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Security Council

Seventy-first year

7853rd meeting

Friday, 23 December 2016, 2 p.m.

New York

President: Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi

(Spain)

Angola	Mr. Martins
China	Mr. Wu Haitao
Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
France	Mr. Delattre
Japan	Mr. Bessho
Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
Senegal	Mr. Ciss
Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
United States of America	Ms. Power
Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The meeting was called to order at 2.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Israel to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document [S/2016/1100](#), which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it.

I shall first give the floor to those members of the Council wishing to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): I thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting at such short notice. Malaysia, together with New Zealand, Senegal and Venezuela as sponsors of draft resolution [S/2016/1100](#), on the issue of illegal Israeli settlements, have called for this meeting to put the draft to a vote. As representatives of various regional groupings at the United Nations — the Group of Asia-Pacific States, the Group of Western European and other States, the Group of African States and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States — we are bound by similar aims and a sense of responsibility to take effective action on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, especially on the issue of settlements.

In numerous Council meetings on Palestine, and at the Arria Formula meeting on settlements in October, we listened to the repeated calls of Council members, the Secretary-General, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and representatives of civil society and other United Nations Member States for urgent Council action to halt settlement activities and reverse the negative trends that are threatening peace and the viability of the two-State solution. The latest, unprecedented attempt of the Israeli Parliament to legalize outposts on private Palestinian lands added further urgency to the need for the Council to send a clear signal on the issue of settlements. Malaysia acknowledges the efforts made by Egypt and the Arab League to engage in consultations with Council members over the past two months on this issue. We fully support their efforts, and we share their aim for Council action. We have also observed an emerging consensus among Council members on the issue of settlements. We thus believe that it is urgent for the Council to seize the opportunity for effective Council action without any further delay.

The draft resolution being put to the vote today ([S/2016/1100](#)) calls for the cessation of all Israeli settlement activities and for affirmative steps to reverse the negative trends on the ground that are endangering the two-State solution. It also calls for immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, and calls for accountability. The text further urges all parties to intensify their efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East and to end Israeli occupation.

On the implementation of the draft resolution, the text is requesting the Secretary-General to report the Council every three months.

We realize that some Council members may have legitimate concerns as to the short period of time in which the draft was officially circulated, put into blue and submitted for adoption. In normal and ideal circumstances, we, too, would have preferred a more transparent and inclusive process. However, we realize that this is anything but a normal situation and that we need to tread carefully in view of the sensitivity of the issue.

Exceptional circumstances require bold action and exceptional measures. Ultimately, our aim is to bridge the gap in the respective positions of Council members in order to reach a consensus. The last time the Council adopted a resolution on settlements was more than 36 years ago. Since then, the situation on the ground has worsened to the point where the very prospect of a two-State solution is now in question. There is no doubt that this falls under the responsibility of the Security Council under the United Nations Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security.

We thus appeal to all Council members not to lose this opportunity for peace and to exercise our legal, political and moral responsibility to vote in support of the draft resolution, which is based on previous Council resolutions and the values and principles of the United Nations Charter, international law and international standards of human rights. The time for action is now, to prove our long-held commitment and to reinforce the fact that the two-State solution is not merely an empty slogan.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): New Zealand has made no secret of its frustration that it has been almost eight years since the Security Council adopted a resolution on the Middle East peace process. New Zealand has worked hard over the past two years to try to advance a resolution on this issue, which we consider to be one of the most pressing unaddressed issues on the Council's agenda.

New Zealand has floated its own ideas for a more comprehensive draft than the one that is before us today ([S/2016/1100](#)), and we are grateful for the willingness of other Council members to engage with us on the text. It became apparent to us, however, that the balance of the Council wished to focus on the more pressing issue of the settlements, which, as my colleague from Malaysia has said, is threatening the viability of the two-State solution. This message was very clearly delivered to us in the last [Quartet report](#) and in regular reports of the Secretary-General.

For these reasons, we supported the text circulated on Wednesday and joined the group calling for a vote on that text today, in order to ensure that the Council had a chance to consider it.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this important vote on a draft resolution ([S/2016/1100](#)) that will well be historic as a contribution to peace. Our country, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, together with Malaysia, New Zealand and Senegal, decided to co-sponsor and call for a vote on this draft resolution on the peace process in the Middle East, especially on the issue of the illegal Israeli settlements.

The decision to present this draft resolution to the Council responds to the pressing, urgent need for this body to speak out on the worrying situation in the occupied Palestinian territories as a result of the continued illegal expansion of Israeli settlements, which today represent the most serious threat to the possibility of the political solution of two States.

When we submitted this proposal, we were motivated by the firm commitment to reverse this dangerous trend in order to safeguard the interests of the Palestinian people and the viability of their State and to revitalize the peace process, which has been at a standstill for more than 20 years. It is high time for the Security Council to shoulder the great responsibility it has in the origin and the continuation of this conflict.

I believe that the draft resolution is a balanced text that reaffirms the right of both countries to coexist peacefully within the internationally secure pre-1967 borders, pursuant to resolution [242](#) (1967) and the norms of international law, and bearing in mind the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 9 July 2004 (see [A/ES-10/273](#)).

At the same time, this proposal objectively addresses with the problem of settlements and their destabilizing effects on the region, and condemns the violence against the civilian population, no matter who the perpetrators might be and regardless of their motives.

Venezuela acknowledges the efforts made by the Council to hold this meeting, especially on the part of those countries that have called for open, transparent and frank discussion in this body and for action by the Council that would revitalize the peace process, as well as the countries that have presented initiatives aimed at emerging from the stalemate.

Special mention must be made of the tireless efforts of Egypt and the support of the Arab League in achieving effective progress in dealing with the Palestinian question. We also wish to thank and acknowledge the Spanish presidency of the Security Council for its continued availability to facilitate the holding of this meeting, and New Zealand, for having been the driving force that enabled this draft resolution to be submitted before the end of the year.

The proposing countries represent diverse regions of the world. We felt encouraged because of the emerging consensus on the issue of settlements. All member countries recognize that illegal settlements are an obstacle to the peace process and a threat to the two-State solution. Our actions are also a response to the many calls of the members of the Council, the Secretary-General himself, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the Quartet, other member States and prominent stakeholders, in the framework of overcoming the obstacles facing the Palestine-Israel peace process.

We are on the threshold of a historic decision, which could represent the beginning of a new phase in the peace process after almost four decades of failed attempts. That is why the Council, as a representative of the international community and the guarantor of international peace and security, must act in a spirit of unity, approving the text submitted today.

