resolution of the conflict that would fulfil the rights and needs of the Palestinian people to realize freedom and human dignity after decades of loss, oppression, statelessness and suffering. While addressing humanitarian needs, the world must also focus on stabilizing and restoring normality to Gaza. That would entail a permanent, durable ceasefire and vigorous efforts in Egypt to mediate such a ceasefire while promoting stability and security. Israel's inhumane blockade of Gaza must be lifted to end the imprisonment of the Palestinian people. The immediate, sustained opening of all border crossings was an imperative and must enable the importation of all essential supplies, including sufficient food, medicine and fuel, as well as building supplies for reconstruction and other goods and commercial flows necessary for economic recovery.

Serious steps must also be taken to pursue accountability for Israel's crimes against the Palestinian population, he emphasized, reiterating his call upon the international community, including the Council, to conduct investigations of the grave breaches of international law committed by the occupying forces in Gaza, and bearing in mind articles 146, 147 and 148 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. "All crimes, including the wilful killing of civilians, wilfully causing of great suffering or serious injury to body or health and extensive destruction and appropriation of property, must be investigated and the perpetrators must be prosecuted. Our consciences will not allow these barbaric war crimes against our people to go unpunished."

The Palestinian leadership had taken initial steps to collect evidence and explore options in that regard and would continue to act responsibly to ensure that the law was upheld and justice served, he said. It would work diligently to follow up the findings of the Secretary-General's Board of Inquiry, of the fact-finding commission to be dispatched by the Human Rights Council and other relevant investigations. Investigating the truth and delivering justice was a pre-condition for peace, and the only way to end Israel's impunity, prevent the recurrence of such crimes and progress towards a just, lasting peace and coexistence between the two peoples.

He recalled his repeated appeals that the Council uphold its responsibilities by acting to compel Israeli compliance with its legal obligations and immediately halt settlement activities, as well as settler terrorism and violence against the Palestinian people. The situation in and around East Jerusalem was most severe as Israel continued to pursue the de-population of the city's Palestinian inhabitants while at the same time promoting Judaization by unlawful actions, including in the Old City. Israel also continued to impose the closure of Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem and obstruct Palestinian cultural events in connection with the celebration of "Jerusalem: Capital of Arab Culture 2009". Action must be taken to halt all Israeli colonization measures aimed at illegally and unilaterally determining the fate of the city. Colonization and the peace process could not coexist.

Israel's settlement activities were in total contradiction to the peace process and the core principle for land for peace sustaining that process, he said. The Palestinian Authority had negotiated in good faith but could not continue blindly while Israel destroyed all chances for Palestinians to realize their legitimate national aspirations. They were concerned about the hard-right shift in the new Israeli Government, as well as rhetoric and positions that totally contradicted the two-State solution, the Quartet principles and the peace process itself. "We, therefore, emphasize that demands must be made upon Israel to not only 'talk' of peace, but to actually 'act' for peace, just as the Palestinian leadership has done over the past 15 years since the start of the peace process, including the upholding of its Road Map obligations."

Despite the stall in talks mediated by Egypt, he said he remained hopeful of achieving the unification of the Palestinian political factions in order to strengthen efforts to pursue their just national cause. Arrangements were being made for a Transitional Government and elections, and other priority issues. The international community was urged to engage diplomatically with a unified, representative Palestinian leadership.

GABRIELASHALEV ( Israel ) said the region was passing through an important juncture that might determine the future of the Middle East. Moderates were working towards peace, but extremists used every opportunity to sabotage any progress made. Among the latter were the Hamas and Hizbullah terrorist organizations led, supported, harboured, financed and trained by their Iranian and Syrian patrons. Iran continued its threats to wipe Israel off the map and its development of nuclear capabilities should sound alarms across the globe. "Iran is indeed the real danger for our region, for the world, for the future."

She said her country was committed to the peace process, which must be based on, among other things, the three principles set out by the Quartet: recognition of Israel; renunciation of terrorism and violence; and adherence to previous agreements. Any future Palestinian Government must abide by the same basic conditions. Relations between the two continued to advance in real terms, with Israel having recently removed some 10 roadblocks and 130 temporary barriers in the West Bank. They had remained open in spite of the ruthless murder by terrorists of two Israeli police officers and the finding of a car bomb at a shopping mall in Haifa. Meanwhile, the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority had increased their security cooperation.

Those positive developments were proof that confidence-building steps could bring the parties closer to their common goal, she said. In contrast, the situation in Gaza remained problematic, with more than 100 rockets and 60 mortars having been launched from the enclave into Israel since 18 January. "Israel will not tolerate a return to the status quo ante, with continued terrorist attacks jeopardizing civilians throughout the southern part of my country. Israel's obligation was, is, and will continue to be safeguarding the security of its citizens."

Responding to the statement by the Permanent Observer of Palestine, she agreed that civilians on both sides, including children, had indeed borne the burden of the conflict. Children in the cities of southern Israel asked their parents why more than 1,000 rockets had been fired into their communities. Osher Twito, who had loved playing soccer, had been eight years old when he had lost both legs a year-and-a-half ago and asked his parents that question every day. Each side had stories to tell, but they should only be used to advance the cause of peace.

Unfortunately, some actors in the region continued to give direct support to Hamas, she said, adding that it was worth remembering that Hamas terrorists and not the citizens of Gaza had been the true target of Israel's military operation. Ordinary Gazans had been used as human shields by militants who had deliberately staged attacks from, and hid in, heavily populated civilian areas. Israel was not indifferent to the humanitarian situation. More than 140,000 tons of humanitarian supplies and 13.5 million litres of fuel for Gaza's power station had been delivered since 18 January. That amounted to an average of 140 trucks per day entering Gaza. However, expanded activity at the crossings would be discussed upon the release of Gilad Shalit.

Turning to the situation in Lebanon, she said her country had witnessed the most serious violations of resolution 1701 (2006) since its adoption in the form of rockets fired into Israel and wounding civilians. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces had discovered a number of other rockets and Israel had been alerting the Council to Hizbullah's ongoing military build-up in southern Lebanon.

"This terrorist organization [...] continued to increase its presence and strength in the area, using private homes and other civilian property for its activities," she continued. Israel called for robust actions against arms smuggling along the Syrian-Lebanese border, in accordance with the recommendations of the Secretary-General's Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team II (LIBAT II) report. "There is no better time than today for the international community to show its support for moderate voices and to assert its resolute opposition to terrorists and those who support them. We ask Member States to add their vocal and tangible support in the quest for a durable peace in the Middle East."

RUHAKANARUGUNDA ( Uganda ) said the opportunity for peace created by the peace and quiet that had characterized the last few weeks must be grasped. The situation remained fragile. While there had been a cessation of hostilities, there was still no permanent peace, hence the need for a durable and fully respected ceasefire. Such a ceasefire, however, would always remain temporary unless it was accompanied by sustained efforts to find a political settlement in the region. Uganda was convinced that a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could only be achieved through negotiations among the parties concerned.

