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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Rosenthal	(Guatemala)
<i>Members:</i>	Azerbaijan	Mr. Sharipov
	China	Mr. Zhu Yanwei
	Colombia	Mr. Alzate
	France	Mr. Legendre
	Germany	Mr. Eick
	India	Mr. Kumar
	Morocco	Mr. Erroja
	Pakistan	Mr. Masood Khan
	Portugal	Mr. Teixeira Coelho
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zhdanov
	South Africa	Mr. Laher
	Togo	Mr. Akpoto Komlagan
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Day
	United States of America	Mr. Cenzer

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The meeting was resumed at 3.10 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Australia, Bahrain and the Maldives to participate in this meeting.

I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Kodama (Japan): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his briefing this morning.

Japan is deeply concerned about the serious and worsening situation in Syria and profoundly deplores the death of many thousands of people as a result of the continued violence. Japan reiterates its call on all parties in Syria to immediately halt the violence and abuses of human rights, and condemns the Syrian authorities for not keeping their own commitments and responsibilities to protect their own citizens. The recent deaths of Turkish civilians near the Syrian border are a tragic incident that shows the increasing violence is not only causing harm to Syrian people but also spilling over into neighbouring countries. Japan welcomes the press statement issued by the Security Council on 4 October (SC/10783) and condemns in the strongest terms such acts of transboundary violence.

Japan once again urges the Syrian authorities to cease violence immediately and to carry out concrete measures for a Syrian-led political transition, including in the framework of the Friends of Syria. The ad hoc ministerial meeting on Syria held last month provided an important occasion to strengthen coordination among parties towards a peaceful transition in Syria. Japan has not just implemented significant economic sanctions, but we will also soon host the next meeting of the working group on sanctions.

It is necessary for the international community to step up the pressure in a unified manner. In that regard, Japan deems it extremely regrettable that the Security Council has thus far failed to unite and speak in one voice, in line with such international efforts.

Japan welcomes and strongly supports the diplomatic efforts by the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. The unconditional and swift implementation of Mr. Annan's six-point plan, together with the transition plan set forth in the Action Group communiqué (S/2012/523, annex), are essential in order to bring about a democratic and pluralistic political system.

Japan is gravely concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation of the Syrian people. For that reason, the Japanese Government has so far provided emergency grant aid totalling \$13 million, and cooperated effectively with relevant international agencies to improve the humanitarian situation of Syria. Moreover, Japan commends the efforts by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Valérie Amos, to coordinate humanitarian assistance and bring the worsening humanitarian situation in Syria to the attention of the international community. As we enter into winter, we underline the importance of allowing humanitarian personnel full and unimpeded access to people in need of assistance.

The Middle East peace process represents a linchpin to the peace and stability of the region. Japan firmly supports a two-State solution, in which Israel and a future independent Palestinian State would live side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition. We would also like to remind both sides that a two-State solution can only be achieved through sincere direct negotiations between the parties concerned. Japan deplores Israel's settlement activities and reiterates its call upon Israel to fully freeze such activities, while we also urge both sides to further their confidence-building efforts.

Japan has been supporting the efforts of the Palestinians towards establishing an independent State and is committed to continue to provide assistance. We strongly hope that the entire international community, in particular donor countries, is united to assist the Palestinians. Support to the fiscal stability of the Palestinian Authority is a necessary task that Israel should carry out. In that regard, Japan welcomes the understanding between Israel and the Palestinian Authority regarding the transfer of goods and related tax procedures.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. Diallo (*spoke in French*): Allow me, at the outset, on behalf of the Committee to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to address the Council during this important debate. I wish the Council the greatest success in its deliberations in the month of October under your presidency, Sir.

The tragic events of recent days in and around Gaza is a sobering reminder that resolution 1860 (2009) has yet to be fully implemented. The Committee condemns all attacks against civilians, regardless of their perpetrators. Indiscriminate rocket fire, targeted assassinations and military strikes must cease, as must provocations, threats and acts of incitement. The policy of brinkmanship employed by the parties is irresponsible and dangerous. Any major incident risks unleashing a spiral of violence and provoking a deadly conflict.

At its high-level meeting on 22 September 2011 on the prevention of armed conflict (see S/PV.6621), the Council resolved to strengthen efforts in this regard. It is now high time for action. While we applaud Egypt's efforts to restore calm, the Council has the Charter responsibility and the tools to act to stabilize the situation, protect civilians, prevent the eruption of new hostilities, and fully implement resolution 1860 (2009) before it is too late.

Over the past few years, the Palestinian Authority has built strong institutions, reformed its finances and restored law and order. It is a major force of stability and security in the area. However, those accomplishments are starting to unravel owing to a financial crisis that is triggering social unrest among the Palestinian people. The donors' meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians did not result in significant new aid inflows. Our Committee strongly urges donors to step up efforts to provide the assistance so urgently needed, without politicizing the issue.

The Committee is aware that donor-driven development is unsustainable in the long run. Palestinians need a healthy economy to underpin a viable State. At its meeting in August, our Committee heard a briefing by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Norwegian Refugee Council on the devastating humanitarian toll of Israeli restrictions and settler violence on Palestinians in Area C, which is under full Israeli control. Let me recall that Area C covers some 60 per cent of the West Bank.

The Area is also strategic for a viable Palestinian economy. Our Committee calls for a speedy transfer of additional portions of the West Bank to Palestinian control, a process that began under Oslo that was frozen after 2000 and never restarted.

Our Committee is concerned by the assessment contained in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2012/701) that the two-State solution must be urgently implemented to avoid the fait accompli of a one-State reality. In that regard, our Committee feels that an upgrade of the United Nations status of Palestine can open up new opportunities to revitalize the political process, rescuing the two-State solution, before it is too late. At the same time, we reiterate our principled position that settlements are illegal and an obstacle to peace.

At its meeting on 8 October, our Committee heard a briefing by members of the jury of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine, a civil society initiative that just concluded its fourth session in New York. We were struck by the assessment of eminent jurists that the United Nations failure to take action commensurate with the duration and severity of Israeli violations testifies to a failure of the international community. Our Committee takes its responsibilities extremely seriously. We will continue to promote accountability and will continue to make a constructive contribution to our shared goal of two States living in peace and security. We encourage the Council to do the same.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Mr. Thomas Mayer-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Mayer-Harting: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding country Croatia and the candidate country Montenegro align themselves with this statement.

The European Union stands by the Syrian people in its courageous struggle for freedom, dignity and democracy. The use of force by the Syrian regime against civilians, including with heavy weapons and aerial bombardments, has reached unprecedented levels and can only exacerbate further the violence and endanger the stability of the whole region. The European Union recalls that the priorities should be to end oppression, stop all violence, deliver humanitarian aid for all those in need, prevent further regional instability and be prepared for the post-conflict period. The European Union underlines that those whose presence would undermine the political transition should be excluded and that, in that regard, President Al-Assad has no place in the future of Syria. The European Union remains committed to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria.

The European Union remains deeply concerned by the spillover effects of the Syrian crisis in neighbouring countries in terms of security and stability. The European Union strongly condemns the shelling by Syrian forces of Turkish territory, particularly on the border town of Akçakale on 3 October. The European Union calls on all to prevent escalation. The EU calls again on the Syrian authorities to fully respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all neighbouring countries.

Recalling that the main responsibility for the current crisis lies with the Syrian authorities, the European Union warns against further militarization and radicalization of the conflict and sectarian violence, which can only bring further suffering to Syria and risks having a tragic impact in the region. In that regard, the European Union expresses concern about the protection of civilians, in particular vulnerable groups and religious communities. The intensification of violence and the recent series of terrorist attacks demonstrate the urgent need for a political transition that would meet the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people and bring stability in Syria.

The European Union reiterates its full support for the endeavours of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria and stands ready to strengthen its cooperation with him. The EU emphasizes the need to focus international and regional efforts to solve the Syrian crisis through a political solution and calls on key actors in the region and all members of the Security Council to uphold their responsibilities and support Mr. Brahimi's efforts.

In view of the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and of the approaching winter, the European Union recalls the moral imperative to step up assistance to all affected populations throughout Syria and neighbouring countries. The EU will continue to provide assistance and calls on all donors to increase their contributions to the latest United Nations appeals for funding humanitarian assistance and refugee assistance. All parties should allow full and safe access for the delivery of

humanitarian aid in all parts of the country and respect international humanitarian law.

The European Union urges all parties to the conflict to respect in full their legal and moral obligations to protect civilians. Particularly alarmed by the dramatic and growing difficulties in access in Syria to medical services, the EU urges all parties to commit themselves to respect in full the inviolability of all medical facilities, medical personnel and vehicles in respect of applicable international humanitarian law.

The EU is appalled by the deterioration of the situation in Syria, in particular by the widespread and systematic violations of human rights, international humanitarian law and fundamental freedoms by the Syrian authorities. The EU welcomes the extension of the independent international commission of inquiry on Syria and its strengthening through the nomination of two new members. The EU reaffirms its support to the commission's investigations into alleged violations of international human rights law with a view to holding to account those responsible for such violations, including for those that may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes according to the definition of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The EU underlines the importance of documenting the widespread, systematic and gross human rights violations and recalls that all those responsible must be held accountable.

The EU recalls that an inclusive and coordinated opposition is essential to starting a political transition. The EU continues to urge all opposition groups, inside and outside Syria, to put aside their differences and to agree on a set of shared principles and start working towards an inclusive, orderly and peaceful transition in Syria. The European Union will continue to work closely with the League of Arab States and facilitate further dialogue initiatives to complement its efforts to encourage the opposition to form an inclusive common platform.

Today the European Union approved additional restrictive measures against Syria. The European Union stands ready to engage with those seriously committed to a genuine democratic transition. The EU will continue its policy of imposing additional measures targeting the regime, not the civilian population, as long as repression continues. It calls on all Syrians to dissociate themselves from the repressive policy of the regime in order to facilitate a political transition. The EU commits to working closely and comprehensively with international partners on planning to ensure that the international community is ready to provide rapid support to Syria once transition takes place.

On the Middle East peace process, political changes across the region underline the urgent need for progress. The European Union is convinced that heeding the aspirations of the people in the region, including those of Palestinians for statehood and those of Israelis for security, is a crucial element for lasting peace, stability and prosperity in the region as a whole.

It is in the fundamental interest of the European Union, of the parties and of the wider region to resolve the conflict, which can be achieved through a comprehensive peace settlement based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the road map, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative. The European Union stresses once again the central role of the Quartet in this context.

The EU recognizes the additional challenges that both parties currently face. The Palestinian Authority continues to face severe financial difficulties, which risk undermining everything that has been achieved to date, including the State readiness of the Palestinian Authority regarding its institutions in key sectors. This has been acknowledged by the international community, most recently at the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, held here on 23 September. In this regard, the European Union calls on international donors to increase their support to the Palestinian Authority treasury, on the Palestinian Authority to continue reforms and improve the business environment, and on Israel to take further and broader steps to enable Palestinian sustainable economic development, including in Area C and the Gaza Strip.