Today the world has its eyes on the Security Council. It has placed its hopes in its members working for peace, aware that history will judge our actions with gratitude if we can contribute, even in a small way, to relaunch a political process. We are opening the path for new generations of Israelis and Palestinians to have the opportunity to build a peaceful world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

Against:

None

Abstaining:

United States

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There were 14 votes in favour, none against and 1 abstention. The draft resolution has been adopted as resolution [2334](#) (2016). I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Since the beginning of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948 and the wait for the Palestinian people to exercise their right to an independent sovereign State and a natural life of dignity and freedom, despite the resounding silence of the international community and dozens of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions that continue to be unimplemented, Egypt has shouldered its responsibilities and confronted many challenges. We have gone through many military and diplomatic wars to defend Palestinian rights in the move towards creating an independent Palestinian State with its capital in East Jerusalem and taken steps towards achieving a just and lasting peace settlement in the Middle East.

Resolution [2334](#) (2016) on Israeli settlements, which was adopted today, undoubtedly expresses the painful reality of illegitimate settlements. It is also born from the policy of the confiscation of Palestinian land that runs contrary to the unambiguous principle adopted by the international community concerning the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by armed force. That requires all of us to be wise and politically realistic in taking up this issue without excessive action on the part of any party, precisely as we witnessed during our deliberations on this resolution.

I am referring specifically to the issue of settlements, which is related to one of the most important components of the final peace settlement — borders.

Consultations on the resolution and the timing of the vote over the past several hours have demonstrated that some international parties want to intervene directly in order to resolve the question of Palestine once and for all in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions [242](#) (1967), [338](#) (1973) and [446](#) (1979). Any opportunity to take future steps can in no way allow us to avoid the fundamental requirements of a settlement to the question of Palestine including the issue of settlements. Those pillars are well known and have been set out in previous Security Council resolutions and the positions adopted by international Powers and the Palestinian leadership.

Egypt felt compelled to withdraw its own draft resolution. That was a procedural action because of the pressures that the draft resolution encountered since it had been put into blue. That led to a warning from some members of the Security Council. That is utterly unacceptable in form and substance in view of Egypt's firm positions, about which there can be no doubt, pertaining to the legitimate rights of the Palestinians. Let it also be known that those pressures were exerted in Egypt's absence through 24/7 active political efforts since the draft resolution's inception.

In order to maintain the legitimate Palestinian rights through a just and lasting settlement in accordance with relevant international resolutions, we acted accordingly. Nevertheless, Egypt voted in favour of resolution [2334](#) (2016), based on our firm, principled and unequivocal positions. It should not be subject to negotiations or pressure from anyone. We were the first to bear arms to protect legitimate Arab and Palestinian rights. We were the first to make peace with Israel as we believe in peace rather than armed conflict. Egypt has been and continues to be one of the strongest believers in just and durable peace in the Middle East based on the principles of a two-State solution and land for peace, as has been internationally acknowledged.

Ms. Power (United States): Let me begin with a quote,

"The United States will not support the use of any additional land for the purpose of settlements during the transitional period. Indeed, the immediate adoption of a settlements freeze by Israel, more than any other action, could create the confidence needed for wider participation in these talks. Further settlement activity is in no way necessary for the security of Israel and only diminishes the confidence of the Arabs that a final outcome can be free and fairly negotiated."

This was said in 1982 by President Ronald Reagan. He was speaking about a new proposal that he was launching to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While ultimately, of course, President Reagan's proposal was not realized, his words are still illuminating in at least two respects.

First, it is because they underscore the United States' deep and long-standing commitment to achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. That has been the policy of every Administration, Republican and Democrat, since before President Reagan to the present day. Secondly, it is because President Reagan's words highlight the United States' long-standing position that Israeli settlement activity in territories occupied in 1967 undermines Israel's security, hampers the viability of a negotiated two-State outcome and erodes prospects for peace and stability in the region.

Today the Security Council reaffirmed its established consensus that settlements have no legal validity. The United States has been sending the message that the settlements must stop privately and publicly for nearly five decades through the Administrations of Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and currently Barak Obama. Indeed, since 1967, the only President who had not had at least one Israeli-Palestinian-related resolution adopted during his tenure is Barak Obama. Our vote today, therefore, is fully in line with the bipartisan history of how American Presidents have approached both the issue and the role of this body.

Given the consistency of this position across United States Administrations, one would think that it would be a routine vote for the United States to allow the passage of a resolution with the elements in resolution [2334](#) (2016), thereby reaffirming the long-standing position of the United States on settlements, condemning violence and incitement and calling for the parties to start taking constructive steps to reverse current trends on the ground. These are familiar, well-articulated components of United States policy.

But in reality this vote was not straightforward for us because of where it is taking place — at the United Nations. For the simple truth is that for as long as Israel has been a member of this institution, it has been treated differently from other nations at the United Nations. That has been true not only in decades past, such as the infamous resolution that the General Assembly adopted in 1975 with the support of the majority of member States, officially determining that Zionism was a form of racism, but also in 2016, this year. One need only look at the 18 resolutions against Israel adopted during the General Assembly in September or the 12 Israel-specific resolutions adopted this year in the Human Rights Council — more than those focused on Syria, North Korea, Iran and South Sudan put together — to see that in 2016 Israel continues to be treated differently from other Member States.

Like United States Administrations before it, the Obama Administration has worked tirelessly to fight for Israel's right simply to be treated just like any other country — from advocating for Israel to finally be granted membership to a United Nations regional body, something no other United Nations Member State has been denied; to fighting to ensure that Israeli non-governmental organizations are not denied United Nations accreditation, simply because they are Israeli; to getting Yom Kippur finally recognized as a United Nations holiday; to pressing the Council to break its indefensible silence in response to terrorist attacks on Israelis. As the United States has said repeatedly, such unequal treatment not only hurts Israel, it undermines the legitimacy of the United Nations itself. The practice of treating Israel differently at the United Nations matters for votes like this one, for even if one believes that today's resolution is justified or even more, necessitated, by events on the ground, one cannot completely separate the vote from the venue.

Member States that say that they are for the two-State solution must ask themselves some difficult questions. For those States that are quick to promote resolutions condemning Israel but refuse to recognize when innocent Israelis are the victims of terrorism, what steps will they take to stop treating Israel differently? For those States that passionately denounce the closures of crossings in Gaza as exacerbating the humanitarian situation but say nothing of the resources diverted from helping Gaza's residents to dig tunnels into Israeli territory, so that terrorists can attack Israelis in their homes, what will they do to end the double standard that undermines the legitimacy of this institution?

Member States should also ask themselves about the double standards when it comes to the Council taking action. Just this morning, we came together as a Council and we were unable to muster the will to act to stop the flow of weapons going to killers in South Sudan who are perpetrating mass atrocities that the United Nations has said could lead to genocide. We could not come together even to curb the flow of arms. Earlier this month, the Council could not muster the will to adopt the

simplest of resolutions, calling for a seven-day pause in the savage bombardment of innocent civilians, hospitals and schools in Aleppo, yet when a resolution on Israel comes before the Council, members suddenly summon the will to act.