Expressing concern about the persisting divisions among the Palestinian groups, he commended the efforts by Egypt and others to promote intra-Palestinian reconciliation. Regarding the dire situation in Gaza, the humanitarian and reconstruction demands following the recent conflict there still posed challenges, among them the fact that overall levels of humanitarian assistance entering the territory remained below the level urgently needed due to the Israeli blockade. Also, the socio-economic infrastructure remained in shambles.

Welcoming the \$4.5 billion pledged at the International Aid Conference for Gaza Reconstruction, he warned, however, that even with the pledged money coming in, the humanitarian situation and reconstruction efforts would require the complete lifting of the blockade in order to facilitate easier humanitarian access. Furthermore, all Palestinians would have to work together to implement the recovery and reconstruction plans successfully.

BAKİ İLKİN ( [Turkey](#) ) said the tragic events at the start of the year had further complicated the political, humanitarian and socio-economic aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Palestinians in Gaza were now faced with formidable suffering and hardship while, on the other hand, Israeli citizens living in the cities adjacent to Gaza should also feel safe and secure. "Time will not, in itself, heal all wounds." Active engagement by the international community was imperative in dressing them. While the number of pledges and the level of participation in the Sharm el-Sheikh donor Conference, including a contribution of \$50 million by Turkey, was encouraging, the reconstruction of Gaza and a return to daily life would not be possible until the blockade ended completely and restrictions on the movement of people and goods were lifted, both in Gaza and the West Bank.

Voicing his increasing concern about ongoing settlement activities, he said that settlement-building, in contravention of Road Map commitments and the two-State solution, was wrong and should stop. Securing Palestinian reconciliation and unity had also become once again an issue of critical importance and urgency. The Palestinian cause would be best served if the Palestinian factions settled their differences. Turkey maintained its contacts with, and guidance to, different Palestinian groups and was committed to the empowerment of the Palestinian Authority in the context of the State-building process.

"The Israelis and Palestinians are bound to live next to each other," he said, adding that they could either do so as combatants or as good neighbours and friends. Turkey was ready to assist once again in the resumption of indirect talks between Syria and Israel, if the parties so desired. Turkey also welcomed the establishment of diplomatic relations between Lebanon and Syria and their reciprocal appointment of ambassadors. It was also encouraged by the current engagement of the United States with Syria. The forthcoming elections in Lebanon would be an important step in taking the Lebanese people towards a better and brighter future.

LE LUONG MINH ( [Viet Nam](#) ) said the recent tragic events in Gaza, compounded by the 18-month blockade, had driven the enclave's people to the limits of human suffering and was further proof that violence could never be a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. At the present politically delicate juncture, pending the formation of a new Government in Israel and the outcome of reconciliation efforts among Palestinian factions, all parties should opt for peaceful rather than military means to settle their disputes, desist from any action detrimental to innocent civilians, and return to negotiations, in line with commitments specified by the Annapolis outcome, as well as the relevant Security Council resolutions.

"We underline the pressing need for full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009)", he said, "especially with regard to a durable, lasting and fully respected ceasefire, the opening of border crossings, and intra-Palestinian reconciliation." The role of the United Nations, the League of Arab States and regional countries remained essential in that connection. Viet Nam fully supported collective efforts to address the heavy casualties and damage to the lives and psychological well-being of the Palestinian people, as well as the immediate post-conflict needs of affected families, and to facilitate long-term recovery and reconstruction in Gaza. A lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East could not be isolated from concurrent progress on other related tracks, and Viet Nam recognized the steps taken by Lebanon to assert full authority over its territory, strengthen political stability and socio-economic development, and normalize relations with other countries of the region.

ZHANG YESUI ( [China](#) ) noted that, 11 days after the adoption of resolution 1850 (2008), the situation in Gaza had deteriorated, resulting in devastating civilian casualties and huge economic losses. China opposed any attempts to resolve the dispute through military means or by targeting civilians. The situation remained fragile and violence continued. The humanitarian situation was a cause for concern and the reconstruction process was beset with difficulties. China appealed to the parties concerned to exercise maximum restraint and refrain from violence and actions that might exacerbate the situation.

Urging Israel to open the borders into Gaza, stop building settlements and let the Palestinians live a normal, dignified life, he also called on the international community to focus on consolidating the security situation, pushing for a durable ceasefire and ensuring full implementation in good faith of resolution 1860 (2009). There was a need to honour commitments to reconstruct Gaza and alleviate the humanitarian situation on the ground. China welcomed the outcomes of the Sharm el-Sheikh Conference, which should be translated into action.

The Board of Inquiry set up by the Secretary-General must give a timely report on the findings of their investigation, he said, emphasizing also the critical importance of intra-Palestinian reconciliation. China appealed to all Palestinian factions to resolve their differences. It was necessary to expedite a resumption of the Middle East peace process and the Council must push for resumed political talks towards a two-State solution. China was ready to work with the international community in that regard.

JORGE URBINA ORTEGA ( [Costa Rica](#) ) said Egypt had played a fundamental role in starting to reduce tensions and achieve the first agreements, including the ceasefire agreement. The humanitarian situation in Gaza called for particular attention and the United Nations must have all the facilities it needed to provide humanitarian assistance and provide programmes without any obstacles. Gaza's reconstruction was of essential importance. The National Plan for Gaza Recovery and Reconstruction was the framework for activating the territory's economy and it should guide international efforts.

Noting that Gaza had lost 14 per cent of its infrastructure and 75 per cent of its arable land, he said contributions to its reconstruction would not translate into sustainable results unless concrete agreements were reached on substantial issues. It was important to ensure the parties' full respect for their obligations under international law and international humanitarian law. While the normalization of border crossings was a major objective, the levels of goods entering Gaza in recent weeks was much lower than those of July 2008. Levels of humanitarian assistance were also lower than the needs. There must also be a halt to the illicit trafficking of arms and armaments, and to the building of new Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories.

KONSTANTIN DOLGOV ( [Russian Federation](#) ) said the international community must consider how to provide a new impetus to the quest for peace in the Middle East. Much depended on the way in which the new Government of Israel would conduct itself. It must continue to pursue a two-State solution and ensure an end to settlement activity. It was important to stabilize the ceasefire. The conflict in Gaza could not be repeated but there was also a need to free the citizens of southern Israel from rocket attacks. It was important to implement resolutions 1860 (2009) and 1850 (2008).

Egypt should continue to enjoy the energetic support of the international community, he said, adding that his own country would continue to provide the Palestinians with all necessary assistance. Intra-Palestinian reconciliation was of the utmost importance. The Gaza crisis had led to calls for the withdrawal of the Arab Peace Initiative, which was a matter of concern as the proposal could advance genuine peace in the region. The Russian Federation was ready to organize a conference in Moscow. Negotiations must resume not only on the Palestinian track, but also on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. Efforts to restore favourable conditions for Lebanese elections continued, and the country's problems must be resolved exclusively through national dialogue. The Russian Federation welcomed ongoing progress in relations between Lebanon and Syria.

THOMAS MAYR-HARTING ( [Austria](#) ) said that, beyond international support, stabilizing the situation in Gaza required immediate action by the parties concerned. Austria condemned indiscriminate rocket attacks but urged Israel to allow humanitarian access. Unfortunately, supplies continued to be highly insufficient. Recovery and reconstruction could only advance if all crossing were immediately and fully opened, and freedom of movement restored.

