



## Security Council

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12 March 2012

*Provisional*

## Security Council

Sixty-seventh year

### 6734<sup>th</sup> meeting

Monday, 12 March 2012, 9.50 a.m.  
New York

*President:* Mr. Hague

(United Kingdom of Great Britain and  
Northern Ireland)

*Members:* Azerbaijan  
China  
Colombia  
France  
Germany  
Guatemala  
India  
Morocco  
Pakistan  
Portugal  
Russian Federation  
South Africa  
Togo  
United States of America

Mr. Mehdiyev  
Mr. Li Baodong  
Mr. Osorio  
Mr. Juppé  
Mr. Westerwelle  
Mr. Caballeros  
Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri  
Mr. Loulichki  
Mr. Haroon  
Mr. Portas  
Mr. Lavrov  
Mr. Sangqu  
Mr. Menan  
Mrs. Rodham Clinton

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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*The meeting was called to order at 9.50 a.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in the Middle East**

**The President:** I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, Ministers and other representatives participating in this meeting. Their collective presence is an affirmation of the importance of the subject matter to be addressed.

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

I give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

**The Secretary-General:** ...

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Let me also say a few words about the broader picture in the region going forward. I see five crucial points to bear in mind.

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Fifthly, there must be regional peace. A regional awakening based on the ideals of freedom, dignity and non-violence cannot be complete without a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Yet, the past year has not brought about new momentum. The peace process continues to stagnate. The situation in Gaza is yet again proving its unsustainability. I am gravely concerned about the latest escalation between Gaza and Israel. Once again, civilians are paying a terrible price. Rocket attacks from Gaza against Israeli civilian areas are unacceptable and must stop immediately. I reiterate my call on Israel to exercise maximum restraint.

I have appealed to Israeli and Palestinian leaders to embrace regional changes and to show the courage and vision needed to reach a historic agreement. Together with my Quartet partners, with whom I met this morning, we will remain engaged to assist the parties in forging a way ahead. We must create the conditions for meaningful negotiations that will resolve the core permanent status issues — namely, with regard to territory, security, refugees and Jerusalem — and end the occupation that started in 1967. That is the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace that will realize the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security.

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**The President:** I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

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The Arab Spring, as it has become known, is already the most significant event of the early twenty-first century, with deep implications for international peace and security. It is therefore right that it is debated by the Security Council. Some people regard it with fear and consternation, but in Britain we view it in a strongly positive light. It raises the prospect of the greatest enlargement of human freedom since the end of the Cold War, and of a Middle East that in 20-years' time could be made up of open, prosperous and stable societies. If this scenario were also to include peace between Israelis and Palestinians — a need underlined by the events in and around Gaza over the past few days — and include a negotiated settlement of the nuclear crisis with Iran, then the case for helping it become a reality is even stronger.

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I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the other members of the Security Council.

**Mr. Juppé** (France) (*spoke in French*): ...

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In the Middle East there is another people whose aspirations must be recognized. Are the claims of the Palestinians not as legitimate as those expressed in the rest of the region? Is it not natural for Palestinians to wish for a Palestinian State to emerge? The security of the Israeli State must also be ensured. France will always stand by Israel to guarantee its security and will not compromise. Today, we all know that the solution of two States living side by side in peace and security is the only viable one and the best guarantee of Israel's security.

After so many repeated failures of the peace process and so many years of suffering and disappointed hopes, the time has come to change method. That is the very direction of the appeal to the General Assembly launched by President Sarkozy on 21 September 2011 (see A/66/PV.11). We are convinced that we can no longer continue to do without a multilateral forum as such, that of the Council, and the support of all partners, in particular regional and European. In the coming months, France will do everything in its power so that a just and lasting peace is at last established in the Middle East.

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**Mr. Caballeros** (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): ...

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The so-called Arab Spring evokes feelings that are, overall, of a positive nature. That is why I have concentrated more on the opportunities than on the challenges in my statement. That is also why I have deliberately avoided touching on other topics that some would consider obligatory when discussing the Middle East, such as the imperative of ending the conflict between Israel and Palestine or the situation in Syria, since we have addressed those matters in other meetings of the Council.

**Mr. Lavrov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): ...

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The Arab Spring should in no way be used as a pretext to diminish attention to the Palestinian issue. We are convinced that the potential for conflict in the Middle East and North Africa will remain high until a comprehensive settlement is achieved in the Middle East within the existing international legal framework. This is a truly historic obligation for the international community and the Security Council.