It is because this forum too often continues to be biased against Israel, because there are important issues that are not sufficiently addressed in the resolution and because the United States does not agree with every word in this text that the United States did not vote in favour of the resolution. But it is because the resolution reflects the facts on the ground and is consistent with United States policy across Republican and Democratic administrations throughout the history of the State of Israel that the United States did not veto it.

The United States has consistently said that it would block any resolution that it thought would undermine Israel's security or would seek to impose a resolution to the conflict. We would not have let the resolution pass had it not addressed counterproductive actions by the Palestinians, such as terrorism and incitement to violence, which we have repeatedly condemned and raised with the Palestinian leadership — and which of course must be stopped.

Unlike some on the Security Council, we do not believe that outside parties can impose a solution that has not been negotiated by the two parties, nor can we unilaterally recognize a future Palestinian State. But it is precisely our commitment to Israel's security that makes the United States believe that we cannot stand in the way of the resolution as we seek to preserve a chance of attaining our long-standing objective — two States living side by side, in peace and security. Let me briefly explain why.

The settlement problem has gotten so much worse that it is now putting at risk the very viability of that two-State solution. The number of settlers in the roughly 150 authorized Israeli settlements east of the 1967 lines has increased dramatically. Since the 1993 signing of the Oslo Accords — which launched efforts that made a comprehensive and lasting peace possible — the number of settlers has increased by 355,000. The total settler population in the West Bank and East Jerusalem now exceeds 590,000. Nearly 90,000 settlers are living east of the separation barrier that was created by Israel itself. And just since July 2016 — when the Middle East Quartet issued a [report](#) highlighting international concern about a systematic process of land seizures, settlement expansions, and legalizations — Israel has advanced plans for more than 2,600 new settlement units. Yet rather than dismantling those and other settler outposts, which are illegal even under Israeli law, now there is new legislation advancing in the Israeli Knesset that would legalize most of the outposts — a factor that propelled the decision of the resolution's sponsors to bring it before the Council.

The Israeli Prime Minister recently described his Government as “more committed to settlements than any in Israel's history”, and one of his leading coalition partners recently declared that “the era of the two-State solution is over”. At the same time, the Prime Minister has said that he is still committed to pursuing a two-State solution. But those statements are irreconcilable. One cannot simultaneously champion expanding Israeli settlements and champion a viable two-State solution that would end the conflict. One has to make a choice between settlements and separation.

In 2011, the United States vetoed a draft resolution that focused exclusively on settlements, as if settlements were the only factor harming the prospects of a two-State solution. The circumstances have changed dramatically. Since 2011, settlement growth has only accelerated. Since 2011, multiple efforts to pursue peace through negotiations have failed. And since 2011, President Obama and Secretary Kerry have repeatedly warned — publicly and privately — that the absence of progress towards peace and continued settlement expansion were going to put the two-State solution at risk and threaten Israel's stated objective to remain both a Jewish State and a democracy. Moreover, unlike in 2011, today's resolution condemns violence, terrorism and incitement, which also pose extremely grave risks to the two-State solution. Today's resolution reflects trends that will permanently destroy the hope of a two-State solution if they continue on their current course.

The United States has not taken the step of voting in support of the resolution because it is too narrowly focused on settlements, when we all know — or should know — that many other factors contribute significantly to the tensions that perpetuate the conflict. Let us be clear. Even if every single settlement were to be dismantled tomorrow, peace still would not be attainable without both sides acknowledging uncomfortable truths and making difficult choices. That is an indisputable fact. Yet, it is one that is too often overlooked by members of the United Nations and by members of the Council.

For Palestinian leaders, that means recognizing the obvious fact that in addition to taking innocent lives, the incitement to violence, the glorification of terrorists and the growth of violent extremism erode prospects for peace, as the resolution makes crystal clear. The most recent wave of Palestinian violence has seen terrorists commit hundreds of attacks, including driving cars into crowds of innocent civilians and stabbing mothers in front of their children. Yet rather than condemn those attacks, Hamas, other radical factions and even certain members of Fatah have held up the terrorists as heroes and used social media to incite others to follow in their murderous footsteps. And while President Abbas and his party's leaders have made clear their opposition to violence, terrorism and extremism, they have too often failed to condemn specific attacks or condemn the praise heaped upon the perpetrators.

Our vote today does not in any way diminish the United States' steadfast and unparalleled commitment to the security of Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East. We would not have let the resolution pass had it not also addressed counterproductive actions by Palestinians. We have to recognize that Israel faces very serious threats in a very tough neighbourhood. Israelis are rightly concerned about making sure that there is not a terrorist haven next door.

President Obama and this Administration have shown an unprecedented commitment to Israel's security because that is what we believe in. Our commitment to that security has never wavered and it never will. Even with the financial crisis and budget deficits, we repeatedly increase funding to support Israel's military. In September, the Obama Administration signed a memorandum of understanding to provide \$38 billion in security assistance to Israel over the next 10 years — the largest single pledge of military assistance in the history of the United States to any country. As the Israeli Prime Minister himself has noted, our military and intelligence cooperation is unprecedented. We believe, however, that continued settlement building seriously undermines Israel's security.

Some may cast the vote of the United States as a sign that we have finally given up on a two-State solution. Nothing could be further from the truth. None of us can give up on a two-State solution. We continue to believe that that solution is the only viable path to provide peace and security for the State of Israel and freedom and dignity for the Palestinian people. We continue to believe that the parties concerned can still pursue that path if both sides are honest about the choices and have the courage to take steps that will be politically difficult. While we can encourage them, it is ultimately up to the parties to choose this path, as it always has been. We sincerely hope that they will begin to make those choices before it is too late.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): The adoption of resolution [2334](#) (2016) is an important and in many ways historic moment in the history of the Security Council. It is the first resolution adopted by the Council on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in eight years. It is the first time that the Security Council has expressed itself so clearly to state the obvious fact that, little by little, Israel settlement building undermines the possibility of building a viable and independent Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel. It was therefore necessary for the Security Council to recall the collective and unanimous devotion of the international community to the two-State solution and to clearly lay out the threats to that solution. Unless we act resolutely to that end, the two-State solution will disappear like a mirage in the desert. There is no credible alternative that could meet the legitimate aspirations of both parties.

Over the past few decades, Israeli settlement-building has undoubtedly accelerated, which only fuels tensions on the ground and exasperates the international community. Settlement-building, which is illegal under international law, is part of a deliberate policy aimed at presenting the population, including the international community, with a fait accompli in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. It proceeds in various manifestations, including the expansion of settlements beyond the Green Line, including in East Jerusalem; the de facto annexation of Zone C; forced transfers of population; the demolition of Palestinian homes and structures; restrictions of access and movement; and the building of the wall beyond the 1967 border. This policy is not only illegal under international law, but also threatens the prospects for the creation of a viable and independent Palestinian State, which is the best guarantee for Israeli security and a lasting solution to the conflict. That is the message that France sought to send today by voting in favour of the resolution.