Progress towards sustainable peace could only advance hand in hand with the reconstruction of Gaza, he said. Moving forward also required rebuilding trust, including by strengthening respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. All allegations of violations of international humanitarian law must be investigated thoroughly. The Palestinian side must speak with one voice and form a Government committed to a two-State solution.

Voicing full support for Egyptian reconciliation efforts, he also expressed hope that a new Israeli Government would be committed to negotiations and a two-State solution. Israel's continuing construction of settlements and the barrier were contrary to international law. Austria strongly encouraged efforts by the parties on all tracks towards achieving peace in the region, including on the Syrian track, and recognized the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative.

PAUL ROBERT TIENDRÉÉOGO ( Burkina Faso ), noting that the challenges of the situation in Gaza were numerous and the humanitarian needs great, said the Donors' Conference was an example of the international community showing solidarity. Israel should lift its embargo on Gaza and restrictions on the movement of goods and activities. There should be continuing support for the work and activities of United Nations agencies operating in Gaza under difficult conditions, particularly UNRWA.

Calling on Israel to stop building settlements in Palestinian areas, he also urged the Palestinians to unite and reconcile. Lebanon should continue to abide by the Doha Agreement of May 2008. Hopefully elections next June would be held under optimal conditions. Burkina Faso also hoped that the Moscow conference would be held as soon as possible and that the Annapolis negotiations would be re-launched so as to contribute to a two-State solution. However, in order for that to occur there must be trust, an end to Israeli settlements, an exchange of prisoners, an end to the firing of rockets into Israel, and intra-Palestinian reconciliation.

DAVID QUARREY ( United Kingdom ) said little had changed since the Council had last met and called on all parties to implement resolution 1860 (2009). The situation was perilous and the international community should bring humanitarian aid to alleviate it. The United Nations, particularly UNRWA, could play a critical role in that regard. Israel should allow unimpeded access to humanitarian and construction materials entering Gaza, which also needed help for reconstruction. The United Kingdom had been encouraged by the conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, where it had given an additional \$44 million to build homes, schools and hospitals in Gaza, bringing its total contribution to \$70 million.

While Israel should reopen the border crossings, the smuggling of arms into Gaza must also be addressed, he said. That was the purpose of the 13 March meeting to support resolution 1860 (2009). The Gaza conflict had been marked by serious allegations on both sides and the United Kingdom welcomed the work of the Board of Inquiry set up by the Secretary-General and Israel's decision to investigate the activities of its own Armed Forces. However, there was reason for deep concern about the increase in settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, where Israel's eviction notices to Palestinian families were not conducive to peace. The United Kingdom called for an immediate end to the evictions and the building of settlements.

JEAN-MAURICE RIPERT ( France ) said peace was possible even though it would require painful concessions. Regarding Gaza, the consolidation of the ceasefire remained a priority. Resolution 1860 (2009) laid out the main parameters for a ceasefire, including the opening of crossings and an end to illegal arms smuggling. France welcomed the convening of the Sharm el-Sheikh conference, but underlined that the Palestinian Authority should have ownership of reconstruction efforts. It condemned Israel's land operations in Gaza and stressed the need for all parties to respect international humanitarian law under all circumstances.

Intra-Palestinian reconciliation was important and there would be no peace agreement with only one part of the Palestinian people and without Gaza, he said. In that regard, France continued to support the efforts of the Egyptian mediators, and fully to support the Arab Peace Initiative, one of the main bases for a comprehensive settlement. Israel's settlement activities were continuing and its destruction of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem had compounded the situation. Israel must freeze all settlement activities. Meanwhile, the opening of embassies was a historic step towards the normalization of relations between Syria and Lebanon. France hoped the June elections would be carried out in a climate of peace and stability. France also welcomed the establishment of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and called on States to cooperate with the Office of the Prosecutor.

YUKIO TAKASU ( Japan ) called on all parties to make every effort to achieve a durable and effective ceasefire agreement, and fully to implement resolution 1860 (2009). A sustained reopening of the crossing points and the prevention of arms trafficking were essential to an effective ceasefire. Japan strongly urged Israel to make further efforts to improve access of goods and humanitarian workers into Gaza. At the same time, it condemned sporadic rocket attacks into Israeli territory.

He said his country had pledged \$200 million in assistance to the Palestinians and would provide aid to needy citizens in a timely manner. Japan also supported the development of the Palestinian economy through the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" initiative. Palestinian reconciliation was of the utmost importance, and Japan encouraged the efforts of Arab leaders to create an environment conducive to the advance of peace in the region as a whole. The upcoming Arab League Summit in Qatar would strengthen the cooperation among countries in the region.

Expressing hope that the incoming Israeli Government would commit itself to a two-State solution and work with the Palestinian Authority to restore the peace process, he commended the work of United Nations agencies in supporting the Palestinian Authority's reconstruction efforts in Gaza. The damage and injuries incurred at UNRWA and other facilities were not acceptable. It was essential that all parties respect and implement Council resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009) and, for that purpose, Israel must freeze its settlement activities, in accordance with the principles contained in the Road Map.

CLAUDE HELLER ( Mexico ) said that, despite the adoption of resolution 1860 (2009) and the unilateral ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, tension still prevailed in the Middle East. The lack of substantive progress in the intra-Palestinian dialogue and the formation of a new Government of Israel had led to a temporary interruption of the peace process, which was also negatively affected by the continuing construction of Israeli settlements in Palestinian areas.

Calling on the parties to implement resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009) as soon as possible, he said it was only through the implementation of a monitoring mechanism that a ceasefire could be sustained and the illicit trafficking in arms ended. Egypt was to be commended for taking steps to facilitate intra-Palestinian dialogue, as were efforts to resolve the humanitarian crisis and rebuild Gaza as soon as possible. Mexico also welcomed the pledging conference, where donors had pledged almost \$5 billion.

For its own part, Mexico contributed to the Operation Lifeline for Gaza programme of the World Food Programme (WFP) and would continue also to contribute actively to UNRWA, which had acted in an exemplary manner during the recent conflict, he said. It was a matter of concern that the work of humanitarian personnel in Gaza was still being hindered, particularly the delivery of humanitarian aid and construction materials. It was important that all parties to armed conflict respect the norms and principles of international humanitarian law governing the protection of humanitarian personnel and the rights of refugees.

ALEJANDRO WOLFF ( United States ) said the response to the urgent needs in Gaza could not be separated from broad reforms towards achieving peace. The United States had contributed more than \$66 million to provide food, water and shelter. During the Sharm el-Sheikh Conference, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had said the United States would give up to \$900 million in assistance, designed in collaboration with the Palestinian authorities, which would be submitted to the United States Congress for approval. The United States was working with President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority to address the critical humanitarian, budgetary and security needs of Palestinians in Gaza, where the Palestinian Authority had spent more than 50 per cent of its current budget. United States assistance aimed to foster conditions for the creation of a Palestinian State.