The changes under way in the region continue to present Israel with uncertainty, but also offer opportunities in its relations with the Arab world. At the same time, progress on the Middle East peace process would contribute to regional stability and offer new opportunities for the region as a whole.

The EU and its member States reaffirm their fundamental commitment to the security of Israel, including with regard to vital threats in the region, and are committed to a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that would guarantee security and prosperity for both Israel and a future Palestinian State.

The European Union is appalled by the recurring rocket attacks from Gaza and condemns in the strongest terms violence deliberately targeting civilians.

Our position as to how to achieve such a resolution is clear. Direct negotiations between the parties in the framework of a credible set of parameters, including those established in the Quartet's statement of 23 September 2011, remain the best way forward. The European Union will continue to contribute, including within the Quartet, to the work for that solution.

The European Union encourages others in the region to facilitate a return to negotiations, and calls on the parties themselves to demonstrate their commitment to a peaceful solution by actions that can create the environment of trust necessary to ensure that meaningful negotiations can start without delay. Now more than ever, bold decisions by both parties are needed, and both parties must respect their obligations under the road map. Settlement expansion, which constitutes a violation of international law and threatens to make a two-State solution impossible, must cease immediately.

The EU reiterates its grave concerns about these developments, including the acceleration of settlement construction and the serious limitations on the Palestinian Authority's ability to promote the economic development of Palestinian communities in Area C. Continuing demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures, displacement and plans of forced transfer, as well as settler violence, also remain a serious concern. The EU reiterates its call on Israel to work together with the Palestinian Authority to allow more access to and control of the Palestinian Authority over Area C. Social and economic development in Area C is of critical importance for the viability of a future Palestinian State, as Area C is its main land reserve. A way must also be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two States.

The European Union continues to call for intra-Palestinian reconciliation behind President Abbas, in line with the principles set out in his speech of 4 May 2011, as an important element for the unity of a future Palestinian State and for reaching a two-State solution. The situation in Gaza continues to be of great concern. Fully recognizing Israel's legitimate security needs, the EU continues to call for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from the Gaza Strip. The EU calls for full respect for international humanitarian law.

High Representative Catherine Ashton will travel to Lebanon, Jordan, the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel later this month and more widely in the region in November. The European Union also looks forward to hosting the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee in Brussels in the spring of next year. At the same time, our hope is to not then be simply reiterating the statements we have made at that forum in recent years while the parties themselves drift further apart.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Jarman (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this year. We thank the representative of Germany for his stewardship in September. We would also like to thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing.

The question of Palestine is one of the most important challenges facing the Middle East. Recent developments in the occupied Palestinian territory and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 are evidence of the gravity of the serious legal, humanitarian and political violations committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people, including its systematic, illegal, expansionist settlement activities deep within the territory of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and its surrounding neighbourhoods. Its continued evictions of the Arab population from their homes and confiscation of their land and property, both public and private, undermine the foundations of the Palestinian State and the Palestinian Authority.

The United Arab Emirates reiterates its condemnation of all these serious Israeli practices, which have stalemated the regional and international efforts for the resumption of the peace negotiations and led to increased tension and instability in the entire region. We call upon the international community, especially the Security Council, to fully fulfil its obligations under the Charter to persuade Israel to immediately cease its dangerous policies. This should include rescinding its unilateral and illegal measures taken in this regard and creating the appropriate environment for the urgent resumption of peace negotiations with a view to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the Palestinian question on the basis of the two-State solution, as set forth in the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Here we reiterate our support for the establishment of the State of Palestine and its admission to the membership of the United Nations as soon as possible. We express our grave concern regarding the difficult humanitarian and economic situation of the Palestinian people, especially in the Gaza Strip, as witnessed by the most recent sustained military campaign against the Gaza Strip, the blockade and the closing of crossing points. As the Israeli occupation forces continue to launch air strikes on civilian neighbourhoods in the Gaza Strip, in serious breach of international law, including the Geneva Conventions for the protection of war victims, we call upon Israel to immediately stop these attacks and put an end to its siege of the Gaza Strip, in implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) and to remove all of its military barricades in other Palestinian cities and villages. We also demand the immediate and unconditional release of Palestinians who are detained and languishing in inhumane conditions in Israeli prisons and detention centres.

The United Arab Emirates has been following with grave concern the increasing violence and the killings and displacement in Syria. From this rostrum, we call on the international community to fulfil its humanitarian and political obligations in order to put an end to the horrendous atrocities being perpetrated against the peaceful

people of Syria. We are convinced that the crisis can be resolved only through a methodical transfer of power, and we support the efforts undertaken by the Joint Special Representative, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, to find a solution to the crisis through peaceful means, as set out in the terms of reference of his mandate.

We reiterate our commitment to all requirements related to nuclear non-proliferation and to efforts to convene an international conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, including the Arabian Gulf region, in 2012. We stress the need for all relevant parties to participate in that conference. We also call on Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to subject all its nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) comprehensive safeguards system.

In that regard, we urge the Islamic Republic of Iran to cooperate fully with the IAEA and to fulfil its international obligations, thereby dispelling all suspicions and fears regarding its nuclear programme. We hope that a peaceful solution will be found to this crisis that will ease tensions in our region by ensuring the transparency of the Iranian nuclear programme and demonstrating its peaceful nature.

In closing, we hope that the Security Council will fulfil its obligations and take the actions necessary to support prospects for renewing peace negotiations and for achieving just, lasting and comprehensive peace and security in the Middle East.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Khan (Indonesia): The delegation of Indonesia is pleased to participate in this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. We are also grateful to the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, for his briefing.

Before I continue, the delegation of Indonesia would like to associate itself with the statements that will be delivered later by the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan, on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Indonesia remains deeply committed to the resolution of the situation in the Middle East, although, regrettably, there has been next to no progress in the peace process between Israel and Palestine. Despite that fact, Indonesia remains fervently supportive of the two-State solution. We believe that the kernel of a permanent solution lies in two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, on the basis of the principle of land for peace and a just and comprehensive regional peace consistent with the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Quartet road map and the Arab Peace Initiative. It is realistic and desirable that both parties, encouraged by the international community, make progress in that direction.

Israeli policy in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, especially its continued illegal settlement activity, continues to prove a difficult obstacle to that objective, in addition to being a grave violation of international law. Settlements may be good for the Israeli ego, but they indicate no commitment to meeting the Palestinians in fair and realistic negotiations. The continued construction of settlements and their expansion simply compounds the problem of the fragmentation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and complicates prospects for negotiations.

Similarly, Israel, ignoring and defying the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, has further continued its illegal construction of the separation wall in the West Bank, including in and around occupied East Jerusalem.

As we all know, Gaza remains pervaded by general suffering following Israel's menacing blockade there, which hinders the movement of people and goods, leading to increasingly greater unemployment and the shrinking of private-sector businesses.

Indonesia fully supports Palestine's application for full membership in the United Nations, which was submitted last year by President Mahmoud Abbas. This year, in his speech to the General Assembly, the President indicated that, for the same purpose, Palestine had begun intensive consultations with the objective of having the General Assembly adopt a resolution during its sixty-seventh session by which it would consider the State of Palestine to have non-member State observer status in the United Nations. We are pleased to place our support behind this effort and to invite other Member States to support it as well.

The two-State solution is meaningful only if it is comprehensive and embraces other relevant political tracks such as the Israel-Syria and Israel-Lebanon tracks. Thus Israel must withdraw completely from the remaining occupied Lebanese land, as well as from the occupied Syrian Golan, and comply fully with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Finally, with respect to the current situation in Syria, I wish to highlight President Yúdhoyono's address to the general debate, only a few weeks ago, in which he stated:

"The world community is witnessing, with great pain, the worsening violence and unfolding humanitarian catastrophe on the ground; at the same time, the United Nations is a state of paralysis in responding to the situation... Indonesia therefore reiterates its call for the immediate cessation of violence in Syria, which has taken a high toll in innocent civilian lives. The Security Council must now unite and act decisively, as mandated by the United Nations Charter, to bring the situation under control." (A/67/PV.6, p.33)

Therefore, Indonesia sincerely hopes that the world, including the Council, will now unite to end the violence in Syria.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to express our satisfaction at seeing you, Mr. President, guide the work of the Security Council this month. We are confident that your well-known experience and wisdom will ensure a successful outcome to the work of the Council.

We have repeatedly cautioned against the exploitation of international and regional concerns with respect to the Arab Spring, the Iranian nuclear programme, the American presidential elections and other international and regional issues to impose new Israeli facts accomplis on the Palestinian occupied territories, which could undermine the establishment of a Palestinian State. Therefore, His Majesty King Abdullah II, in his statement before the General Assembly on 25 September, emphasized the crux of the matter, namely, the question of Palestine, as follows:

"As the Arab Spring demanded dignity for all, so it demanded the end of exceptionalism. No single issue causes greater anger than to tell an entire people that when it comes to global justice they do not count. The Arab Spring cannot bear its full fruit until the Palestinian-Israeli conflict ends, and ends with a just peace and a Palestinian State living side by side with a secure Israel at peace with the entire region." (A/67/PV.7, p.20)

Our main priority has always been and will remain the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security and able to move forwards on the basis of a fair and comprehensive settlement. Earlier this year, we worked alongside the two parties in Amman in an attempt to relaunch a dialogue. Although that dialogue has ceased, we will not lose hope and will continue to work for the resumption of direct negotiations between the two parties.

In that regard, we have repeatedly demanded and will continue to demand that Israel completely cease its settlement activities and unilateral actions, since such measures pose a direct threat to a peaceful settlement. We therefore noted before the General Assembly that what is needed now more than ever is for all countries to use their collective influence, since neither the parties to the conflict nor the world can endure the ongoing acts of aggression and insecurity. We hope that, following the United States election this year, there will be an exceptional opportunity to achieve our common goal.

We reiterate our ongoing concern over Jerusalem and its holy Islamic and Christian sites and subsequent threats. We underscore the significance of the sacred Al-Haram al-Sharif, which is the third holiest site for Muslims, who consider Al-Haram al-Sharif as sacred as the Kaaba itself. The international community should therefore send a clear message that any attempt to destroy the Arab, Islamic or Christian character of Jerusalem is unacceptable.

Despite the urgent need to reach a lasting settlement to the Palestinian issue, we should not ignore the plight of our brothers in Syria. The bloodshed there, which we strongly condemn, cannot be overlooked or condoned. Members are all aware of Jordan's huge burden as a result of sheltering refugees, who flee daily for their lives. That burden will be exacerbated with the onset of winter, increasing their hardship and suffering. Also, we cannot ignore the deliberate targeting of our border troops as they strive to secure the entry of refugees across our borders. That targeting must stop immediately.