While settlements are the main threat to the two-State solution on the ground, unfortunately it is not the only one. Acts of violence and incitement to violence and terrorism also undermine the chances of seeing two States — Israel and Palestine — peacefully coexist one day. They destroy trust and dialogue between peoples who must find a way to live together. In that regard, resolution [2334](#) (2016) strongly reiterates its condemnation of all acts of terrorism, incitements to violence and all deliberate attacks on civilians. It calls on the Palestinian Authority to continue to do its utmost to discourage terrorist actions.

Identifying and naming the threats to a two-State solution is important but not enough. It is also necessary to work on recreating, after a two-year impasse, the conditions for resuming negotiations. Like the Palestinians, the Israelis have a vital interest in peace, which can be based only on a two-State solution. That is the aim of the French initiative to try to relaunch the peace process. In that respect, following the important ministerial meeting of 3 June, France decided to organize an international conference on 15 January 2017 in Paris, whose goal will be to introduce the contributions of the international community to relaunch the negotiation process and conclude and implement a peace agreement. We all know, of course, that only the Palestinians and Israelis themselves can achieve peace through direct negotiations.

The resolution that we have adopted today and the Paris international conference represent two sides of the same coin, both aimed at reiterating our shared attachment to the two-State solution and creating conditions conducive to that end. We hope that the resolution and the French initiative will be the first important steps towards relaunching a credible political process that we will need to pursue collectively in the weeks and months ahead. In sum, the resolution is certainly not the end of the road. It is an important and potentially historic step on the difficult and demanding path to peace and security in the Middle East. Let us assume together the heavy responsibility that is incumbent on all of us on that path.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela welcomes the adoption of resolution [2334](#) (2014) in the conviction that it represents a unique opportunity to advance the peace process and restore trust between the parties, while allowing the Security Council to abandon its habitual inaction by engaging it in building an environment conducive to negotiations between the parties that take into consideration the aspirations and concerns of both and that upholds the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to a free, sovereign and independent State in accordance with General Assembly resolution [181 \(II\)](#).

Of course, this resolution represents a mere first step, but it is a step in the right direction. This conflict is extremely complex and fraught with obstacles. There is an urgent need to respond decisively to the greatest challenge to the two-State solution — the continued expansion of illegal Israeli settlements on the occupied territory of the State of Palestine. Illegal settlements violate international law and the rights of the Palestinian people by depriving them of their land, destroying their homes and means of subsistence, restricting their free movements and undermining their right to social and economic development.

That is why the Council must speak categorically against this terrible problem. The United Nations, the General Assembly and the Security Council have the obligation and mandate to defend peace and international law. Furthermore, the United Nations and the Security Council have the moral obligation to support the Palestinian cause, as they are deeply responsible for the tragedy and Nakba of the Palestinian people. That is why they must adopt all the resolutions they can to protect the weakest and force Israel to abide by international law and openly enter into a peace process based on the existence of two States.

The resolution we have adopted today is a first step on the path to a peaceful negotiated solution between Palestine and Israel with the support of the international community. It is therefore necessary for Israel, the occupying Power, to put an end to the policies derived from the prolonged occupation of the territories of the State of Palestine, as well as the inhumane blockade of the Gaza Strip, which has lasted for almost a decade and is a flagrant violation of international law. Those are essential conditions for consolidating what we have achieved today and for moving forward towards a political solution in which Palestine, as a full member of the United Nations and with East Jerusalem as its capital, can live peacefully with Israel, within secure, internationally recognized pre-1967 borders.

The members of the Council have recognized that illegal settlements are a systematic obstacle to the peace process and a threat to the two-State solution. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly critical for Israel to assume its responsibilities and comply with the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly urging it to put an end to a pernicious practice that denies the human rights of the Palestinian population.

Furthermore, Venezuela reiterates its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, no matter who the authors may be and what their motives are. With the same emphasis, we condemn the continued violation of the most basic rights of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories and in Gaza, which continues to be blockaded and besieged by Israel, through the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force by Israeli military and security troops.

We repudiate the violence of extremist settlers against the Palestinian population and the policies of the occupying Power that subject Palestinian men, women and children to prison and illegal administrative detention. We call once again for the release of all children who are unfairly languishing in Israeli jails. Clearly, much remains to be done to reverse this negative situation and ensure that Israel complies with its obligations as an occupying Power. However, we recognize that today's decision opens a space needed for resuming dialogue and negotiation as the only means of resolving a conflict that has marked the history of the Middle East for almost 70 years.

We are pleased that at the end of our term in the Security Council, the Council has today had the vision and the courage to adopt this resolution. We therefore acknowledge the contribution of those who have participated in this historic outcome, especially Egypt, New Zealand and the countries that sponsored the resolution.

Venezuela reaffirms its unyielding commitment to peace, international security and the Palestinian cause. We will remain vigilant with regard to the evolution of the inescapable task of helping to bring about a negotiated peaceful settlement of the conflict, as provided for in Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations. Similarly, we will support in other forums all the efforts and initiatives directed to realizing the two-State solution in accordance with international law.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the adoption by the Security Council of resolution [2334](#) (2016) on the Israeli settlements and appreciates the important role played by the sponsors in promoting its adoption.

The question of Palestine has been the crux of the Middle East issue. It is also the underlying cause of the situation in the region. Safeguarding the legitimate national interests of the Palestinian people is the shared responsibility of the international community. Recent years have seen the stalled peace talks between the two sides, the ever-expanding Israeli settlements, ongoing violence and conflict, the constantly deteriorating humanitarian situation and the growing tension between Palestine and Israel, all of which has threatened the vision of two States as well as regional peace and stability.

China has all along supported the Council in playing its due role on the question of Palestine. Resolution [2334](#) (2016) adopted by the Council today is significant in that it reflects the common aspiration and wish of the international community and heeds the just demand of Palestine and the Arab countries. We urge Israel to implement [2334](#) (2016) in a practical manner, immediately end its settlement activities and stop demolishing Palestinian homes in order to create conditions for the relaunch of the peace talks. China encourages both sides to honour their respective obligations, keep calm, exercise restraint and gradually establish mutual trust so as to come back to the path of peace negotiations as soon as possible.

China has been a firm supporter of the just cause of the Palestinian people. China supports the Palestinian people in establishing a fully sovereign and independent State, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. China welcomes and supports all efforts that help ease tension between Israel and Palestine, achieve the two-State solution at an early date and support the peaceful coexistence between the two sides. China is ready to work with the international community in scaling up the diplomatic efforts to promote an early, comprehensive and just solution to the conflict between Palestine and Israel.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom welcomes the adoption of resolution [2334](#) (2016) today. It is the first Security Council resolution on the Israel-Palestine issue in over seven years. The adoption of the resolution is first and foremost a clear reinforcement of the international community's conviction that a two-State solution remains the only viable route to sustained Arab-Israeli peace.