He said his country was engaging with Israel on a daily basis concerning the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza. The United States was encouraging Israel to ease restrictions on construction materials. It was also concerned about the smuggling of weapons into Gaza and continued rocket attacks by Hamas, which were a serious threat to peace. The United States was committed to moving forward quickly to block arms trafficking. The United States policy was to move quickly and actively, including through its special envoy to the Middle East, George Mitchell, who was engaged in vigorous and determined diplomacy. All parties must respect their obligations under the Road Map.

Expressing hope that Syria could play a constructive role in regional peace, he called on Israel to stop settlement activities and to dismantle the settlements it had already created. As for the situation in Lebanon, the United States supported the Government's efforts to provide security and ensure that the perpetrators of the recent deadly attack were brought to justice. However, the United States was also concerned about Hizbullah's activities to rearm, but encouraged by the 1

March opening in The Hague of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. The United States would support the Tribunal and called on all others to do the same.

NEVIN JURICA ( Croatia ) said that, in the aftermath of the violence in Gaza, the priority was responding to reconstruction needs and creating an environment in which to continue the peace process. All parties were expected to facilitate humanitarian access, and the diversion or delay of aid was not acceptable. The Sharm el-Sheikh Conference had sent a strong message of international solidarity with the people of Gaza and it was to be hoped that there would soon be a reconstruction plan under the auspices of the Palestinian Authority.

Full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) remained essential, he stressed, noting the importance, in parallel with humanitarian assistance, of securing the ceasefire. All rocket attacks into Israel were to be condemned, and it was essential to end the capability of Hamas and others to launch them. On the other hand, Israel must open the crossing points. Croatia appreciated Egyptian efforts for intra-Palestinian reconciliation but regretted that no agreement had been reached on the release of Corporal Shalit.

The current period was burdened by political uncertainties on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides, he said, emphasizing the importance of encouraging confidence-building steps and implementing resolution 1850 (2008). Croatia deplored all attempts to undermine the atmosphere of calm in Lebanon and was encouraged by the improvement in relations between that country and Syria. Developments on a regional plan remained crucial to achieving the bigger picture of peace in the Middle East, including a two-State solution.

Council President ABDURRAHMAN MOHAMED SHALGHAM ( Libya ), speaking in his national capacity, said peace had become impossible because of Israeli practices, including killings, the destruction of homes and the establishment of barriers. Thousands of Palestinians were in jail, including women and children, and the occupation authorities had imposed a suffocating blockade of Gaza. The occupying Power had created such a grievous situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory that its actions were on the level of war crimes and genocide, as defined by international law.

Noting reports by human rights organizations and testimony by Israeli soldiers alleging that they had received orders not to care about the lives of Palestinian civilians, he said the international community must end the suffering of Gaza's people and not allow them to be kept as hostages. The situation in the West Bank was no better since the crime of ethnic cleansing was being committed there through the systematic demolition of Palestinian homes to make way for the building of settlements, especially in East Jerusalem. That would annihilate any chance to establish a Palestinian State.

The Council's unbalanced view, due to the attitude of some members, had only encouraged Israeli settlement activities, he emphasized, noting Israel's announcement that 1,700 homes had been demolished in East Jerusalem. The Israeli Government's practices affirmed that its only policy for six decades was that it did not seek peace and that the Israeli authorities were a gang of criminals. The international community must make its position clear on the crimes committed against the Palestinian people otherwise they would be considered co-conspirators.

MAGED ABDEL AZIZ ( Egypt ) said the situation in the entire Occupied Palestinian Territory remained extremely acute and the international community's inability to intervene so as to protect the Palestinians under occupation exacerbated it. The occupying Power continued to disregard its Road Map obligations to freeze settlement activities and insisted on defying the international community's repeated calls to stop the illegal construction and expansion of settlements. Israel also continued building the illegitimate separation wall throughout the West Bank, particularly in and around East Jerusalem.

A few weeks ago, he recalled, Israel had announced a decision to build 3,500 new settlements on private Palestinian land confiscated from its legitimate owners in East Jerusalem, and had issued demolition and eviction orders against more than 1,500 Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah and Al-Bustan in order to build new dwellings for Israeli settlers. The aim was to promote the old city's Judaization and to sever it from its Arab-Palestinian surroundings. That type of colonization violated international law, United Nations resolutions and the Road Map, besides threatening to inflame tensions and violence.

He said the continuing severe humanitarian crisis resulting from Israel's military incursions into the Gaza Strip, the lack of a durable ceasefire and the failure to effect a sustained opening of crossing points based on the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access had exacerbated the gravity of the situation. Egypt had intensified efforts to achieve national reconciliation in order to form a new Palestinian unity Government. Having hosted the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction of Gaza, Egypt renewed its call on Israel immediately and unconditionally to reopen the border crossings into Gaza and allow the movement of people, goods and reconstruction materials so as to end the humanitarian crisis and rebuild what had been destroyed.

NAWAF SALAM ( Lebanon ) said that Israel, in committing many violations of international law governing the use of force, had offered the excuse that Article 51 of the United Nations Charter gave it the right to self-defence. However, Article 51 was an exception to Article 2 – which prohibited the use of force – and must, therefore, be interpreted in the narrowest way. Because Israel maintained total control over Gaza's borders and airspace, it remained the occupying Power and its claim to the right of self-defence was negated by that situation of occupation. The right to self-defence also required the existence of necessity and parity, neither of which existed. The occupying Power must provide for the safety of Gaza's inhabitants and their property. With its continuing construction of the separation barrier and its destruction of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem, Israel was perpetrating ethnic cleansing.

Reaffirming the commitment of the Government of Lebanon to implement resolution 1701 (2006), he said Israel continued to postpone its implementation, to occupy parts of southern Lebanon, and to commit violations of Lebanese airspace. It also refused to provide maps to show the location of the cluster bombs it had used during the 2006 war. Lebanon appealed to the Secretary-General to work towards solutions that would guarantee Israel's withdrawal from the Sheba'a Farms. It also asked the Council to implement its resolutions on the question of Palestine. Every day in which implementation of those resolutions was delayed would escalate the risk of crises in the region and threats to international peace and security, while undermining the Council's credibility.

ABELARDO MORENO ( Cuba ), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, condemned Israel's continuing military occupation of Palestinian territory, in breach of international law and United Nations resolutions, as well as its recent military aggression in Gaza. The Movement also condemned Israel's wanton destruction of thousands of homes, in addition to infrastructure, schools, public institutions and United Nations facilities where people had sought safe refuge. It further condemned Israel's inhumane and unlawful blockade of the Gaza Strip and demanded that it cease those illegal practices and ensure the immediate and sustained opening of all the Gaza crossings. The Movement reminded the international community, including the Council, of its responsibility to ensure that thorough investigations of all the crimes and violations committed by Israel in Gaza were carried out.

He reiterated the Movement's strong condemnation of Israel's continuing intensive campaign of settler colonization and its imposition of arbitrary, racist residency and movement restrictions through a permit regime and hundreds of checkpoints throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Such policies constituted a grave breach of international law and flagrant defiance of United Nations resolutions, as well as the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Peace negotiations were incompatible with such illegal colonization activities and the Movement demanded that Israel immediately cease all of them. In the face of continued Israeli defiance, the Movement called for urgent international action to compel the occupying Power to abide by all its obligations under international law.