In that regard, we wish to underscore the fact that Jordan will never hesitate and will continue to provide assistance to our brothers in Syria despite the dangerous and serious bloodshed. At the same time, we will not allow any violation of our sovereignty because of our humanitarian role. If our sovereignty is breached, Jordan reserves the right to resort to all legal international measures and mechanisms. As a member of the United Nations and the League of Arab States and a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Jordan will not hesitate to use such mechanisms.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Pedersen (Norway): We take the floor today to draw attention to the grave consequences of Syria's tragic path to civil war and to stress that we must not lose sight of the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Both conflicts require a political solution.

The historical changes and popular uprisings in the Arab world, in particular Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, have removed lifelong dictators and replaced them with representative Governments. Those changes were driven by the people demanding greater political freedom, which is their legitimate right. Governments that draw their legitimacy from the consent of their people, rather than from fear and repression, are best suited to delivering justice and lasting order, stability and peace. The international community must now help to consolidate those developments by providing political and economic support, while holding the new Governments accountable.

Nineteen months ago, the conflict in Syria began not as a sectarian civil war but as a call for dignity, freedom and democratic change through the peaceful protests of the Syrian people. It was a genuine call by the Syrian people. It was not an external manipulation or a pretext for foreign intervention, as the regime is propagating. Tragically, the call for change was met by brutal military force, not dialogue.

President Al-Assad and his regime decided to turn the legitimate struggle of the Syrian people into a sectarian war by redefining peaceful protests as terrorism and foreign conspiracy. Every Government has a responsibility to protect its people but Al-Assad chose to turn the deadly State apparatus against the Syrian population. The popular demands for meaningful change have never been given serious consideration by the Syrian regime.

Syria's conflict has already spilled over into neighbouring countries and is destabilizing the region, as we have seen on the Syrian-Turkish border. We condemn the shelling by the Syrian forces and the continued violence in the strongest possible terms. All violence and atrocities in Syria, including the systematic use of sexual violence and torture against children, men and women, must stop. Crimes of that nature must never go unpunished. Even in times of war, there are rules. All parties to the conflict are bound by international humanitarian law. It is our duty to end impunity for international crimes and to ensure accountability for the crimes committed. The Syrian Government bears the primary responsibility for the conflict. One tragic result of the conflict is the escalation of humanitarian needs both inside Syria and beyond. We commend Syria's neighbours for their generosity in receiving Syrian refugees and for their efforts to support them. Increased humanitarian support and access are necessary and all parties must protect the civilian population, ensure unhindered humanitarian access and protect health workers and medical facilities.

As the level of violence intensifies, it is urgent to move forward with a meaningful political transition that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people and brings stability. Such a plan has already been endorsed by an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly. A credible political transition must be inclusive and peaceful and must preserve the unity of the State, while protecting the rights of all constituencies in Syria. To make progress towards transition, the violence must end, Al-Assad's regime must cede power and the political opposition must unite around a road map for peace and shared principles.

By staying engaged with all parties, the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi, plays a key role in helping to find common ground in order to move the political process forward. Norway fully supports his efforts. However, it is unfortunate that Mr. Brahimi's tasks have been hampered by a divided Security Council. It is indeed inexcusable that the Security Council has failed to act on its clear responsibilities and to use its collective weight to impose serious consequences in the event of the Syrian Government not ending the violence or complying with its responsibilities.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains deadlocked, with no political solution on the horizon. That deadlock must be broken and the negotiations on a two-State solution resumed.

On 23 September, Norway once again hosted a meeting of the donor support group for the Palestinian Authority, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee on Assistance to the Palestinians, in New York. The meeting was held against the backdrop of the serious fiscal crisis facing the Palestinian Authority, which may be looking at a financing gap of not less than \$400 million at the end of this year. The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee was established in accordance with the Oslo Accords to mobilize funding to promote the development of a Palestinian institutional structure upon which an independent and viable Palestinian State can be built. That aim has been achieved. The assessment made last year that the Palestinian Authority is ready for statehood still stands.

However, the Authority should not be allowed to become a perennial client of the international donor community. The task of the donors will not be complete until the Palestinian economy can prosper and fiscal independence is assured. The reports to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting noted that the constraints on the Palestinian economy are limiting its prospects for reaching sustainability. While acknowledging that Israel has taken steps to facilitate growth in the Palestinian economy, the donors called on it to take further steps to improve access in the West Bank and Gaza, including in Area C and East Jerusalem. Further realization of the potential of the Palestinian private sector can be achieved by relaxing Israeli restrictions on access to land, a range of raw materials and export markets.

While welcoming the Palestinian Authority's efforts to strengthen its fiscal position, the donors noted the importance of further mobilizing all available Palestinian resources in order to overcome the current crisis and continue to reform its institutions. The donors reaffirmed their willingness to continue to support the Authority, but only as part of an international effort to promote the two-State solution.

The current political stalemate is, however, untenable. The Israeli occupation, which severely hampers Palestinian economic development, remains the main obstacle to the realization of Palestinian statehood. A self-sustaining Palestinian economy cannot be achieved as long as the occupation remains in place and illegal settlements continue to expand, encircling East Jerusalem and undermining the very concept of the two-State solution.

Norway, as Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, urges donors to honour their outstanding commitments and continue their assistance in helping to build a viable Palestinian economy that can sustain the institutions that are vital for statehood. If the present fiscal crisis in the Palestinian territory is not resolved, there is a risk of growing social and political unrest that could spiral into chaos.

The continued impasse in the negotiations between the parties threatens the common vision of the two-State solution and is an obstacle to a peaceful future for the Palestinian and Israeli people. That is why Norway calls on both parties to resume negotiations on the final status issues. It is the only way to achieve a viable and just solution.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): I have the honour to address the Security Council on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation group in New York.

Our meeting today is taking place amid serious concerns about this critical time and the intricate situation in the Middle East. The intransigence of Israel, the occupying Power, and its persistence in its unilateral policies definitely undermine the two-State solution and increase regional instability. It has therefore become imperative that the international community play a constructive and effective role to reverse this deteriorating situation. We must also enhance opportunities for a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to the conflict, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The situation in the region has been exacerbated and tensions increased due to the illegal policies of Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, such as the expulsion of Palestinians, the expansion of settlements and the construction of the apartheid wall. That state of affairs is being further aggravated by the detention of thousands of Palestinians and the illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip. Israel's practices thus not only represent a flagrant violation of international law and the Geneva Conventions, but also undermine the stability, prosperity and security of the countries of the region.

With the assistance of the international community, the Palestinian Authority has achieved tangible success in building the institutions of a potentially independent Palestinian State. It has also developed a strategic plan for achieving reform, economic development, social justice, transparency, good governance and efficient financial management. We acknowledge its remarkable progress and considerable improvements in building government institutions, as has been confirmed by reports from the World Bank.

Nonetheless, the Israeli occupation remains the main challenge to sustainable development, progress and prosperity in Palestine. Israel's full control of Area C, which makes up 60 per cent of the West Bank, imposes an enormous price on Palestine. Israel holds most of the agricultural land, natural resources — including water resources — and land reserves, thus damaging the territorial integrity of, and restricting access to, Area C, where the settlements are located. That consequently stifles Palestinian economic development and limits the Palestinians' capacity to utilize much of their land and most of their natural resources.

It is worth noting that the economic losses directly attributable to the ongoing Israeli occupation are estimated at \$7 billion a year. That is a devastating factor that not only jeopardizes the gains already achieved, but also inflicts serious damage on the Palestinian economy and curbs its growth.

Sustainable economic growth and institution-building require further attention and support on the part of the international community. The current fiscal crisis could jeopardize the existence of the Palestinian Authority's institutions altogether. It is high time for the international community to take urgent action to lift the Israeli restrictions and help the Palestinians overcome the challenges posed by Israeli occupation. This should be done through parallel investment in both the political and economic areas. We must therefore work together to compel Israel to honour its responsibilities under international law and to facilitate Palestinians' unimpeded access to their lands and natural resources. At the same time, the international community is invited to unite in a sense of urgency to increase financial and economic support to the Palestinian Authority. It is also important that the international community work to help free the Palestinian economy from Israeli hegemony.

It is self-evident that the building of State institutions in Palestine will definitely enhance regional peace, security and stability. Hence, we emphasize the need to continue international efforts to end the Israeli occupation and support the national aspirations of the Palestinian people. It is therefore the duty of the entire international community to render all forms of assistance to the Palestinian Authority, including financial and economic support, so as to lay the foundations of a modern, democratic and viable State.

We should keep in mind that assistance is vitally needed to help the Palestinian Authority address the needs of its people and protect and maintain the gains already achieved. We must commit ourselves to enabling the Palestinian people to realize their right to freedom, self-determination, independence and the establishment of the sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In conclusion, with regard to the situation in Syria, I would like to express our unequivocal support for the efforts of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, in achieving a peaceful settlement and establishing peace and security in Syria.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, and your country, Guatemala, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. My delegation associates itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and that just made by the representative of Kazakhstan on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The situation in the Middle East, especially the unresolved conflict on the question of Palestine, continues to be the central issue in the maintenance of international peace and security. The intransigence of Israel on the question of Palestine, the Arab Spring, the situation in Syria and Libya are issues that have drawn our attention to the region. The Middle East continues to witness incidents of violence and hostility.

It is without a doubt that the deadlock in the talks on Palestine is diminishing the possibility of a return to the negotiating table for a two-State solution. With more Israeli settlements created, the probability of a resumption of mediation is even more remote. But the world cannot sit idle as the situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank continues to deteriorate, with no hope of recourse. We should collectively demand that Israel lift the blockade on Gaza immediately.

Israel must cease all its illegal settlement activities. Malaysia has been consistent in its view that the continued occupation by Israel of Palestinian land and territory is unlawful and against international law. On the same token, Malaysia is also extremely concerned with Israel's intention to divide the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is also a holy site for Muslims and Christians. Such acts would further undermine international law and aggravate the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Just a few weeks ago, world leaders gathered in New York to participate in the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels. Our leaders adopted what is considered to be a landmark Declaration (resolution 67/1). The provisions contained therein should be implemented. These include applying the rule of law to all States equally and resolving disputes by peaceful means, in conformity with the principles of justice and international law. World leaders also committed themselves to upholding the right to the self-determination of peoples who remain under foreign occupation, and to ending impunity for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Malaysia hopes that the Security Council will uphold the agreement adopted in the outcome document.

The plight of the people of Palestine cannot be ignored by the international community. It is our moral responsibility to uphold their aspirations to freedom and liberty. Their ambitions for self-determination are legitimate aspirations. With 133 Member States recognizing Palestine as a State, it is an irony that we, the people of the world, cannot make this aspiration a reality. We must continue to uphold the principles for the establishment of a Palestinian State under the two-State solution, based on the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. Only then will Israel and Palestinians live side by side in peace and security.