As the [Quartet report](#) in July 2016 highlighted, the foundations of peace — trust and goodwill — are being corroded from all sides because of violence, incitement, demolitions and settlement activity. Ultimately, as long as terrorists are treated as martyrs, peace will be distant. The scourge of anti-Semitic, racist and hateful language must be excised from the region. It is critical that the Palestinian leadership implement the recommendations of the [Quartet report](#) and continue their efforts to tackle terror and incitement, strengthen institutions and develop a sustainable economy. The United Kingdom will continue to provide the Palestinian authority with professional support in helping develop its security institutions.

But goodwill alone will not secure peace. Today's resolution is a sober recognition that the two-State solution is slipping away. By undermining the prospects for a contiguous Palestinian State, settlement construction is corroding the possibility of a two-State solution. Since the Oslo process in 1993, the population of settlements has doubled to 570,000, including 85,000 settlers deep in the West Bank. The [Quartet report](#) warns of sliding into a one-State reality of perpetual occupation and conflict. That is no future at all.

The United Kingdom is a dear and close friend of the State of Israel. We reject all efforts to delegitimize or undermine Israel. The movement for boycotts, divestment and sanctions, rooted as it is in a culture of prejudice and hostility to Israel, is a barrier to peace. My Government will never support any resolution that advances the cause of boycotts or delegitimization in any way. It is because of our steadfast and stalwart commitment to Israel's security — and its existence as the Jewish homeland — that we voted for today's resolution and worked tirelessly to secure a balanced final text. We believe that Israeli settlement activity represents a clear and present danger to our shared vision of two States for two peoples. The United Kingdom's long-standing view is that settlement expansion is illegal and not in

Israel's long-term interests.

Today's resolution also takes important and balanced steps to support peace through, first of all, calling for immediate steps to prevent incitement and all acts of violence against civilians, including terror. It also calls for a strengthening of efforts to combat terrorism, including through existing security coordination, as well as clearly condemning all acts of terrorism. Secondly, the resolution calls upon both parties to act on the basis of international law and to refrain from provocative actions in order to build trust and create the conditions for peace. Thirdly, the resolution calls upon all parties to exert collective efforts to launch credible negotiations on all final-status issues, urging the intensification and acceleration of international and regional efforts to support a comprehensive peace. We have long held that if negotiations are to be successful, they will need to lead to a safe and secure Israel, living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian State based on the 1967 borders with agreed land-swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capitol of both States and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees.

In closing, we recognize that the adoption of the resolution will not change the situation on the ground overnight. The year 2017 will not be an easy year for the Israel-Palestine issue, 50 years since the Six-Day War and the subsequent occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and 100 years since my country issued the [Balfour Declaration](#). However, we must all uphold our responsibility, as the Council has finally upheld its responsibility today, in order to deliver the long-term security that Israelis deserve and the statehood and end to the occupation that Palestinians are calling out for.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (spoke in Spanish): Uruguay voted in favour of resolution [2334](#) (2016), convinced that after eight years we finally had an historic opportunity to break the Council's stalemate, which has seriously threatened the two-State solution and the peace negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians. Resolution [2334](#) (2016), adopted a few minutes ago, responds to the ongoing call of Council members to disrupt the reigning status quo and reverse the negative trends on the ground, in particular the illegal settlements built by Israel in occupied Palestinian territory.

We are at a moment of great importance to the future of the Middle East peace process and the two-State solution. We hope that the resolution will serve as a call for action by both Israel and Palestine to promptly resume bilateral negotiations towards a just and lasting peace, taking the interests of both parties into account. Uruguay reaffirms its unwavering support for the right of Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace within internationally recognized borders in an atmosphere of renewed cooperation and free from any threat or action that could threaten peace. We also reaffirm our support for the solution based on two independent States, as we are convinced it is the only possibility whereby Israel and Palestine could peacefully coexist.

It is very important for the authorities to send political signals of their desire to escape the current quagmire created by misunderstanding, hatred and violent confrontation. Likewise, both sides must refrain from adopting unilateral decisions that can undermine dialogue, and comply in good faith with their obligations under international law and the Council's resolutions.

Uruguay reaffirms its willingness to continue working to reactivate the peace process in the Middle East as quickly as possible and achieve once and for all the two-State solution of two States, living in peace and cooperation. We owe that to the many generations of Israelis and Palestinians that have been exhausted by many years of conflict.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation, I am sure like many others in the Chamber, was puzzled by the process that unfolded around today's resolution [2334](#) (2016). While the resolution has been worked on for many months, the apparent haste surrounding its adoption does not promote its ends.

For many years, our country has been involved in the Middle East peace process, first as co-chair of the Madrid process, then as a member of the Middle East Quartet and, of course, as a permanent member of the Security Council. Our experience confirms that the issue can be resolved only through direct and unconditional negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis. That is precisely what dictated our work to arrange a September meeting in Moscow between Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel and President Abbas of Palestine. The Palestinian side was ready to take part in the meeting.

Today, we voted in favour of the resolution on the Israeli settlements, convinced that it was based on tested language reflecting the general position of the international community on the illegality of Israeli settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories. We believe it important that the document also condemns violent acts against civilians and acts of terrorism and appeals to both sides to end the violence and the rhetoric of incitement and provocation, which only fuel an atmosphere of distrust and confrontation between Palestinians and Israelis. There is no doubt that such actions undermine the possibility of achieving a two-State solution to the Palestinian question.

Russia will continue working on reanimating the negotiations and restoring Palestinian unity based on the political platform of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the [Arab Peace Initiative](#). In that connection we confirm the importance of the ongoing work of the Quartet as an effective and approved mechanism of the Security Council in the Middle East peace process.

We also note that the July report of the Quartet ([S/2016/595, annex](#)) on the situation in the Palestinian-Israeli track is still very relevant as a strong signal from the international community to both sides of the conflict. Implementing the recommendations contained in the report would contribute to returning the peace process to the political track.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): Japan is deeply concerned about the current stagnation in the peace process and alarmed that a two-State solution may be slipping from our reach. We have been consistent in our position that settlement activity is in violation of international law and that it has been steadily eroding the viability of a two-State solution. With that in mind, Japan voted in favour of resolution [2334](#) (2016).

It is important that the parties commit themselves to the resolution just adopted so as to make meaningful progress in the Middle East peace process. The Council also must reaffirm its commitment to a two-State solution and support the parties to that end. Japan remains firm in its belief that peace in the region can be realized only through negotiations and will not recognize any unilateral change by either party that may prejudice the final resolution.