Seriously concerned about Israel's ongoing air and land violations of the Blue Line in Lebanon, he called for an end to the occupation of the northern part of Ghajar and the prompt settlement of the Sheba'a Farms question. The Movement also called strongly on Israel to provide the exact location of cluster bombs and landmines planted during its occupation of southern Lebanon. It reaffirmed that all measures and action taken by the occupying Power to alter the legal, physical and demographic conditions and institutional structure of the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as measures to impose Israeli jurisdiction and administration there, were null and void and without legal effect. The Non-Aligned Movement further condemned the act of aggression committed by United States forces in Iraq against Syria on 26 October 2008.



BASHAR JA'AFARI ( [Syria](#) ) said the United Nations and the Council could no longer treat the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine as business as usual. The Council's inability to act could not continue. Syria called upon the Organization and the Council to rise to the level of Charter principles by trying to implement at least some of the hundreds of resolutions they had adopted. Syria reiterated the need for efforts to establish a just peace based on Council resolutions, land for peace, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative. It called upon the international community, the Council in particular, to hold Israeli leaders accountable for their continuing crimes, legally described as war crimes and crimes against humanity.

What Israel was doing now was the "true holocaust", he stated, pointing out that it had escalated its brutal attacks to reach the residents of East Jerusalem in an attempt to reduce the significance of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in an attempt to take control of and demolish it. Occupation authorities had imposed a fine on any Palestinian whose home was demolished in order to cover the cost of the demolition. Israel was thus asking the Palestinians to pay for the bullets that would kill them. There was a need for an immediate end to the blockade against Gaza and for the territory's reconstruction. It was also important to restore Palestinian unity.

Israel continued to refuse to return the occupied Golan to Syria, as demanded in resolution 497 (1981), he said, adding that its practices exceeded all legal boundaries as it terrorized Syrian citizens and placed them in detention homes. Syria asked the Council to pressure Israel into releasing the detainees, including a Syrian journalist. Syria objected to Israel's illegal settlement expansion in the Golan, where its Army carried out massive military manoeuvres. Some 531 people, including women and children, had fallen victim to landmines. Israel also continued to refuse the resumption of visits by Syrian citizens in the Golan to Syria. Syria had chosen a fair and comprehensive peace as a strategic peace choice based on, among other things, Council resolutions, including the one on restitution of the Syrian Golan. The continued occupation was in contradiction to peace.

MARTIN PALOUŠ ( [Czech Republic](#) ), speaking on behalf of the European Union, deeply deplored the loss of life during the conflict in Gaza, particularly the civilian casualties, and continued to remind all parties to the conflict to fully respect human rights and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law. The European Union would closely follow investigations into alleged violations of international humanitarian law. The European Union called for the unimpeded provision and distribution of humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. Only the immediate and unconditional reopening of all crossing would reverse the humanitarian deterioration.

The European Union was the largest donor to the Palestinian Authority, he said, noting that the European Commission had given it €554 million in 2009, in addition to bilateral aid from member States. The European Union was determined to play a substantial role alongside the United States and Arab countries in alleviating the suffering in Gaza and would continue to support the overall Palestinian economy. Unhindered passage of humanitarian aid, people and commercial goods must be allowed to ensure recovery and reconstruction. The European Union had consistently pushed for the sustained reopening of Gaza's borders based on the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access.

Intra-Palestinian reconciliation was necessary for the sustainable recovery and development of Palestinian society, he said, welcoming the reconciliation process launched by all Palestinian factions on 26 February. During the transition period in which a new Israeli Government and an interim Palestinian Government were to be formed, it was expected that their representatives would honour the obligations entered into by their predecessors. The European Union reiterated its condemnation of rocket attacks launched into southern Israel, as well as Israel's planned settlement activities. It also called on Israel to suspend the eviction notices served on Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

MARIA LUIZA RIBEIRO VOTTI ( [Brazil](#) ), welcoming the willingness of Palestinian political forces to form a reconciliation Government, called for an immediate end to such serious obstacles to a two-State solution as Israel's expansion of settlements and frequent use of violence. More than ever, persuasion by the international community was essential to the achievement of peace. All regional actors prepared to act constructively must be given a chance to participate in the peace process. Brazil encouraged the convening of a follow-up conference to Annapolis as a matter of urgency. It expected the new Government to be formed in Israel to fulfil international commitments already in place and engage fully in the peace process.

All parties must implement resolution 1860 (2009) fully and without preconditions, she said, stressing that the reality on the ground called for immediate action, including the permanent reopening of all crossings into Gaza, so as to allow access for humanitarian aid and a normalization of trade. On the Palestinian side, there was a need to cease violence against Israeli citizens, including by launching rockets. Brazil had donated \$10.5 million at the Stockholm and Paris donor conferences, for a wide range of projects, including the construction of schools, the creation of fishing farms and communal land management, among others. With India and South Africa, Brazil had pledged an extra \$3 million over three years and was pursuing the construction of a sports centre in Ramallah, West Bank, scheduled for April. Brazil had donated \$10 million for Gaza during the March pledging conference.

MOHAMMED LOULICHKI ( [Morocco](#) ) said that, following the Israeli aggression against Gaza, the world had seen atrocities committed in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. The aggression had ended but the Palestinians in Gaza were still waiting for the opening of the crossings and for reconstruction. Morocco had ordered the provision of medical supplies to Palestinians in hospitals and King Mohammed VI had committed \$15 million to Gaza's reconstruction.

Israel's policy of demographic change in East Jerusalem was an insult to Council resolutions, the Road Map and the principles of land for peace, he said, condemning the intentions of the Israeli authorities in the vicinity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in East Jerusalem. Morocco supported a return to negotiations, for which the reunification of Palestinian factions was important, and urged the continued deployment of all good offices, in particular those of Egypt. It was important, furthermore, to start an international process to foster the Arab Peace Initiative. Morocco supported fully the rights of the Palestinian people to an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as peace in the entire region.

NASSIR ABDULAZIZ AL-NASSER ( [Qatar](#) ) said the cessation of hostilities in Gaza was not enough. It was necessary to lift the siege on Gaza, open the crossings and ensure the passage of people, materials and the necessary equipment for reconstruction. Because the Israeli aggression against Gaza had been marked by many war crimes and crimes against humanity, there was a need to investigate violations of international law and international humanitarian law, and to bring perpetrators to justice. The violations in question included the use of forbidden chemical weapons and the targeting of densely populated buildings, including houses of worship, hospitals and schools. There was a particular need to investigate the Israeli Army's direct attacks on UNRWA schools.

Because Qatar was among the leading supporters of the Palestinian people, the Emir had taken the initiative to convene an emergency Arab League Summit in Doha. He had also announced the establishment of a Gaza Fund, to which he had donated \$250 million, in addition to other assistance already rendered. Qatar called on the Council to stop the double standards and reluctance with which it addressed an issue that threatened international peace and security and constituted a serious humanitarian situation. For the peace process to succeed, all segments of the Palestinian people must be involved. Nor should they be punished for having exerted their right to vote. Qatar called upon the Palestinians to achieve unity and reconciliation.