We are appalled by the death of thousands of Syrian civilians and the thousands more who have been displaced and have taken refuge in neighbouring countries. The unabated violence and destruction of property must end, the loss of lives must be stopped, and due process of law must resume. We call upon all parties in Syria to cease hostilities immediately and abide by international law, including international humanitarian and human rights laws. We believe that a solution to the conflict in Syria must be a Syrian-led process if it is to be sustainable in the long run.

Malaysia joins the international community in urging restraint between Turkey and Syria with regard to the recent shelling incidents along their common borders. We believe that resorting to military action would worsen the situation. Both nations should find the courage to resolve their differences amicably, without the need for any military action.

Malaysia strongly supports the restoration of Syrian sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan. We urge Israel to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967.

Malaysia also reiterates its support for Lebanon in its efforts to complete the liberation of all its territories and condemns the continued violations and aggression launched by Israel. We urge Israel to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006), which called for a permanent ceasefire and for the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon, with full respect for the Blue Line.

The situation in the Middle East needs our collective attention and a solution. Malaysia urges the main players to show political leadership and impartiality in order to improve the deteriorating situation in the region. We also wish to remind the Council that failure to enforce many of its resolutions on the question of Palestine has in some ways encouraged the occupying Power to continue defying world opinion. The time has come for us to make some difficult decisions for the good of the region and the world. It has been a year since Palestine submitted an application to be a State Member of the United Nations. How much longer does the international community have to wait for the Council to take a decision, when the majority has agreed to admit the State of Palestine as a Member of the United Nations?

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Ms. Lalama (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to express its viewpoints on the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine, all the more so at this important stage, which the Security Council must address. I would like to begin by thanking the President for convening this debate. My country appreciates the detailed briefing of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine.

The Government of Ecuador expresses its concern once again, pursuant to the standards and principles of international law, over the Security Council's protracted handling of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. At this time of political and economic turmoil, it is important to fight for an international system of justice. In that context, the case of Palestine has awakened the conscious of the international community about what the United Nations should be. Member countries are more interested than ever in complying with current international legislation and resolutions, and call for an end to Zionism in Palestine in all its forms.

Proof of that is the recognition of 133 States Members of the Organization that support the request of the President of the Palestinian Authority, on 23 September 2011, for Palestine to be considered a full Member of the United Nations. However, due to the anti-democratic right of veto enjoyed by the permanent members of the Security Council, the rise in status of Palestine in the United Nations has not taken place. It is time to seek mechanisms to actively support progress in the peace efforts and strengthen the capacity of the Palestinian Authority so that it can meet the security needs of its people.

The Charter of the United Nations was created to emphasize the rights of the people, not those of States. The Security Council therefore has responsibility for Israel's violations of international law, which have allowed it to operate in a state of immunity and impunity. Israel has flouted resolution 242 (1967), which rejects the acquisition of territory by war, while its settlements on Palestinian territory are in full view of the international community. Since 1992, it has built a true wall of shame based on the pretext of security concerns, although its purpose is actually to militarily control the West Bank and impede the lives of the Palestinians by controlling agriculture and 82 per cent of the water. Many efforts and initiatives at the United Nations, including creating new principles, have all met with failure in the face of this conflict. But it is important to emphasize that that also applies to the Quartet grouping, which prepared a road map that has had no effective results to date.

My country believes it is timely to implement the Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels (resolution 67/1), adopted at the opening of the current session of the Assembly (see A/67/PV.3), which states that,

“the rule of law applies to all States equally, and to international organizations, including the United Nations and its principal organs, and that respect for and promotion of the rule of law and justice should guide all of their activities”. (resolution 67/1, para. 2)

In that context, my delegation calls for the Security Council to drop its passive attitude when considering Israeli abuses. It is not enough to denounce and condemn Israel for its violations of international law, since that path has not led to any positive results and, to some degree, has resulted in complicity.

To conclude, Ecuador calls upon the international community to support the request of Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority, to accept Palestine as a State Member of the United Nations with full rights, within its 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. While the issue is being studied, we call for the support of the General Assembly to consider Palestine as an Observer State of the Organization. Only in that manner will we achieve peace and security in the Middle East, and thereby the security of all States Members of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also thank you for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East.

I also express my country's endorsement of the statements delivered, and to be delivered, on behalf of the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Israel has continued both its occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories and its aggression against religious holy place in violation of international law. In return, the United Nations has continued to ignore what is right and kept silent on instances of violent provocation, unjust aggression and illegal acts committed by Israel against the Palestinian people — the very same people who continue to hope that the international community will grant them justice by authorizing the establishment of their free and independent State, within the 4 June 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital.

While we support the demands of the Palestinian people, we also call for the complete withdrawal of the Israeli occupation forces from all other occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan and the Shaba'a farmlands and other occupied Lebanese territories.

Israel has never ceased its abhorrent actions, including attacks against religious sites, forced displacement and expulsion, arbitrary detention and mistreatment of prisoners, building new settlements and expanding existing ones, as well as extrajudicial killings.

Furthermore, in the past month, Israel has stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque and attacked worshipers with sound bombs. Prior to that, Israeli settlers and the occupation

forces launched more than 60 attacks on holy sites in Jerusalem and other occupied Palestinian territories.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, by virtue of its responsibility for Islamic holy sites and its custodianship of the two holy mosques in Mecca and Medina, is deeply concerned about Israel's continuous assault on Jerusalem, in general, and on Al-Haram Al-Sharif in particular, including its continuous attempts to burn down or otherwise destroy Al-Haram Al-Sharif.

We draw attention to additional Israeli plans to accelerate the demolition and displacement timetables and to intensify settlement policies. The most accurate description of the illegal settlement expansion carried out by Israel is that it is a great danger that threatens the two-State solution. The settlements clearly violate international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibit occupation authorities from taking any action that could lead to changing the demographic or geographic character of occupied territory.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia considers resolving the Palestinian issue a top priority, and reiterates its full support for Palestine's request for full membership of the United Nations and its affiliated entities. As a step towards that goal, we call upon all Member States to support upgrading Palestine to non-member State status, and urge them to support Palestinian endeavours in that regard.

At the same time, we question the unfair practices that put pressure on the Palestinians and threaten to cut back assistance to them. Rather, the threats and pressure should have been directed towards Israel, to compel it to end the occupation, cease settlement activities and seriously negotiate the process of establishing an independent Palestinian State.

My country looks forward with great interest to the conference on the Middle East aimed at establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, to be held in Helsinki by the end of the year. We call on the Finnish facilitator of the conference, Mr. Jaako Laajava, and the States that sponsored the initiative, to issue invitations to the Conference without delay.

The tragic situation in sisterly Syria has reached dangerous levels. The number of victims, refugees and displaced persons has increased every day as a result of the Syrian regime's arrogant policies and practices. That regime insists on considering its citizens as enemies who deserve nothing but bullets, artillery shells and bombardment by aircraft and helicopter. Moreover, the regime's aggression goes beyond its national borders and threatens the security of the entire region while depending on military and political backup and cover from certain major Powers. The Syrian regime continues to pursue a military solution, ignoring the fact that fate will inevitably answer the people's call for freedom.

While we support the efforts of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the Legal Adviser of Arab States, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, we believe that the success of his mission requires a focus on achieving a peaceful transition of power and the taking of concrete steps towards building the future of new, modern and civil Syrian State in which the entire Syrian people, with its broad spectrum of religious, sectarian, ethnic and regional affiliations, enjoy equal rights and responsibilities. The Syrian regime must realize that the time for its departure has arrived, as it cannot build its rule on the bones of its people, nor can it quench its thirst for power with the blood of innocent women and children. The international community must shoulder its responsibilities and intensify its support for the Syrian people using every possible means to enable them to defend themselves, heal their wounds and care for their children and displaced refugees. Furthermore, we demand that an investigation be conducted on the Syrian regime's crimes against humanity and that all those involved in such heinous acts be brought to justice.

My country is deeply concerned about the continuation of the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear programme outside international control, a matter that is seriously jeopardizing the security of the entire Arabian Gulf region. While we reaffirm the right of Iran and all countries in the region to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, we uphold the principle that the process should be under the full and comprehensive supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We also support the efforts of the 5+1 group with respect to negotiations with Iran aimed at reaching a peaceful resolution to the issue. Consequently, we call on Iran to negotiate seriously and in good faith in order to achieve that goal. We further call on all parties to refrain from threats and counterthreats.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): I thank the delegation of Guatemala for scheduling today's very important open debate on the situation in the Middle East. Allow me to express our appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman for his comprehensive briefing this morning.

The delegation of Bangladesh aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Kazakhstan, who spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, respectively. In addition, I wish to briefly make certain points that Bangladesh believes to be of importance.

The people of Palestine are being denied their fundamental rights to self-determination and to live freely in their own land, while displaced Palestinians have been denied their rights to return home and live with dignity and in safety. Achieving a lasting solution in the Middle East requires Israel's complete and unconditional withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.

The occupying Power's extensive destruction of property, homes and economic institutions, its construction of new walls, confiscation of land and farms, its settlement activity and indiscriminate air strikes and incursions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, are all contrary to international law. They have seriously hampered the already critical dire socioeconomic situation faced by the Palestinian people. In that regard, we support the invitation from the Palestinian Observer Mission to the Security Council to visit the occupied Palestinian territories.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains an issue of concern. One could duly concur with Palestinian resentment that the Paris Protocol has been selectively implemented in favour of Israel insofar as provisions that would allow the Palestinian Authority to enter into free trade agreements with other States or which mandated access to Israeli markets have not come about. We urge Israel to lift its harsh restrictions in order to ease the plight of civilians and bring an end to the blockade of Gaza. Walls and blockades do not work in the long run; indeed, even the Berlin Wall had to come down.

The situation of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention centres has deeply offended those who truly believe in human rights and the fairness of justice. Those detained must be charged and face trial with judicial guarantees, or be released without delay. We know that justice delayed is justice denied.

During the recent general debate of the General Assembly on 27 September 2012, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas indicated that Palestine intended to seek upgraded status at the United Nations — from Permanent Observer to "non-member observer State" — through a draft resolution to be submitted for adoption by the General Assembly (A/67/PV.12). Since the Palestinian application to become a State Member of the United Nations has remained unresolved in the Security Council since September 2011, we believe that Palestine's current demand warrants due consideration from the world body.

However, we are saddened to see that there is very little momentum this year for breaking the impasse, in contrast to September 2011 when the Quartet issued a new timeline for the Middle East peace process that called for each side to submit a comprehensive proposal on borders and security within three months, to be followed by direct negotiations leading to a solution by the end of 2012 (see SG/2178). Although the Palestinian Authority submitted its proposals soon thereafter, the Israeli Government did not meet the initial three-month deadline, and no direct negotiations have taken place. I would add that the European Union should now assume greater responsibility because it has received this year's Nobel Peace Prize. Let it prove its worth by taking a lead role in realizing peace and security in the Middle East.