I would like to conclude by stressing that Japan will continue to engage in this matter both in and out of the Council in order to facilitate the peace process with a view to achieving a two-State solution.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): Today, after decades of paralysis in the Council on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Council has finally exercised its legal, political and moral responsibility to take effective action to reverse the negative trends that are threatening peace and the two-State solution. With the historic adoption of resolution [2334](#) (2016), we prove our sincere commitment to peace and to the two-State solution. We sincerely thank all Council members who voted in support of the resolution today. We are also encouraged by the exemplary restraint shown by the permanent members of the Council. Malaysia also appreciates the full support and solidarity shown by New Zealand, Venezuela and Senegal in carrying the resolution forward.

We have been persistently warned that the settlement enterprise constitutes the single biggest threat to peace and the two-State solution. It is illegal under international law, as reinforced by the 2004 [advisory opinion](#) of the International Court of Justice and in various Council resolutions. They also lead to settler violence, home demolitions, land confiscations, as well as to discriminatory policies and the denial of development, infrastructure and natural resources. Decades of great injustice and gross violations of human rights have perpetuated anger and frustration for those who have nothing to lose, leading to further radicalization in the region and beyond.

Recent developments have made it even more urgent for the Council to act, particularly the brazen attempt by the Israeli Parliament to legalize outposts on private Palestinian lands. We need to send a strong and clear signal that this is simply not acceptable. Today the Council has redeemed itself to steer the parties in the right direction, away from violence and unjust and illegal acts. We are giving hope to both the people of Israel and the people of Palestine, the majority of whom still believe in the two-State solution and still want peace. This is not just a victory for Palestine, it is a victory for the Security Council, for the United Nations, for the rule of law, for peace and for humankind as a whole. It is also a victory for the people of Israel who still believe in living side by side in peace and security with the

Palestinians and their Arab neighbours. In the next few months, the Council should continue to exert pressure on both sides to ensure compliance with resolution [2334](#) (2016). We also urge all Member States to abide by their obligations under the resolution to halt settlement activities. As we enter into 50 years of Israeli occupation in 2017, we need to take a step back to reflect on our collective failures for the past half-century that have led to our current predicament on the viability of the two-State solution. Although our action today is significant in halting settlement activities, we need to recognize that we are addressing the symptoms and not the root causes of the conflict. In the long term, the Council and the international community must galvanize their efforts to end the longest occupation in modern history, which has given rise to sustaining the settlement enterprise.

We therefore urge all parties to intensify their efforts to resume the peace process in order to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions and various initiatives, including the [Arab Peace Initiative](#). We also reaffirm our support for all diplomatic initiatives to that end, including by France and Russia.

Lastly, although Malaysia's days in the Council are coming to an end, we will continue to play an active role in creating the necessary conditions for peace in the region and defending the two-State solution, in line with our principled position on the Palestinian question.

Mr. Martins (Angola): Angola welcomes the adoption today of resolution [2334](#) (2016). I would like to thank the sponsors — Egypt, Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal and Venezuela — for presenting it to the Council.

For far too long, a source of deep frustration and despair to the international community as a whole has been the continued expansion of illegal settlements by the Israeli authorities, which have perpetuated an atmosphere of mistrust, hostility and violence among Israelis and Palestinians. There is no doubt that the settlements are illegal under international law, and therefore we find it disappointing that the Israeli authorities dispute that and believe that their final status should be determined in talks on Palestinian statehood.

Palestinian statehood will not be possible if settlements are expanded; then any possibility of a contiguous Palestinian State would be eliminated. Therefore, we urge both parties to refrain from any negative unilateral actions that could hinder the prospect of the two States living side by side in peace and harmony.

A Council resolution represents only a positive contribution to peace and security in the world, which again is the primary *raison d'être* of the Council; that is, if the resolution can be implemented. I hope that resolution [2334](#) (2016), which we just adopted, will be effectively implemented, particularly by all key parties. This calls for the unity of the Security Council, unity by the Palestinians, unity in Israel. Above all, resolution [2334](#) (2016) calls for a commitment to peace, particularly by the two main parties, Israel and Palestine.

In conclusion, let me say that the resolution is not an imposition of terms by the United Nations, but rather a measure to salvage the prospects of the two-State solution. Therefore, we hope that we will definitely see this as a step in the right direction, as we have several times reiterated in the Council.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): Today is a significant day for the Security Council, as the applause ringing around the Chamber earlier this afternoon attests. I was so very pleased that in this last meeting of the year we are able to adopt a very positive step on this most very difficult issue. The applause reflects the pent-up frustration that the Council has been unable for so long to adopt a resolution on the Israeli-Palestine issue, despite regular reports from the Secretary-General and the Special Coordinator that the two-State solution was slipping away and that urgent action was necessary to arrest it.

As I noted earlier, the focus of resolution [2334](#) (2016) is on settlements: the primary threat to the viability of the two-State solution. However, as others have pointed out, the resolution also includes welcome elements on the need to stop violence and incitement and lays the groundwork for a return to negotiations. There is no question that ongoing Israeli settlement in the occupied territories is a significant obstacle to a return to negotiations and a grave threat to the very viability of a future Palestinian State. As my Foreign Minister said earlier this month, those settlements violate international law, and those settlements have created enemies where there should have been neighbours.

Every settlement creates false hope for the settlers that the land will one day be part of a greater Israel. Every settlement takes land away from Palestinians needing homes or farmland or roads. Today's resolution provides important signals to the parties and to the international community about the way forward. It reaffirms the central importance of preserving the two-State solution as the only model we have for achieving a negotiated peace. The resolution also prepares the ground for a return to negotiations as soon as possible. The resolution reaffirms, through the United Nations most powerful organ, that settlements in the occupied territories are contrary to Israel's obligations under international law and a major obstacle to peace. It condemns the acts of violence, provocation, terror and incitement that have driven the two sides apart and hardened feelings of hostility and mistrust on both sides.

The reporting mechanism the resolution establishes should provide a firm foundation for the Council to continue to encourage the parties towards negotiations on a viable two-State solution. We recognize that there is much more that the resolution might have done. The Council must stand ready to provide additional support to the parties, including by setting out the parameters for negotiations when the time is right. But today we have focused on what is achievable right now, and that is what we believe today's text represents.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): By deciding to co-sponsor resolution [2334](#) (2016), along with Malaysia, New Zealand and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Senegal wishes to reaffirm its principled position on the settlements, which are illegal from the point of view of international law. Indeed, at a time when the peace process is at a stalemate, we see a continued and accelerated progress of building settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. In addition to compromising the chance for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, those settlements and occupations foment the violence that affects both Israelis and Palestinians and the possibility for both peoples to live side by side in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

Together with the Israelis and Palestinians, with whom we, as members of the Council, share the same aspirations for peace and stability, we must find a path to negotiations with a view to reaching a peaceful, happy and definitive solution to the dispute. We avail ourselves of this opportunity to renew our disapproval and condemnation of acts of terrorism and incitement to violence, no matter who the authors are or what the motives may be.