ISMAT JAHAN ( [Bangladesh](#) ), affirming her country's solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just and legitimate struggle for self-determination and statehood, condemned the construction of illegal settlements in Palestinian territory and reiterated that the continuing occupation of Palestine was the root cause of violence, unrest and destabilization in the region. Bangladesh strongly condemned the attacks in Gaza that had caused the deaths of innocent Palestinians, including women and children, as well as innumerable economic losses. Even humanitarian workers and the United Nations compound had not been spared those heinous actions, which were in blatant violation of international law. Bangladesh also condemned Israel's continuing and illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and expressed grave concern over its plan to build a museum on the site of an ancient, historic Islamic cemetery.

All concerned must comply with resolution 1860 (2009), she said, calling on the United Nations to take the necessary steps to ensure its full and effective implementation. Border crossings must be reopened and humanitarian workers guaranteed full and secure access to Gaza. Bangladesh commended the



Secretary-General's decision to dispatch a Board of Inquiry to investigate the heinous crimes and violations committed in Gaza, and expected the Board's findings to be followed up without delay. It also expected that the fact-finding mission that the Human Rights Council had called for would be dispatched immediately. All concerned, including the Council and the international community, must come forward and oblige the occupying Power to comply with international law.

PAUL BADJI ( [Senegal](#) ), Chairman, Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said it was now known that more than 1,400 Palestinians, many of them innocent civilians, had been killed during the massive Israeli assault on, and shelling of, Gaza two months ago, and that basic reconstruction would take years, as well as billions of dollars. Most troubling were the brutality and gross disregard for human life with which the Israeli military had carried out the operation. Recent accounts by Israeli soldiers now made it clear that there had been "unbridled contempt for, and forcefulness against the Palestinians". As reported in *Haaretz*, an Israeli squad leader had said that most of the men under his command had felt that the lives of Palestinians were far less important than the lives of Israeli soldiers.

Israel's decision to conduct an investigation into the soldiers' accounts was welcome, but it would do little to relieve the horrendous suffering endured by the people of Gaza. The Committee supported the investigative missions established by the Secretary-General, the Human Rights Council and the Arab League and, while welcoming similar efforts by several international, Palestinian and Israeli non-governmental organizations. The Committee would convene a meeting later in the year to consider the issue of upholding international humanitarian law, and it would play close attention to the results of ongoing investigations. The Committee urged donors quickly to make good on their promises, made during the pledging conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, in which they pledged some \$4.5 billion to start rebuilding Gaza.

He said the Committee had held a United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People in Cairo on 10 and 11 March, thereby contributing to the wider international discourse on ways to streamline and coordinate efforts for Gaza's recovery and reconstruction. While in Cairo, Committee members had visited Palestine Hospital and had been horrified by the severity of the injuries suffered by wounded Gazans. They had been shocked by accounts from medical personnel to the effect that a number of those cases, for unknown reasons, had not responded to the customary treatment protocols, something the international community should seriously look into. The Committee called on Israel to halt all illegal policies and practices throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and immediately to lift the siege on Gaza and allow the entry of uninterrupted humanitarian aid. Both sides should urgently cease all acts of violence, exercise utmost restraint and agree on a sustainable ceasefire.

MARTY NATALEGAWA ( [Indonesia](#) ) welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to set up a Board of Inquiry to investigate incidents involving United Nations premises and operations during the Israeli military attack on Gaza. In addition, an independent commission should be established to look into possible crimes against humanity committed during the Israeli assault, and to bring perpetrators to justice. The horrendous humanitarian challenge in Gaza cried out for an emphatic response, but the level of assistance allowed into the territory fell far short of expectations. The blockade should be lifted, immediately and unconditionally, to permit the movement of people and goods.

Reiterating his country's outrage at Israel's continuing illegal settlement activities, he said they were nothing but a blatant violation of international law. If Israel was genuinely committed to peace, it must stop all settlement construction, expansion and planning, including in East Jerusalem. The Council should pronounce itself collectively in that regard. Intra-Palestinian reconciliation was important and Egypt's hosting of the intra-Palestinian dialogue was to be commended. Indonesia's commitment to an independent, viable and democratic Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with its neighbours, was absolute. A truly comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East required a solution not only to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, but also on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks, based on the relevant Council resolutions.

MARÍA FERNANDA ESPINOSA ( [Ecuador](#) ) said she was very concerned about the humanitarian and security situation faced by the Palestinian population as a consequence of the occupation, the blockade, the wholesale destruction of infrastructure and the permanent military aggression. Ecuador appealed urgently for an immediate end to hostilities and a solution to the humanitarian crisis. As a founding member of the United Nations, Ecuador championed the peaceful settlement of international disputes and rejected the threat of the use of force.

Any comprehensive solution could not be a military one but a political one with strict respect for international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law, she said. Israel should withdraw from the territories it had occupied since 1967 and establish an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. Apart from the Council, other international bodies could provide an effective response and pave the way for the restoration of peace. In that regard, Ecuador welcomed the investigation by the Human Rights Council and would extend its support for any initiative that would consolidate and establish lasting peace in the entire region.

ZAINOL RAHIM ZAINUDDIN ( [Malaysia](#) ) applauded the recent donor conference in Cairo, which had netted \$5 billion to reconstruct Gaza. Contributions would help the survivors pick up the pieces of their lives, torn apart by the war. But it seemed strange that someone else was footing the bill while the perpetrator who had caused all the damage and destruction got off scot-free. Questions had been raised about why the perpetrators had not been brought to justice. Recent action by the International Criminal Court indicated the availability of recourse to action against the perpetrators, including prosecuting them for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The evidence included testimonies and accounts by Israeli soldiers indicating that war crimes had indeed been committed.

Welcoming the Secretary-General's creation of the Board of Inquiry, he said he would have expected it to expand its mandate to include more than just United Nations premises and staff. There should be no distinction between attacks on the Organization and on Palestinian civilians and their homes. Both were in clear violation of international law and the Council should act accordingly, otherwise its inaction would signal that it condoned those actions and justified criminality.

Malaysia had called for the creation of a war crimes tribunal to investigate and prosecute those responsible for war crimes in Gaza, he said. The international community was morally obligated to give the survivors at least a sense of closure. Failure to do so could create a generation of even more radicalized Palestinians. There was no guarantee that Israel would not launch another strike, as it had done many times, including in Lebanon in 2006. The creation of a war crimes tribunal was a clear preventative measure against the recurrence of such wanton attacks.

MOURAD BENMEHIDI ( [Algeria](#) ) said that two months after Israel's savage assault on Gaza the situation remained troubling. Despite the international community's repeated appeals, Israel had not lifted its embargo on Gaza and the peace process was deadlocked. Algeria firmly condemned the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and called on the international community to devote all necessary measures to ensure that Israel complied with its obligations under international humanitarian law.