We believe that the best guides for achieving a two-State solution are the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, namely, resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), the principle of land for peace, the Madrid Conference terms of reference, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The principled support of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination from all corners of the globe, both bilaterally and multilaterally, has been an essential pillar of Palestinian resilience over the decades. In that regard, let me reiterate Bangladesh's long-standing position that the continued illegal occupation of Palestine over the past six decades is the root cause of violence, unrest and destabilization in the region. Let me also reiterate our full support for a lasting peace for all inhabitants of the region — both Arabs and Israelis — and our strong commitment to the realization of an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, living side by side and in peace with all its neighbours.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Kohona (Sri Lanka): My delegation thanks you, Mr. President, for arranging today's discussion on this critical issue.

Sri Lanka also associates itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is undoubtedly at the heart of the tensions in the Middle East and must be resolved urgently in order to achieve a meaningful peace, including in the wider region. Peace between Israel and Palestine will be the answer to a long-standing prayer of the international community. As things stand, the conflict saps resources, makes life a continuing and hopeless nightmare for many Palestinians, fuels desperate responses, and keeps the world on nervous toes. Unfortunately, the peace process, which was so enthusiastically embraced, is at an impasse and tensions continue to escalate.

It is an essential condition that all parties cease tension-provoking activities. Israel's continuing settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories are a critical sticking point. The resumption of talks has become tied to that issue. The Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the Economic and Social Council and the International Court of Justice have called for an end to settlement activity and highlighted its illegality. Israel's practice of demolishing Palestinian homes is a matter of concern and fuels resentment. The continuation of that practice cannot contribute to confidence-building or the peace process. It

should be emphasized that Israel must not undertake actions that are contrary to the established truths of international law.

The humanitarian situation of the Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory is of grave concern. The large-scale detention and imprisonment of Palestinian civilians, including children, often under flimsy excuses, is disturbing. In the briefing this July, in my capacity as Chairman of the United Nations Special Committee on Israeli Practices in the Occupied Territories, I detailed some of those unacceptable practices. The detaining and mistreatment of children, particularly in administrative detention, can only add to the tensions. The frustration and resentment that this generates detracts from the peace process.

The most pressing humanitarian situation is in Gaza, where conditions are unsustainable. It remains politically separated from the West Bank. We will continue to encourage political rapprochement between Gaza and the West Bank. In Gaza, the blockade, which is now entering its sixth year, has created an aid-dependent economy and thereby reinforces a sense of helplessness and extremism. The principle result of Israel's blockade has been to make almost 80 per cent of Palestinians in Gaza dependent on international humanitarian aid. Despite some easing of restrictions, businesses in Gaza have been particularly affected by the blockade, with imports remaining at a low level compared to the pre-blockade situation. Israel's restrictions on exports, with limited exceptions, has stifled economic activity and made job opportunities scarce. Between 30 per cent to 40 per cent of Gazans remain unemployed. The United Nations is required to keep most of the people in Gaza supplied with the minimum necessities. Even a modest improvement of the situation in Gaza would require the lifting of the blockade and the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009).

With a view to ultimately establishing an independent Palestinian State, existing in peace side by side with Israel, both parties must actively pursue every possibility for peace, taking into consideration the relevant Security Council resolutions, the road map, the agreements previously reached by the parties, and the Arab Peace Initiative. A climate conducive to peace will be encouraged by ending the settlement activities, releasing more Palestinian detainees, and strengthening the Palestinian Government mechanisms. It is also necessary for the Palestinians to contribute to the peace process by ceasing attacks on Israel.

We welcome the progress made by the Palestinian Authority in institution-building, despite the severe political and economic constraints imposed. We also hope that the Members of the United Nations will continue to support the aspirations of the Palestinian people to seek membership in this Organization. We would also wish to underline our strong support for the work for the United Nations agencies in occupied Palestinian territory, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Sri Lanka remains committed to the attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to statehood and to a two-State solution.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Iceland.

Ms. Gunnarsdóttir (Iceland): The continuing and escalating bloodshed in Syria must be stopped. The international community must unite to end the violence and do whatever it can to foster a political and peaceful solution for the sake of the Syrian people. We must ensure that the regime, and anyone else responsible for the horrible atrocities committed, will at the end of the day face responsibility in an international court of law.

The conflict in Syria is already having serious consequences on neighbouring countries, with the flow of refugees straining their ability to cope, and the artillery and mortar fire across borders. Additionally, traditional transport routes are being disrupted, which can have devastating economic consequences. The truth of the matter is that if the Security Council cannot agree on how to address the situation, then other forces will determine the course of action. That does not bode well for the Syrian people or regional stability. It will do us well to recall that the Charter of the United Nations confers the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security upon the Security Council. The Council has to live up to that responsibility.

In his speech during the general debate of the General Assembly, my Foreign Minister said:

“The truth is that the Security Council has become an obstacle to the international efforts to address and solve situations such as that in Syria. We must reform it so as to make it a tool, not a hindrance, for progress in situations such as that in Syria this year, or as we saw last year concerning the Palestinian application.”

(A/67/PV.18, p.4)

The Minister also left no doubt in his speech during the general debate as to Iceland's firm support for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Accordingly, Iceland continues to call upon the Security Council to vote in favour of recommending that the General Assembly accept Palestine's application for United Nations membership. In the meantime, Iceland will support Palestine's application for non-member State observer status should the Palestinians decide to pursue that path.

It was a tragic loss of opportunity when the Security Council decided not to accept the invitation to visit Palestine to see for itself the situation on the ground in order to put it in a better position to take informed decisions on the matter. The Council is judged not only by its actions, but also by its inaction, and we strongly urge the members of the Council to reconsider their decision.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is at the core of restoring durable peace and stability in the region. The occupation leads to violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law, where settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and the wall, continue to top the list. The international community needs to continue to speak out against those violations and to take action accordingly. One should, however, never lose sight of the main issue, which is to end the occupation altogether and to realize through negotiations the two-State solution, where both States can live in peace and security side by side. That is the heart of the matter. This is a conflict about land, and that is why continued settlement activities are such an obstacle to peace. It is, however, important also to be aware that the settlements and the wall are reversible, like everything man-made.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mr. Le Hoai Trung (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like to say that we are very pleased to see you, Sir, assume your role as President of the Security Council. On behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, I would like to extend our thanks to you for having convened this important debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. I would like also to express our appreciation to Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his informative briefing.

Viet Nam associates itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

It is widely acknowledged that the Middle East has faced growing and unprecedented complex developments over the last couple of years. The upheaval and transformations that have been taking place have seen all parties concerned, Governments as well as people, find themselves in novel but challenging situations. In the light of their wider ramifications, it is in our common interest to promote dialogue and cooperation to minimize the adverse effects and refrain from the use or threat of use of violence and force.

Change, however, has yet to come to the question of Palestine, which has always been at the core of the situation in the Middle East. Years have passed since we last saw substantive progress in the negotiations between the two sides, or among associated parties. Millions of Palestinians remain displaced from their homeland and continue to suffer what the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People considers “the deadlocked political process and the deteriorating socioeconomic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory”. Israel, as the occupying Power, persistently refuses to freeze settlement activities or to adhere to the long-standing terms of reference for the peace process. The lack of direct talks and negotiations and, therefore the current impasse, have been coupled with recent threats to exercise unilateralism with regard to past agreements.

In that context, Viet Nam reiterates our principled support for the courageous struggle and rights of the Palestinian people over more than 60 years, in particular the right to self-determination. We strongly urge an immediate end to the current blockade of Palestinian territory and for continued efforts to facilitate negotiations among all the parties concerned, including those by the Quartet, the League of Arab States, regional and international partners and the United Nations, in order to resume Israeli-Palestinian negotiations as soon as possible. It is high time that the international community, including the Security Council, intensify efforts to address this crisis, for which a just, lasting and comprehensive peaceful solution is long overdue. That solution must take into account the legitimate security concerns of the parties concerned, be based on relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, of which the principle of land-for-peace and the right of all States in the region to live in peace and security are the critical element.

The solution to the pressing issues in the Middle East also lies in greater efforts aimed at creating an environment in the region of mutual trust, peace and coexistence. An important step to that end is the upcoming conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other types of weapons of mass destruction. We are convinced, however, that visible progress towards a lasting and just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict would also be a strong reassurance to all Governments and peoples about the genuine feasibility of peace and prosperity for all in the region and, thus, peace for the world as a whole.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

Mr. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month and to thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman for his briefing this morning.

The Council is one of the central pillars of international peace and security. That is why its credibility is of the utmost importance. Today we are discussing two issues that have a major impact on international peace and security. However, the Council has fallen short of both the trust bestowed upon it by the Member States

and the aspirations of most peoples.

The Palestinian question is the central question for Arabs and Muslims. It is the main political issue on the international stage. However, there is a lack of political will needed to push the peace process forward towards a just and lasting solution.

Regardless of the various points of view on this issue, the ball is indeed in the Israelis' court. We do not find those who believe that the Palestinian people have not done enough reasonable. The Palestinian people have been denied a great number of their rights, but they nonetheless continue to call for peace and negotiate on a tiny part of their historical land. They are calling today for non-member State observer status in the United Nations. We believe that their call should be heeded, as it would contribute to a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the crisis.

The numerous Israeli policies — regarding Al-Quds Al-Sharif, illegal settlements and the construction of the illegal separation apartheid wall, among other matters — all show a lack of good faith, irrespective of the security justifications endlessly invoked by Israelis to reject comprehensive peace based on international law. We believe that, with its mosques and churches, Jerusalem should remain Arab, Islamic and Christian. There is no Palestinian State without Jerusalem, and no Jerusalem without the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

We believe that pressure should not be put on the Palestinians, who have already made great concessions, but rather on the Israelis to reach a comprehensive solution for the Palestinian question based on previously agreed upon principles, including the two-State solution.

Israel should lift the embargo placed on Gaza and put an end to the illegal Judaization of Jerusalem and the attempts to obliterate its Islamic and Arab character.

In line with all the resolutions adopted by the Council to stop the Judaization of Jerusalem, we reaffirm our view that the solution to the crisis in the Middle East hinges on Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Palestinian territories, the occupied Syrian Golan and the remaining occupied Lebanese territories, including ending its violations of Lebanon's sovereignty.

With regard to the Syrian issue, the Security Council has been unable to bring an end to this tragedy. The Syrian regime has drawn on weapons from across the whole spectrum of its vast arsenals, killing tens of thousands of people. It is appalling that the Syrian regime is using cluster weapons, which are internationally prohibited, against its own people. What other kind of weapons could that regime use against the citizens of Syria, their villages and cities? The insistence by the Syrian regime to crush the revolt by committing massacre and using force is in vain. It will only enflame the sectarian war in Syria. That is what we have been warning against since the very beginning of the crisis. We have now started to see the impact of the crisis on the security of the entire region.