My delegation reaffirms the urgency of relaunching the peace process. That is why we encourage the ongoing initiatives, such as that of France, and diplomatic efforts, such as those undertaken by Egypt and the Russian Federation; all of such initiatives, in our view, require greater coordination.

In conclusion, it is up to the international community, and first and foremost the Security Council as the guarantor of international peace and security, to work on the two-State solution. Our faith was restored by the remarks President Macky Sall delivered during the United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People:

"Despite the stalemate of the peace process, I have the strong conviction that efforts must be continued, strengthened and intensified in order to realize the two-State solution. The two States, Israel and Palestine, should be able to live side by side in peace and security, each of them within its own internationally recognized borders, in accordance with all the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the efforts of the Quartet."

On that basis, Senegal, faithful to its principles and foreign policy, and also as Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, continues to engage in dialogue and consultation in order to reach a two-State solution.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

I would like to start by thanking all the sponsors for their efforts, as well as the delegations that worked so intensely to achieve such a historic result. Spain voted in favour of resolution [2334](#) (2016) because we are convinced that it will contribute to preserving the two-State solution, which we believe is the only solution that can lead to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace for Palestinians and Israelis.

That peace could never be determined externally, but will need to be negotiated between the two parties. However, the international community does have an obligation to do everything it can to promote an agreement. With today's vote, the Security Council did what it had to do. Over the past two years, as a non-Permanent Member of the Security Council, Spain has repeated on numerous occasions that we were in favour of the Council expressing its position on the Palestinian question when the time was right and, if possible, to adopt a text on which there was consensus that could truly advance the peace process. That day has come today. The text of the resolution that we adopted today fulfils, as we see it, the necessary requirements. It is a balanced text that strives for nothing more than to act in favour of peace.

Over these two years, we have also repeated many times in this same Chamber the position of Spain on the Palestinian question. We have always stated that the settlements are counter to international law and one of the main obstacles to make the two-State solution a reality so that Israel and Palestine can live in peace and security within mutually recognized borders. Furthermore, we have also stated that the incitement to hatred and acts of terrorism are not only morally and legally reprehensible, but they also undermine efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, and they should be strongly condemned. The resolution that we have just adopted is fully compatible with that position.

As the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon recalled last week here in the Chamber (see [S/PV.7839](#)), over the past 10 years the Security Council has pronounced itself only twice on the Palestinian question — the last time being eight years ago. We welcome the fact that such silence has been broken and we see this as the result of the work carried out by the Security Council, month after month, throughout these years. Spain has contributed to that work, motivated only by its sincere wish to help the cause of peace. Spain will continue working as long as it is necessary, based on that same motivation, to contribute to a just and lasting peace between Israel and Palestine, which would be the outcome of a negotiated agreement between the two parties.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Danon (Israel): Today is a dark day for the Security Council. Resolution [2334](#) (2016), which members just voted on, is the peak of hypocrisy. While thousands are being massacred in Syria, the Council has wasted valuable time and efforts condemning the democratic State of Israel for building homes in the historic homeland of the Jewish people. We have presented the truth time and again to the Council, and implored it not to believe the lies presented in the resolution. By voting in favour of the resolution, members of the Council have in fact voted no. They voted no to negotiations. They voted no to progress and a chance for better lives for Israelis and Palestinians. And they voted no to the possibility of peace.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addressing the Council one week ago said that the United Nations had

“created a disproportionate volume of resolutions, reports and conferences criticizing Israel” ([S/PV.7839](#), p.4).

The resolution today will be added to the long and shameful list of anti-Israel United Nations resolutions. Instead of charting a course forward members are sending a message to the Palestinians, that they should continue on the path of terrorism and incitement; that they should continue to hold their own people hostage; that they should continue to seek meaningless statements. The sad truth is that today’s vote will be a victory for terror; it will be a victory for hatred and violence. By continuing to provide excuses for the Palestinians to avoid recognizing our right to exist, Council members are only maintaining the status quo.

The world is undergoing great change, and the new Secretary-General will soon assume office. I call on the Council to take this opportunity to turn a new page, put an end to the bias and obsession with Israel, stop such endless attempts to blame all the problems of the Middle East on the one true democracy in the region and make clear to the Palestinians that the only way forward is to end the incitement and terror and enter into direct and meaningful negotiations with Israel.

Just two months ago, UNESCO approved an absurd resolution, denying the connection between the Jewish people and Jerusalem. Today the Council, including many of the world’s leading democracies — the beacons of liberty — voted to condemn the State of Israel. Members voted to condemn the Jewish people for building homes in the land of Israel, members voted to ban us from building in our historical capital of Jerusalem, the heart and soul of the Jewish people, with the resolution. Tomorrow night, Israel and the entire Jewish community around the world will celebrate the holy day of Hanukkah. Over 2,000 years ago, King Antiochus banished the Jewish people from our temple in Jerusalem and issued decrees trying to sever us from religion and our heritage. But we prevailed; the Jewish people fought back. We gained our independence and we lit menorah candles in the temples.

I ask each and every member of the Council who voted for the resolution: Who gave members the right to issue such a decree, denying our eternal rights in Jerusalem? Would the Council have had the nerve to condemn the countries of Council members for building homes in their capitals? Would members ban the French from building in Paris? Would members ban the Russians from building in Moscow? Would members ban the Chinese from building in Beijing? Would members ban the British from building in London? Would members ban the Americans from building in Washington, D.C.?

We overcame such decrees during the time of the Maccabees and we will overcome today’s evil decree. We have full confidence in the justice of our cause and in the righteousness of our path. We will continue to be a democratic State, based on the rule of law and full civil and human rights for all our citizens, and we will continue to be a Jewish State, proudly reclaiming the land of our forefathers, where the Maccabees fought the repressors, and King David ruled from Jerusalem.

This holy book, the Bible, contains 3,000 years of history of the Jewish people in the land of Israel. Absolutely no one can change that history.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. I express the State of Palestine’s sincere appreciation for the principled efforts you have exerted, in both your national capacity as well as in Spain’s capacity as President of the Security Council for this month.

The Council’s action, while long overdue, is timely, necessary and important. Resolution [2334](#) (2016) adopted today reaffirms the Council’s decades-long position that Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, the eternal capital of the State of Palestine, have no legal validity, constitute flagrant breaches under international law, namely the Fourth Geneva Convention, and constitute a major obstacle to peace, gravely diminishing the viability of the two-State solution based on the 4 June 1967 borders and the possibility of realizing it.