The reconstruction of Gaza was essential, he said, adding that Israel had no illusions about the strategic importance of rebuilding. It had continued to multiply the number of barriers to, and requirements for, reconstruction. The generosity of donors during the recent pledging conference illustrated Israel's isolation on the international stage. The Council must remind Israel of its obligation to investigate war crimes allegations and violations of international humanitarian law. There must be an end to the impunity that Israel had displayed for too long. Malaysia extended its unwavering support to the quest by Syria and Lebanon to recover their legitimate national rights, which had been violated by Israel.

ABDERRAHIM OULD HADRAMI ( [Mauritania](#) ) said tension continued to spread throughout the region owing to the disastrous actions of the Israeli war machine in the Gaza Strip. The international community should find a solution that guaranteed the Palestinian people their right to self-determination and the establishment of a Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel. The Council should compel Israel to halt its settlement activities, including in East Jerusalem. Israel must also end its blockade of Gaza and implement the relevant Council resolutions. Mauritania called on Israel to alleviate Gaza's humanitarian and economic situation, and noted with satisfaction the results of the Sharm el-Sheikh Conference. It called on donors to deliver as soon

as possible on their commitments. Mauritania looked forward to the establishment of a Palestinian Government of National Unity.

BASO SANGQU ( South Africa ) said Israel's long track record of disregarding international law and the Council's failure to take any meaningful action in response were the key factors contributing to the lack of progress in the peace process. It was essential that all parties fully respect and meet their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law, and that the Council discharges its mandate without selectivity or double standards. South Africa stressed the importance of an independent investigation of events in Gaza and full accountability for any violations of international law, by whomsoever they may have been committed.

The humanitarian consequences of the assault on Gaza should also not be forgotten, he said, pointing out that an entire population had been traumatized and impoverished, and most of the infrastructure destroyed. Israel bore full responsibility for compensating the Palestinian people for its actions. South Africa condemned the continuing Israeli blockade of Gaza and the ongoing construction of illegal settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Those activities undermined all efforts to achieve peace. South Africa also called on the Palestinians to stop firing rockets into Israel and upon the Palestinian parties not to be diverted from their objective of forming a unity Government.

MORTEN WETLAND ( Norway ) said that, nine weeks after the end of fighting in Gaza, there had been little improvement for the enclave's battle-scarred civilian population. The Israeli embargo remained largely intact, and a political solution to the conflict seemed as elusive as ever. Little of the civilian infrastructure to which Israeli military operations had brought massive destruction had been rebuilt, the humanitarian situation remained grave and many families were still homeless. Israel severely restricted the importation of basic building materials such as cement, wood and glass and Norway was concerned that its restrictions on cash transfers to Gaza would impede the essential work of UNRWA, such as its school feeding programme for 200,000 children. Israel must honour its obligations under international humanitarian law and open its border crossings into Gaza.

The Sharm el-Sheikh Pledging Conference had brought the international community together in a show of support for the Palestinians, he said, adding that his country was contributing \$120 million this year. Without continued budget support to the Palestinian Authority, 77,000 public servants providing basic social services would not receive their salaries. The international community must set aside its differences and direct financial and political support for the Palestinian people through existing mechanisms and the Palestinian Authority. Norway would in the near future convene, in close consultation with the parties, a meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, which had been given a central role in alleviating the situation in Gaza. Norway supported Egypt's efforts to facilitate Palestinian reconciliation and pave the way for an interim unity Government.

MOHAMMAD KHAZAEI ( Iran ) said the Israeli regime continued with its destructive policies while persisting in its aggressive and expansionist policies towards Lebanon and the occupied Syrian Golan. Palestinian civilians remained under constant Israeli threats and attacks as the occupying Power continued its construction of the illegal separation barrier and its expansion of illegal settlements. Activities in East Jerusalem had undoubtedly been orchestrated to alter illegally the demographic composition of Palestinian territory, particularly in Al-Quds al-Sharif and surrounding areas.

He said the international community had not forgotten – nor would it ever forget – the Israeli atrocities in Gaza. Recent reports by United Nations human rights rapporteurs illustrated well some aspects of Israeli crimes against innocent Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. There was now more than enough evidence for international judicial mechanisms to move expeditiously to bring the Israeli war criminals to justice. The international community was watching closely how the Council and the wider United Nations would deal with those crimes. The suffering of the Palestinian people caused by the inhumane Israeli blockade should be ended immediately. Iran hoped the Council would take meaningful steps to compel the Israeli regime to end its crippling blockade of Gaza and allow immediate and unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance.

MARÍA RUBIALES DE CHAMORRO ( Nicaragua ) said that Kevin Cahill, Chief Adviser for Humanitarian Affairs to the President of the General Assembly, and his special envoy to examine the Gaza situation had testified that, seeing Gaza in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion had reminded him of the engravings of Dante's *Inferno*. The level of destruction had evoked images of Dresden and Hiroshima at the end of the Second World War. Certain areas of northern Gaza had been completely razed and not a single structure remained standing.

The Security Council bore primary responsibility for resolving the Palestinian problem but it had quite simply not acted in compliance with its Charter mandate, she said, asking why it had been incapable of acting to bring about a ceasefire while knowing that the attacks on Gaza were a total massacre of the Palestinian people. Where else in the world could an occupying Power settle more than half a million people without being subjected to a single sanction by the United Nations? Nicaragua condemned Israel's illegal actions, which constituted de facto annexation and suffocated the integrity, viability and unity of Palestinian territory.

The steady decline of all trade with Gaza had strangled its economy, leading to one of the highest unemployment levels and lowest nutrition rates in the developing world, she said, adding that the Council must demand the reopening of all border crossings. The report of Richard Falk before the Human Rights Council stated that six times more civilians than militants had been killed in Gaza. Israel had used prohibited weapons against them and allowed foreigners to leave while preventing Palestinians from doing so. That must be considered as a new crime against humanity.

BASHEER ZOUBI ( Jordan ) said the Palestinian question remained the core of the problem in the Middle East and there was an urgent need to find a peaceful solution. All parties should engage in negotiations for establishing a Palestinian State. The peace that Arabs aspired to was a peace based on the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and a Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. While underlining the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative, he welcomed the efforts of the Quartet, the European Union and the Council and looked favourably at the positive moves by the United States Administration. He condemned any unilateral measures that created obstacles for the peace process, especially the settlement activities of Israel, including the natural growth, in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Those activities were an obstacle for a viable Palestinian State. Israel, the occupying Power, should also resist from undertaking excavations around the Holy Mosque.

He said the Council should pressure Israel to end its aggression and the illegal measures aimed to create a new situation. The Islamic heritage in Jerusalem should be preserved and historical and religious sites in Jerusalem must be maintained. The blockade against Gaza should end and humanitarian access should be provided. There was a need to reconstruct Gaza and end the Israeli aggression. He hoped the Council would expeditiously consider the findings of the Board of Inquiry.

ROBERT HILL ( Australia ) said his country was deeply saddened by the recent conflict in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel and its humanitarian cost, and condemned any ongoing rocket and mortar fire. He called on Israel to do all it could to help increase the flow of humanitarian goods and other necessary supplies into Gaza. The priority for both sides remained, just as much as ever, the pursuit of a two-State solution, based on the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to a viable State and Israel's right to live in peace within a secure border.