As to the humanitarian situation, the number of internally displaced persons and refugees has risen to over 1 million. That has led to calls for the creation of buffer zones and safe havens to protect Syrians, or for Arab or international forces to intervene to restore peace in Syria. We therefore call on the Security Council to provide support to the Syrian people and to use all possible means, including Chapter VII, to protect the Syrian people. In that connection, we stress the need to maintain Syria's sovereignty, independence, national unity and territorial integrity.

We have supported in good faith all diplomatic efforts to achieve a comprehensive solution to the Syrian question, in which the whole spectrum of the Syrian people would participate. But at the same time, we call for pressure to be brought to bear on the Syrian regime, so as to translate its words into action. We therefore support the efforts of the Special Representative, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kyrgyzstan.

Mr. Kydyrov (Kyrgyzstan): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate at such a crucial time, when major political changes are taking place in the Middle East.

We are living in a highly interlinked world, where events in one region, or even at the local level, might have an influence on world processes. Last year we watched with a sense of sincere empathy and solidarity the events in the Middle East and North Africa. Today's situation in Syria is also a subject of great concern. Attempts to solve the conflict and stabilize the situation in that country have, unfortunately, been unsuccessful so far. Thousands of innocent people have been killed and the number of victims is growing day by day. The Kyrgyz Republic calls for the immediate cessation of violence in Syria. Unity on the part of the international community is urgently needed to create the conditions to start an inclusive national dialogue among the various political forces and to pursue political, social and economic reforms in the interest of all Syrians. In that regard, we fully support the efforts of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, to explore a peaceful, political solution to the conflict in Syria.

The situation in and around Syria should not detract attention from the efforts to resume direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. We consider it important to continue that process to find ways for a long-term settlement of the situation and to reach a peace agreement providing for the coexistence of two States in peace and security in accordance with previously defined and accepted parameters. We agree with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who stated in his address to the General Assembly that, after decades of harsh occupation and humiliating restrictions in almost every aspect of their lives, the Palestinians must be able to realize their right to a viable State of their own (see A/67/PV.6).

In recent months, we have been following with great concern the aggravation of the economic, financial and humanitarian situation in Palestine. In that connection, we call for a lifting of the blockade of the Gaza Strip and for the delivery of financial and humanitarian assistance to create conditions favourable for development for the Palestinian people.

The Middle East Quartet has a strong mandate because of the trust placed in it by the whole international community. It should promptly put in place all the necessary conditions to enable the two States to find a mutually acceptable resolution. Kyrgyzstan hopes that the Quartet will play an active role in finding a solution suitable to all parties concerned. We are in favour of the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by political and diplomatic means on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet's road map.

It is time to decide on the issue of Palestine's accession as a Member of the United Nations or granting it non-member State observer status. We have long been waiting to welcome Palestine as a Member of the United Nations. In that regard, Kyrgyzstan considers it extremely important to achieve rapid progress in the peace process and to overcome the current worrisome impasse. We also urge the parties to demonstrate their strong will and unwavering commitment to peace and to eliminate all the obstacles impeding the resumption of direct talks.

In conclusion, let me emphasize that the peoples of the Middle East have been suffering from conflict and confrontation for several decades. The time has come to reach a final and comprehensive settlement that would resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We believe that maintaining the current situation is totally unacceptable.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khazaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have the honour to address the Security Council today on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine.

At the outset, I would like to express the Movement's appreciation to Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing to the Council today.

The Non-Aligned Movement remains firm in its conviction of the urgent need for the international community to act resolutely and collectively to fulfil its longstanding commitment to, and responsibility for, the realization of a just solution to the question of Palestine in all its aspects, on the basis of international law and the terms of reference of the peace process, including the resolutions of the Council.

The Movement remains resolute to continue assisting the Palestinian people in their legitimate quest for dignity, justice and their inalienable right to self-determination in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The issue is long overdue and its continued postponement will only put that goal further out of reach.

The Movement fully supports the application submitted by Palestine, on 23 September 2011, for membership in the United Nations and considers it to be consistent with the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence.

The Movement regrets that all efforts exerted to date by international and regional parties, including by the Quartet, have been unable to achieve any progress, owing to the deliberate obstruction by Israel, the occupying Power, its refusal to respect the parameters of the peace process and its insistence on continuing to change the facts on the ground, in total contradiction of the two-State solution, the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

The Movement remains concerned about the ongoing and intensifying acts of violence, terrorism and racist hate crimes, the demolition of houses, the revocation of residency, the attacks on towns and villages across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the excavations under Al-Aqsa Mosque and the storming of the Mosque compound, the firing of stun grenades at Palestinian worshipers, the latest instance of which took place on Friday, 5 October and caused many injuries among Palestinian worshipers, as well as the uprooting of olive and other trees by illegal Israeli settlers.

The Movement expresses its grave concern over continued illegal Israeli colonial settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in and around East Jerusalem, and the construction of the apartheid annexation wall in violation of international law, relevant United Nations resolutions and the International Court of Justice advisory opinion of 9 July 2004, and calls upon the international community, including the Security Council, to compel Israel to cease these illegal actions

and measures.

The Non-Aligned Movement expresses grave concern regarding the deteriorating situation and deplorable conditions of the thousands of Palestinian prisoners and detainees unlawfully held in Israeli jails and detention centres, including at least 300 children as well as women and elected officials, and calls for their immediate release.

In the light of the very difficult conditions on the ground, the Non-Aligned Movement calls once again for specific measures to address in particular the grave impact of Israel's settlement policies on the Palestinian people and their land, including the violent actions by Israeli settlers against Palestinian property and Palestinian civilians, including women and children, as well as provocations, incitement, attacks against holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem and the vandalizing of mosques and churches.

Equally, the Movement remains concerned about the new round of deadly violence, terror and ongoing missile air strikes and artillery bombardment by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people in the besieged Gaza Strip, including the deadly attacks carried out on 7 October. The Movement strongly condemns such attacks, which are a grave breach of international law, including international humanitarian law and the relevant provisions regarding the protection of civilians in armed conflict and the prohibition of reprisals and collective punishment against civilian populations under occupation.

The intensification of Israel's aggression against the Gaza Strip threatens to further destabilize the situation on the ground and to ignite yet another round of deadly violence. The Movement also remains concerned about the critical humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. We call once again for the full and immediate lifting of the illegal Israeli blockade, which has now entered its sixth year, in violation of resolution 1860 (2009), other relevant United Nations resolutions and international humanitarian law, which prohibits the collective punishment of civilian populations under occupation. Israel must promptly and unconditionally open all its crossing points with Gaza and end its continued obstruction of the freedom of movement of persons and of the reconstruction efforts in the Gaza Strip.

The Movement stresses that those actions must be ended, as they undermine the resumption of credible negotiations and obstruct the achievement of a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This demands the attention of the international community, particularly the Security Council, which is duty-bound to act to maintain international peace and security and ensure respect for international law.

The Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its call for the Security Council to act and demands that Israel, the occupying Power, immediately cease all such violations of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, and fully abide by its legal obligations, including those under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israel's blatant impunity and disregard for the law cannot be tolerated.

The Movement also takes this opportunity to express its support for Palestinian reconciliation efforts, which continue to be sponsored by Egypt, and hopes that Palestinian unity will soon be restored in the interest of the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people.

Turning to Lebanon, the Movement condemns Israel's ongoing violations of Lebanon's sovereignty and calls on all parties concerned to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006) in order to end the current fragility of the situation and avoid the resurgence of hostilities.

Concerning the occupied Syrian Golan, the Movement reaffirms that all measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical or demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as Israeli measures to impose its own jurisdiction and administration there, are null, void and have no legal effect. The Non-Aligned Movement demands that Israel abide by resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967, in implementation of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

I would like to take a few minutes to speak in my national capacity.

I wish to refer to the current political and security situation in the Middle East, which is becoming more and more delicate and risky. There are now more threats than ever in the region from terrorism, extremism, the militarization of the region and the nuclear weapons of the Zionist regime. Under such circumstances, any militarization of the region, miscalculation or wrong decision would only foment extremism, terrorism and sectarian clashes.

This is particularly true with regard to the situation in Syria. Iran believes that any foreign military involvement in or against Syria would only exacerbate the crisis and extend insecurity to other countries in the region. The Islamic Republic of Iran is of the view that the way out of the present crisis in Syria lies in strengthening a comprehensive, peaceful political process under regional and international supervisory arrangements aimed at establishing, first and foremost, a cessation of hostilities and the holding of a national dialogue between the opposition and the Syrian Government for a peaceful political process and an end to the violence as soon as possible. This view was reiterated in the talks with Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, the Joint Special Representative visiting Iran, in the course of his meeting held yesterday with our high-ranking officials. We assured him of our full support for his initiatives.

We believe that the countries in the region should cooperate with one another to make the restoration of peace and national dialogue and reconciliation possible.

If we want to bring peace and stability back to Syria and to the region, there is no alternative but to work together. I am therefore not going to respond to some allegations made here by some friendly countries in the region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this debate and Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his briefing this morning.

Australia shares the world's frustration at the standstill in the Middle East peace process. We share the frustration of the Palestinians and their strong and legitimate desire to have their own State. We also share Israel's legitimate concerns to ensure its own security and the security of its people. That security would, of course, be best guaranteed through an effective and genuine two-State solution. Those are the messages we have consistently expressed to both Israeli and Palestinian leaders, including over the past 12 months.

It has now been 19 years, as we know, since the Oslo Accords, and a decade since the historic Arab Peace Initiative, and yet a just and lasting solution still evades us. In a period of tremendous change in the Arab world, the status quo in the Middle East peace process is simply untenable. The status quo cannot provide the lasting peace and security which Palestinians, Israelis and all the peoples of the region deserve.

The prospects for a negotiated peace based on a two-State solution are disappearing, and this genuinely concerns us. It is therefore now more important than ever that negotiations between the parties resume as a matter of urgency. While the parties themselves must resolve through negotiations the final shape of an agreement, for meaningful progress to be made and for negotiations to be credible in order to start, they should take place on the basis of the 1967 boundaries, with agreed land swaps.

The continuing settlement activity in the West Bank remains a fundamental concern. A Palestinian State must not just be independent; it must be viable and contiguous. Settlement activity, which is illegal under international law, must cease. Australia remains opposed to any steps towards legalizing outposts.

It is imperative that all violence against civilians, including rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza, end immediately. All people in the region need to be able to pursue their lives free from the threat of violence.