We express our appreciation to all the Council members that supported the resolution. They have adopted the resolution on behalf of the entire international community, reflecting the long-standing global consensus on the matter. We must also express our gratitude to the four co-sponsors — Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal and Venezuela. They have acted in line with their constant calls for action to redress the unjust situation, firm in their responsibilities as Council members. We also thank Angola, as well as the Non-Aligned Movement caucus members, for their abiding support. Of course, we also thank our brothers in Egypt, the Arab representative on the Council, for all efforts exerted throughout the process. Let me also thank all those who applauded the adoption of resolution [2334](#) (2016) here in the Chamber, and the millions who have applauded in all corners of the globe, especially those in the State of Palestine.

Over the years we have made countless appeals to the Council to uphold its duties under the Charter of the United Nations, convinced of its central role and the primacy of international law, and insisting on the need for concerted action to confront Israel’s oppression of the Palestinian people and relentless colonization of our land under its half-century foreign occupation. Our appeals have sought, in the short term, to alleviate the suffering of our people, a defenceless civilian population denied of their rights, dignity and humanity. However, our appeals have also been calls for the Council to contribute to the cause of peace in the long term — peace for Palestine, peace for Israel, peace for the Middle East region and peace for our world.

We have not been alone in our appeals; they have been echoed by Security Council members themselves and by the States, organizations, international civil servants and civil society that have come before the Council to implore it to act, including specifically to address the illegality of Israeli settlement activities in occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, and the erosion of the two-State solution based on the 1967 borders and the prospects for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

That the Council has finally chosen to act is significant. Let me repeat: that the Council has finally chosen to act is significant, after years of paralysis, as is the fact that the resolution has been adopted with overwhelming majority support. However, this step requires vigilant follow-up, if it is to be meaningful, so as to stem further deterioration and salvage the two-State solution from relegation to history’s archives. Urgent efforts are needed to reverse the dangerous, negative trends on the ground and to advance our collective efforts to end the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, and achieve freedom, rights and justice for the Palestinian people, including the Palestine refugees, leading to Palestinian-Israeli peace and security, as well as the goal of Arab-Israeli peace.

No “bashing” is taking place, as repeatedly claimed by the Israeli Government — not by Palestine, not by the Council, nor by any who have time and again urged the Council to act in the interest of peace and security. Claims of bashing are beyond being offensive, because in reality today’s action may be too little too late. After years of allowing the law to be trampled upon and the situation to spiral downward, today’s resolution [2334](#) (2016) may rightly be seen as a last attempt to preserve the two-State solution and revive the path to peace to keep hope alive. For many, that seems virtually impossible at this point as Israel, the occupying Power, has been permitted to entrench its occupation and a one-State reality with absolute impunity, at times even being rewarded for its violations and intransigence. Against that backdrop, one Council resolution in nearly eight years is not disproportionate; it is shameful. But today’s vote rectifies that record and sets us on a new course.

The fact is that only Israel is doing the bashing — of the Council and the entire United Nations system — members heard what the Israeli representative said — of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. For five decades, despite resolution [242](#) (1967), calling for Israel's withdrawal from the territories it occupied in 1967, and all the resolutions thereafter, Israel has persisted full force with its occupation. Its illegal settlements and the wall have severely fragmented our land, undermined its contiguity and isolated East Jerusalem — the heart and capital of our State and de facto Israeli annexation of which the international community has never recognized and continues to reject. Convictions in the rationality, feasibility and fairness of the two-State solution have been destroyed, as reflected in the growing negative sentiments among Palestinians, whether those besieged and inhumanely blockaded for nearly a decade in the Gaza Strip, or those enduring the colonization onslaught and daily settler terror in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, or those in the diaspora, including in our refugee camps across the region, whose patience in awaiting justice and a peaceful solution is legendary, yet now so frail. To the audacious claims of bias, we say that the only bias taking place is that against the law, against reason and against the vision of two States as the most viable solution to this prolonged, illegal occupation and disastrous, tragic conflict. We have heard it loud and clear in the gleeful boasts by some Israeli officials that “the two-State solution is dead” and “there will be no Palestinian State”. We witness it in the constant Israeli schemes, including Knesset ploys, attempting to pervert the law to accommodate the unlawful and the pretexts used to expropriate and colonize our land and deepen the occupation. We witness it in Israel's blatant contempt of the global demands to comply with its obligations under the law, as is expected of every single other State in the international community, and to finally commit to the path of peace. But today the Council has said, “enough”. And we thank Council members for that.

Resolution [2334](#) (2016) represents a necessary step for addressing one of the most critical aspects of the longest issue on the United Nations agenda, a 70-year open wound, precluding peace and stability in our region, with far-reaching consequences, not least of which is fuelling the anger and despair that injustice breeds, especially among youth, who see no present or future, and undeniably fuelling much of the radicalism and extremism plaguing our region and world.

The Security Council must stand firm by that decision, stand by the law and stand on the right side of history. It should not be cowed by negative threats or spin; the Council is doing the right thing by adopting resolution [2334](#) (2016). We hope this global call for a cessation of Israeli settlement activities and violations will serve to compel compliance with the law, de-escalate tensions, bring an end to the violence, including all acts of terror, provocations and incitement, and reverse the negative trends on the ground. That is vital for salvaging the prospects for peace.

With the Council leading by responsible action, including follow-up of the reports requested of the Secretary-General on the resolution's implementation, we hope that the coming period will be one of serious effort to set the course for a credible political horizon and help the parties advance towards a peaceful solution. We recognize fully the Arab States' efforts in the context of the [Arab Peace Initiative](#), which remains a cornerstone for peace, and the efforts of France, the Quartet, Egypt and the Russian Federation. We hope that those collective efforts, with international support, will be fulfilled.

We remain firm in our belief that peace — the central purpose of the Organization — is more than worthy of both international legislation and action. We therefore urge intensification of international and regional efforts to achieve, without delay, an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, the 1991 Madrid Conference terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the [Arab Peace Initiative](#) and the Quartet [road map](#), whereby the Palestinian people will realize their rights and justice, including a just solution for the Palestine refugees on the basis of resolution [194 \(III\)](#), and can finally live in freedom and dignity, exercising their inalienable right to self-determination in their independent, sovereign and contiguous State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and within secure and recognized borders.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before concluding this meeting, I would like to express the sincere appreciation of the delegation of Spain to the Council members, especially my colleagues the Permanent Representatives, their respective staff and teams and also to the secretariat of the Council for all the support they have given us. It has been a very busy month, and it would not have been possible to achieve this outcome without the contribution of the delegations, the representatives of the Secretariat, the interpreters, the translators, meeting services, sound engineers, as well as the security officers who kept the Council safe day after day this month.

As this could be the last public meeting of the Security Council for December 2016, I would like, on behalf of the Council, to express the sincere appreciation of the Council to the outgoing members — Angola, Malaysia, New Zealand and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. I wish to commend their hard work and contributions during their term on the Security Council from 2015 to 2016.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.