He said it was essential that the international community lend their support. In that regard, he expressed strong support for a durable and fully respected ceasefire and welcomed Palestinian reconciliation consistent with Quartet principles. Recognizing the vital importance of recovery and reconstructions efforts, and the central role of the Palestinians in that regard, his Government had announced at Sharm el-Sheikh a contribution of \$20 million. That assistance built on the \$10 million that Australia had already committed in January for emergency and humanitarian relief and the \$45 million provided in 2008.

PARK IN-KOOK ( Republic of Korea ) said it was deplorable that two months after the declaration of a unilateral ceasefire, the situation in Gaza was still very fragile and a proper ceasefire regime had yet to be set up. Too many Gazans, most of whom had nothing to do with the cause of the conflict, were still suffering from the lack of basic goods and supplies, such as food, nutrition, shelter and proper medical supplies due to the January conflict. That unjustifiable misery and

suffering must be stopped immediately. He urged all parties directly concerned to work to create a durable and fully respected ceasefire agreement as soon as possible, secure unimpeded passage for humanitarian aid to the people suffering in Gaza and take all necessary measures to fully implement resolution 1860 (2009). The effective provision of aid and reconstruction in Gaza depended on the creation of a stable environment. To enable long-term development and help people in their everyday lives, Israel and Palestine must work diligently for an enduring peace settlement.

At the recent conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, nearly \$5 billion had been pledged to aid the early recovery and reconstruction of Gaza, he said. The fact that so many countries congregated and offered to mobilize so much capital in such a short time clearly represented the international community's shared desire and hope for enduring peace and security in Gaza and the Middle East. Reconstruction and long-term economic development, however, could not be pursued unless all parties directly concerned demonstrated strong political will for peace and exercised restraint. He stood ready to provide support to the peace process and to reconstruction and long-term development in the Palestinian territories. The Korean Government promptly provided relief aid to the Palestinian refugees in Gaza through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) shortly after the conflict began there. The Korean Government had already pledged \$15 million in assistance to the Palestinians in 2009 and 2010.

OUMAR DAOU ( Mali ) stressed the importance of regional stability in the Middle East. The most pressing situation in the world that required stability was the Palestinian question, and it was essential for peace in the Middle East. The solution to the Palestinian question could no longer be postponed. It was high time to implement the noble objective of creating a Palestinian State within safe and recognized borders living side by side in peace with Israel. Resolution 1860 (2009) must be implemented, including its call for a durable ceasefire and the lifting of Israel's embargo on Gaza. He called for the swift resumption of the peace process.

He recognized intra-Palestinian reconciliation efforts under Egypt's auspices. He commended the Board of Inquiry set up by the Secretary-General to investigate war crimes committed by the Israeli Army. He reasserted Mali's support for the just and noble cause of the Palestinian people. With the support of the international community and solidarity of all peace-loving and justice-loving people, Palestinians would recover their inalienable rights and their right to a sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

ABDULLAH HUSSAIN HAROON ( Pakistan ) said peace was slowly becoming a word meaning "do nothing" in the diplomatic lexicon, which was a sad commentary on where mankind was heading. The Jewish community had faced a horrible Holocaust, but the Abrahamic communities had given strong leads towards civilization. During the persecutions in Spain, Muslims in Jerusalem had invited the first returns of the Diaspora. It was, therefore, sad to read how young, idealistic soldiers of the Israeli Army had been inducted with the fervour of a religious war. Having faced all those tribulations, how could they inflict the same on others? To retaliate with the might of an empire and kill thousands in reprisal was all the more regrettable because it had been done by a people known for their fortitude, resilience and courage. Strength did not come through the domination of others.

He said the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict remained a severe thorn in the side of the United Nations and the world community. Hopes had been dashed repeatedly and international incidents had been created from small events. Draconian policies had been seen, as had the fragmenting of Palestinian society. The continuing inhumane blockade had turned the Gaza Strip into a prison and the enclave had been bombed back into the Dark Ages. Where was the moral outrage that would result in a meaningful turn in the lives of the Palestinians? The international community, complicit through its inaction, should refocus its attention on reinvigorating the peace process and striving towards a durable solution for which the parameters already existed: Council resolutions; the principle of land for peace; the Oslo terms of reference; the Road Map; and the Annapolis framework.

JULIO ESCALONA OJEDA ( Venezuela ) said his country had warned the United Nations about the crisis in the Middle East and the situation in Palestine. It had called for urgent action to prevent Israel from conducting its invasion, which would amount to crimes against humanity. Such crimes had in fact occurred as Venezuela had warned. During Israel's occupation of Gaza, 1,434 Palestinians had died, including 960 civilians, among them women and children, while 5,303 had been wounded. Most had not been able to return to normal life due to their injuries.

Resolution 1860 (2009) still had not been implemented, a sad revelation of the lack of action by the major Powers, he said. Israel's blockade against Gaza had not been lifted. However, Venezuela had expelled the Israeli ambassador to Caracas over the unjustified military action against Gaza. Richard Falk had said the International Criminal Court should investigate whether Israeli commanders should be tried for violations of international humanitarian law. His report showed that Israel had committed massive violations of international humanitarian law during the 22-day military incursion. The report would be very important for the Human Rights Council.

Israel could not be allowed to behave with impunity, he said. It was important to establish responsibility for its criminal nature so that the Council would not see its credibility lost. Venezuela's criticism of the Israeli Government's policy of genocide should not be mistaken for anti-Semitism. The Venezuelan Government respected the local Jewish community, as well as its beliefs and religious practices. However, the United Nations must attend to the urgent needs of the Palestinian population and guarantee a lasting peace. No peace could happen while the occupation continued and the Palestinian people's legitimate rights to self-determination were denied.

The representative of Israel, taking the floor for a second time in response to the interventions by the representatives of Iran and Syria, said it was astonishing that countries which actively supported terror, sabotaged the peace process and continued to smuggle arms were lecturing Israel on the peace process and its moral values. They should dig into their own human rights records. Israel was proud of its self-criticism and hoped that Syria and Iran, as well as some other countries whose delegates had spoken, would develop the same sense of self-criticism.

Also speaking for the second time, the representative of Syria said in response that the Israeli representative's statement contained misleading claims that were part of that country's desperate campaign to distract the attention of international public opinion from the activities and holocaust it carried out on a daily basis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israel's allegations were meant to cover up its violations of Lebanon's sovereignty. The Secretary-General's reports on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) reaffirmed that the joint forces had not discovered any smuggling of weapons. Israel's statements would not change the fact that it had the largest record of terrorism, which would require a museum to archive.

The representative of Iran, also speaking for the second time, reiterated his country's rejection of Israel's baseless allegations. Needless to say, they were made to distract the international community from Israel's crimes and atrocities, which had been mentioned by many Council members. Israel had displayed a very clear example of State terrorism by a regime that possessed nuclear weapons. Israel's actions posed one of the greatest threats to the region and the international community.

\*\*\*