At a time when negotiations have stalled, one important cause for optimism has been the success which President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad have had in building the institutions for a Palestinian State. However, that decisive achievement is coming under threat, as we know, due to the serious financial crisis facing the Palestinian Authority. As a significant donor, we participated in the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians held in New York on 23 September, which was a very depressing meeting. It is essential that the international community continue to support the Authority, whose effective functioning is a vital source of stability in the region. We call on all donors to live up to their commitments in that respect.

Turning now to the appalling human tragedy which is taking place in Syria, we remain deeply concerned, as is everyone else, that the Council has been unable to adopt a Chapter VII resolution to ensure there are real consequences for President Al-Assad's non-compliance with Council resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012).

We support the efforts of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Lakhdar Brahimi, to find a way through the crisis. But it is well past the time for President Al-Assad to reverse course and end the violence which he has unleashed on his own people. President Al-Assad has been given many opportunities by the international community to take a different path, and he must do so immediately.

The recent incidents across the Syrian-Turkish border are of grave concern and underscore the serious regional dimension to the Syrian crisis. We echo the Council's condemnation of the Syrian attack and call on Syria to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its neighbours. We also recognize the significant burden being faced by Syria's neighbours, including Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon.

While the outlook in Syria is very bleak, it is equally important — indeed, imperative — for us to still focus on our need to help alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. As the third-largest national donor, my own country is and will remain committed to providing humanitarian assistance. We are especially concerned about the need to protect medical facilities and personnel. All parties to the conflict must respect and adhere to the principles of international humanitarian law and ensure the safe and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel. We have been very actively talking with others over the past few weeks to see if we can find new ways to protect hospitals and health workers in Syria, and we will continue to do so.

But while we take humanitarian steps to help those affected by the conflict, the international community must also continue to pursue whatever steps we can towards a political solution. The Council's role in that respect remains, obviously, essential.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Venezuela.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate the fraternal country of Guatemala for its leadership during its presidency of the Security Council.

We are here before the Council once again to address the issue of the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. We endorse the presidential statement of the Security Council which you, Madam President, promoted and which strongly condemned the terrorist attacks in Aleppo, Syria, which took place on 3 October and led to dozens of deaths and injuries.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela associates itself with the statement made by Ambassador Mohammad Khazaei, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My country wishes to express its deep frustration at the inaction of the Security Council when faced with the expansionist policy of Israel, the occupying Power, in the Palestinian territories. Such inaction is, as the Council is aware, the result of the threat of veto by the United States and its closest allies. Those Governments are today promoting armed intervention in Syria; last year, they spearheaded resolution 1973 (2011) on the situation in Libya, which led to hundreds of civilian deaths and to chaos and violence in North Africa. The resulting collateral damage is euphemistically referred to “necessary costs”. The absurd logic that they use to “protect civilians” and “promote democracy” encourages war and violence.

In the Middle East, there is an alarming increase in volatility and violence, which without any doubt threatens world peace. Regrettably, certain members of this body tend to remain silent in the face of the evident threat to international peace and security posed by the Government of Israel. On the other hand, they encourage conflicts that should be resolved solely through mediation and dialogue; that is the case with Syria.

That bellicose attitude threatens the institutionality of the United Nations, the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Military interventionism is the method chosen by certain Powers in order to promote their expansionist, colonialist ambitions.

In Syria, terrorist mercenaries are being financed and armed with a view to overthrowing the Government of that country. In that context, thousands of innocent civilians have been killed, and the situation in the Middle East has been further destabilized.

There is an attempt in the region to put in power Governments that will yield to imperial Powers and offer no resistance to the political and military elite of Israel, the occupying Power. In that way, they seek to strengthen that Power and to weaken the Palestinian cause at the expense of greater uncertainty and instability in the Middle East.

In short, those Powers disregard and violate the self-determination of peoples and the sovereignty of States. The imperialists and their allies try to establish a kind of beneficial terrorism and resort to it, including State terrorism, when they wish to appropriate or control territories and their natural resources or to overthrow leaders of the people — whatever they wish.

The Bolivarian Government of Hugo Chávez Frías has warned against the serious consequences of arming mercenary terrorist groups in order to overthrow the Government of Syria. In that way, they seek to put Israel in a stronger position in the negotiations with Palestine, Lebanon and Syria.

As Noam Chomsky said, the great threat to the region and to the world is Israel’s nuclear arsenal and the power that that gives Israel to expel Palestinians from its territories and to threaten the countries in the region. The countries that arm and protect Israel speak of peace, human rights and international humanitarian law without any moral or political authority. Ironically, those who today speak of peace are the ones that have the greatest interest in the colonial expansionist war. Let us recall that Israel, the occupying Power, has refused to allow inspections of its nuclear installations or to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. That Power is the real threat to the region and to the world.

The many detailed letters from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, Ambassador Riyad Mansour, addressed to the President of the Security Council and of the General Assembly pitifully describe the inhumane and illegal aggression of the State of Israel against the Palestinian people. International law, including international humanitarian law, the provisions for the protection of civilians in armed conflict and the prohibition of reprisals and the collective punishment of civilians subject to occupation, is being flagrantly violated.

Such crimes must be immediately investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. The attempt to disguise one of the main causes of the conflict in the Middle East, namely, the expansionist policy of Israel, should be condemned.

The Bolivarian Government advocates peace and the pursuit of balance in the Middle East. It supports dialogue and mediation as the only way to achieve peace and brotherhood among peoples.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Ben Sliman (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I extend to you, Mr. President, my warm congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I commend you on guiding the Council with wisdom and efficiency.

Today, we meet in an open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, against the backdrop of a complete standstill, the lack of any prospects for peace and the inability of the Organization to uphold the noble purposes for which it was established, in particular with regard to the Palestinian issue.

At the outset, I would like to express our grave concern about the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and the increasing suffering of the Palestinian people as a result of the scourge of the occupation and deprivation and a suffocating economic crisis, exacerbated by diminishing international aid, despite the pledges of numerous countries and international bodies and organizations.

The deadlocked political outlook of the Palestinian issue has serious implications not only for the Palestinian people but also throughout the Middle East, a region that is in a critical position, thus putting it in a state of constant turbulence and instability. Israel’s non-compliance with its international obligations and its ongoing flagrant violations of the fundamental human rights of the Palestinians only exacerbate the situation. The Palestinian people are therefore living constantly under the aggression and violence not only of the Israeli military machine but also of the extremist settlers with the full complicity of the occupation army and the Israeli Government, as well as international betrayal. The Israeli Government has therefore come to perceive that as condoning its ongoing serious violations and policy of uprooting and ethnic cleansing. Moreover, Israel has been rewarded and even shielded from accountability with impunity.

The Palestinian people are living in a disastrous situation with no decisive international position on Israeli violations of international law and its provisions. They can no longer tolerate neglect and indifference. I must be clear that the lack of a credible solution would ultimately lead to a new situation, inciting sentiments that would be exploited by extremist elements throughout the world. Unfortunately, here and there we have started to hear calls for jihad to be adopted as the key instrument to putting an end to the historical injustice long endured by the Palestinian people.

I call on all delegations gathered here today in the primary organ and forum entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security to consider the value of our meetings. Regrettably, such meetings have proved that they do not live up to the responsibility required of the serious situation that threatens the Palestinian people’s security and the region’s stability. The region needs a climate of trust to bring about peaceful exchanges among its peoples and to establish institutions and structures that promote the development of democratic societies.

Our meetings and the long-standing methods of the United Nations in dealing with the Palestinian issue are nothing other than steps towards conflict management. They do not establish the dynamic to address the core issues in order to resolve the conflict and enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable national rights and to establish an independent State, within the 1967 borders, with Holy Jerusalem as its capital. While my country calls for increasing such debates and maintaining their regularity, at the same time it urges that ways be found to inspire hope among the Palestinians and the entire international community through respect for the moral and legal authority of the relevant United Nations resolutions. That would be an incentive to rapidly and seriously relaunch the peace process on all tracks in order to achieve the two-State solution in line with those resolutions.

The failure of the international community to address the Palestinian question with the earnestness and scrupulousness that the tragic situation of the Palestinian people requires has led to the escalation of acts of aggression committed by Israeli settlers against Palestinian citizens and their property. Such practices are a natural result of Israel’s continuing lack of commitment to its international obligations, its ongoing occupation and its alteration of the facts on the ground, which has targeted the city of Jerusalem and its surroundings in an effort to change its Arab and Islamic identity and to annex vast tracts of Palestinian land. The Israeli occupying forces also continue to seize by force large areas of Palestinian territory — farms, residential neighbourhoods and aquifers — under various pretexts and designations. All these practices are designed to make any future agreement based on the two-State solution a virtually unattainable if not completely impossible option.

We all recognize that a two-State solution is critical to any meaningful peace process that can lead to the restoration of the Palestinian people’s legitimate rights. These are the core ingredients of a settlement of the conflict that does not emanate from a vacuum but is inherently anchored in international and regional instruments and United Nations resolutions. We must reaffirm our resolve that they will be revived and enforced, in the hope that the international community will continue to have a chance to put an end to the current impasse in the negotiations, salvage the peace process and imbue it with a new dynamism.

In that context, we hope that the United Nations, especially the Security Council and the General Assembly, can comply with their historic obligations at this critical juncture of the Palestinian question by reaffirming its core principles, the framework instruments and the terms of reference so as to pave the way for a new path in the peace process, for which a first landmark would be giving full support to the ongoing efforts to help Palestine acquire non-member State observer status in the General Assembly. We are confident that Palestine's acquisition of that status would demonstrate to the whole world its readiness to assume its role as a peace-loving State, fully committed to United Nations resolutions and instruments, as well as a critical factor in the maintenance of peace and stability in the region and in the world as a whole.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): I would like to start by again congratulating Guatemala on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. Under your able leadership, Mr. President, I believe that the Council will enjoy a productive, helpful and useful discussion of the issues relating to international peace and stability.

On this occasion, I would like to speak very briefly on the crisis in Syria and to express our appreciation for the position that the Security Council took over the shelling on 3 October of the Turkish town of Akçakale by Syrian armed forces, which led to the loss of five Turkish citizens. The statement underscored that this incident highlighted the grave impact that the crisis in Syria is having on the security of its neighbours and on regional peace and stability, and demanded that such violations of international law stop immediately and not be repeated. While the number of Syrians seeking shelter in Turkey has surpassed 100,000, the Turkish Government continues to extend its helping hand to those in need.

Since I was not able to address the Security Council in September, I would also like to offer our sincere condolences to our American colleagues here and the American nation in general on the demise of Chris Stevens, the late Ambassador of the United States to Libya. As a country that has lost many of its diplomats to acts of terror, Turkey shares their grief and condemn this terrorist attack in the strongest terms. Turkey has consistently emphasized that terror has no religion or nationality and is a crime against humanity. We continue to believe that fighting terrorism effectively demands the unity and solidarity of the international community.

I would now like to express our views on the latest developments relating to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Unfortunately, nothing has changed in a positive direction since the Council's last open debate on this issue (S/PV.6706). We have witnessed increasing violence directed at Palestinians by settlers during the olive harvest season; extremist attacks on Muslim and Christian sacred sites have continued; and the church of Saint George and the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem have recently been targeted. We share the concerns voiced on 6 October by the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, when he warned against escalation.

During the past three months, Israeli operations again claimed Palestinian lives, and the suffering of Palestinian prisoners under inhumane conditions in Israeli prisons continued. We strongly condemn the decision to issue tenders for the construction of 130 additional units in the settlements of Har Homa in East Jerusalem, further increasing the settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories. All settlement activities in the occupied territories constitute a violation of international law. The recent elevation of Ariel College to university status has introduced education elements into the illegal settlement activities. Such policies undermine the possibility of revitalizing the peace process and seriously endanger the vision of a two-State solution. We denounce the wave of recent attacks in the West Bank. A resort to violence in response to existing disputes on the part of any party cannot be tolerated.

The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians recently held a meeting in New York prior to the high-level segment of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly to address the dire circumstances of the Palestinian economy. In that context, the imaginary boundaries imposed on Palestinian fishermen, the continuing occupation of Palestinian lands, and the illegal blockade around Gaza are the main determinants of the economic situation in Palestine.

As a recent briefing of the Special Coordinator on the Middle East highlighted, private-sector growth in Palestine is affected by the obstacles posed to Palestinian movement in the West Bank (see S/PV.6835). Area C is essential to a viable Palestinian State. On that note, I would like to call on the international community to continue and even enhance its support for the Palestinian people, especially for the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. In these circumstances, the Israeli Government has declared early parliamentary elections. The only expectation of the international community for this process is peace.

We supported Palestine's bid for membership of the United Nations in 2011, and we will continue to support any initiative within the General Assembly that would elevate Palestine's status in the Organization. Let us be clear — the Palestinian application to the United Nations is not a declaration of statehood. The Palestinian leadership declared itself a State in 1988, and a total of 133 Members under this roof have recognized the State of Palestine since then. Palestine aims to take its rightful seat among us. A united Palestinian front will certainly draw even wider support from the international community.

Allow me to conclude with remarks from the draft report of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine, which met in New York on 6 and 7 October. The Tribunal's draft report appeals to the international community as a whole, but primarily calls on the United Nations to implement its Charter, uphold its value system and implement the rule of law in the case of Palestine, and criticizes it for its unethical performance on that matter. It argues that such performance is undermining the credibility of the United Nations system as a whole and the trust of the international community.

We will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations to achieve a solution based on the established parameters of Madrid, Oslo and the Arab Peace Initiative. In our view, the United Nations has yet to fulfil its promise made in General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947, which foresees the coming into existence of independent Israeli and Arab States. Now is the time for the United Nations to live up to its decisions and take corrective action, despite a delay of 65 years. Turkey will continue to support the two-State solution, based on the 1967 borders, whereby Israel and Palestine shall live side by side in peace and tranquillity, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Rishchynski (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada welcomes this opportunity to discuss the situation in the Middle East, particularly given the urgent need for the Security Council to take appropriate action on Syria. The continuing violence, the worsening humanitarian crisis and the growing threat to regional stability clearly constitute a case in which the Council must assume its basic responsibility to maintain international peace and security. It is shameful that the Security Council remains paralysed more than a year and a half after the outbreak of the crisis.

Canada continues to call for a complete and immediate ceasefire that will lead to a Syrian-led political transition. Given the Al-Assad regime's failure to honour its commitments, we all need to be fully cognizant of one indisputable fact — Al-Assad will not voluntarily end the brutal campaign of slaughter that he has launched against his own people. He has a clear interest in desperately clinging to power. All countries must bring pressure to bear on Syria for Al-Assad to go.

As long as the Security Council does not adopt tough, binding measures, those who want to protect the Al-Assad regime with Syrian blood will benefit from the political and legal cover this impasse provides. Canada repeats our call for the Security Council to impose binding sanctions and an arms embargo in order to increase pressure on the Al-Assad regime to end the violence and recognize the legitimate democratic rights of the Syrian people.

(*spoke in English*)

In particular, Canada has been actively urging Syria's neighbours to stop allowing arms and other tools of war to reach Al-Assad in his bloody struggle to cling to power. We commend Turkey on successfully stopping one such shipment, as those efforts will help to limit the Al-Assad regime's ability to kill civilians in Syria.

Canada continues to be profoundly concerned by the threat that Iran poses to regional and global security. Iran's nuclear activities in defiance of Security Council resolutions, State sponsorship of terrorism, appalling human rights record and hegemonic interference throughout the Middle East all endanger an increasingly fragile regional balance. It is Canada's unambiguous view that, beyond despotic regimes clinging to power at the expense of their people, and beyond the carcinogenic militancy of Al-Qaida and its affiliates throughout the broader Middle East and North Africa, it is the Iranian regime that poses the greatest threat to global peace and security.

In addition, Canada is deeply concerned about the regional implications of Iran's persistent meddling in Iraq, a country struggling to rebuild itself after years under the brutal Saddam Hussein regime. We urge Iraqi officials to continue to assert their hard-won sovereignty, notably over their skies, and to resist Iranian influence. At the same time, we call on the Security Council to take action and put a stop, once and for all, to Iranian support for Al-Assad.

With regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Canada remains wholly supportive of United States and Quartet efforts, and we welcome their ongoing attempts to encourage the parties to resume successful and direct peace negotiations without delay or preconditions, in accordance with the Quartet's statement of 23 September 2011. But let me be clear. Canada will oppose any unilateral resolution in the General Assembly. In our view, those measures will make a resumption of the peace talks more difficult and raise expectations yet not change the facts on the ground or improve lives, leading to heightened frustrations and a review of our relations with the Palestinian Authority.

Canada would welcome the establishment of a Palestinian State as a result of negotiations with Israel. However, in our judgment, any two-State solution must be negotiated and mutually agreed upon by both States. Pursuing a United Nations resolution is counterproductive to achieving that trust. We should instead all be

focused on encouraging the Palestinians to return to peace talks immediately.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Maldives.

Mr. Sareer (Maldives): I wish to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, and your country, Guatemala, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. My delegation further thanks the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, for his comprehensive briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine.

In December 2010, the Middle East and North Africa saw the onset of actions that would come to be known as the Arab Spring. What began as a peaceful movement has now become a display of overt violence and bloodshed in Syria. The Maldives believes that this issue is central to any discussion of the current political situation in the Middle East.

Speaking at the open debate on this topic in July (see S/PV.6816), the Maldives called for outright peace in Syria. However, since then, with the increasing hostility along the Turkish border, as well as daily reports of increasing deaths in the area, it has become clear that the Syrian issue threatens to engulf the Middle East. The violence and unmitigated human rights abuses prevailing in Syria today are a disgrace to the community of nations. In a region plagued by one crisis after another, we call for a renewed commitment from all stakeholders to the development of peace and stability.

Disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons in those areas affected by the Syrian conflict are an important step forward in preserving peace in that region. As a nation dedicated to non-aggression and peaceful diplomacy, the Maldives wishes to see international relations conducted in the same manner.

The Maldives applauds the recent presidential elections in Egypt, and continues to support the ongoing democratic developments in the region. As a democratic Muslim nation with a wide political spectrum, we understand the growing pains associated with transitions in the Middle East and those relating to the implementation of democratic norms. However, we cannot relate to, nor can we condone, any political transformation that is sought with violence.

Along with the conflict in Syria, the Middle East is immersed in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Maldives remains stoutly determined that Palestine must be recognized as a legitimate State. The Maldives believes that a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine coexisting side by side in peace, is the only way to bring about peace in the Middle East. The Maldives does not believe that such recognition would hinder peace talks, but rather foresees it strengthening and solidifying a tangible solution.

My delegation therefore believes that the Security Council has an obligation to push the resolution forward, bringing the world closer to ending that lengthy conflict. As an institution that guarantees peace and stability, the United Nations has a duty to ensure the success of a two-State solution.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bahrain.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to thank you, Sir, for convening this debate. I also thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing this morning.

The problem of the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, remains a matter of great importance to the Arab countries and to the international community as a whole. At the same time, the issue has seen no progress despite all the efforts undertaken on all fronts and all levels. A comprehensive settlement of the Middle East issue, and in particular the Palestinian question, calls for concerted international efforts to guarantee the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and to ensure justice and right.

At the summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), held in Mecca on 25 August, the King of Bahrain reiterated the importance of the matter and the fact that we need to work in earnest to bring about a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the issue, resulting in an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the Arab Peace Initiative, the decisions of the Quartet and United Nations resolutions. Moreover, the Minister for Foreign Affairs reiterated before the General Assembly (see A/67/PV.14) the principled position of Bahrain that it has put forward in all bodies and forums.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates the need to ensure the implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly that call for the lifting of the ongoing illegal blockade of Gaza. We urge the international community to assume its responsibilities and to work immediately to bring an end to the blockade.

The Middle East question will be resolved only if Israel withdraws from the Palestinian and Arab territories that it has occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan and all occupied Lebanese territories, in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions.

An independent Palestinian State must be established on the basis of the 4 June 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the capital. It is important to achieve a just solution on the repatriation of Palestinian refugees, based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III). In addition, we call for reactivating the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly that call for an end to all Israeli violations and aggression. We must also ensure compliance with the Fourth Geneva Convention in the occupied territories.

Lastly, the two-State solution is the only possible lasting option and the Arab Peace Initiative is a key foundation of that option and solution.

I greatly fear that the current stalemate in the peace process is due to Israeli policies, which have undermined all Arab and international efforts to achieve peace. We call upon the Security Council and other mechanisms, such as the Quartet, to spare no effort in seeking an end to the stalemate, for the benefit of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples alike and in the service of regional and international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of Israel has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I would ask the representative of Israel to be as brief as possible.

Mr. Nitzan (Israel): This monthly debate on the Middle East is no stranger to falsehoods, distortions and absurdities. I must say that the performance of the Lebanese representative this morning offered us all another window into the theatre of the absurd. While reciting every meeting on the Council's calendar this month, he conveniently forgot to mention the consultations scheduled for 31 October on resolution 1559 (2004). That resolution calls for the disarmament of the terrorist organization Hizbullah — the same Hizbullah that has assembled more missiles than many NATO members; that the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) describes as having "the capacities of a regular army" (S/2012/244, para. 23); and that only last week sent an Iranian military drone over Israel.

With Iranian funding, training and arms, Hizbullah has hijacked the Lebanese State and turned it into an Iranian outpost for terror. Hizbullah is an integral part of the Government that the Lebanese representative represents here. Perhaps that explains the Lebanese decision to omit the consultations on resolution 1559 (2004) from the Council's calendar.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.