Unfortunately, the trends we have been witnessing lately delay rather than hasten this prospect, both in political terms — when the settlement parameters that have been repeatedly endorsed by the Security Council, the Quartet and the parties themselves are called into question — and in practical terms too, when the settlement activity of Israel in the West Bank is literally shrinking the area available for the necessary agreements.

A particular concern is the violation of the ceasefire following the resurgence in strikes between Israel and the Gaza Strip, in which civilians are suffering on both sides. Under those circumstances, the international community must step up its efforts. That applies above all to the Quartet, which, as we discussed with our colleagues before the start of today's meeting, should start working in a focused manner and on a regular basis to create an environment conducive to continuing direct Israeli-Palestinian contacts aimed at full-fledged negotiations. We all welcome the initiative of Jordan, which held a series of very useful meetings between the Israelis and the Palestinians in Amman this January, and we want that initiative to be continued.

Russia also confirms our proposal for closer cooperation between the Quartet and the relevant structures of the League of Arab States. We are confident that the Arab Peace Initiative remains relevant and that its comprehensive implementation will ensure the creation of a Palestinian State, guarantee the security of Israel and establish peace and stability throughout the Middle East. Russia is prepared to engage in close cooperation with all responsible members of the international community in order to attain those goals.

**Mrs. Rodham Clinton** (United States of America): ...

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President Obama and I have been consistent in our belief that the Palestinian people, like their Arab neighbours, Israelis and all people, deserve dignity, liberty and the right to decide their own future. They deserve a viable, independent Palestine alongside a secure Israel. We know from decades in the diplomatic trenches that the only way to get there is through a negotiated peace, one that cannot be dictated from outside and one that we will continue to pursue through every productive avenue, including a Quartet consultation this morning.

Let me also condemn in the strongest terms the rocket fire from Gaza into southern Israel, which continued over the weekend. We call on those responsible to take immediate action to stop those attacks. We call on both sides — all sides — to make every effort to restore calm.

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**Mr. Portas** (Portugal): ...

The profound changes taking place around the Arab world render the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian question even more urgent. Palestinians have the right to their independent State, living in peace and security alongside Israel. Palestinians have prepared themselves to fully and efficiently run their own State, and that has been acknowledged by the international community at large. Fulfilling the legitimate ambitions of both sides can only be attained through serious and credible negotiations between the two parties that take into account the rightful concerns of each side.

We all know that the solution lies in the framework of the parameters; what is lacking is political will. We need concrete and tangible actions that bring Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiation table to engage in the substance and to accept a precise calendar, as proposed by the Quartet on the Middle East and the Arab Peace Initiative. Europeans have a particular responsibility in this context, and we must play an active role to break the present deadlock. Tensions are mounting and time is quickly running out. If a new surge in violence is to be avoided, both parties and the international community must act promptly.

Rampant settlement activity, demolitions of Palestinian homes and displacement of innocent people continue. They are illegal. They undermine the Palestinian institutions and leaders. They increase frustration and create an explosive mix. We appeal to Israel to stop those activities, as they fatally threaten the viability of any mutually agreed political solution. Israel has legitimate security concerns, but they can only be fully addressed in an efficient way through a negotiated settlement.

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**Mr. Westerwelle** (Germany): ...

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The changes in the region have made it even more urgent to make progress towards a two-State solution for Israel and Palestine. I therefore welcome the meeting of the Quartet principals today. All parties must do everything to ease tensions and to avoid an escalation on the ground. I am deeply worried about the flare up of violence around Gaza. The shelling with rockets of innocent people is unacceptable and must stop.

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**Mr. Loulichki** (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): ...

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No one should underestimate the challenges facing the Middle East. In discussing those challenges, we cannot fail to tackle the crisis that has cast a dark shadow across the entire region and has dangerously escalated in recent days. The greatest and most dangerous threat to the stability and security of the Middle East is embodied in the policy of occupation and settlement that Israel continues to espouse, in violation of international legitimacy, signed agreements and the founding principles of the peace process.

The dead end reached in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, despite repeated international efforts, and Israel's continued acceleration of its settlement activities, especially in Jerusalem, the construction of the wall and the siege of the Gaza Strip have bred frustration and despair that threaten the security and stability of the entire region. The immediate and urgent challenge facing the Security Council is the creation of openings to resume negotiations and moving them towards a just and comprehensive solution, which it must seek to achieve as soon as possible.

The international community, and particularly influential States thereof, has a big and decisive role to play in influencing the parties and activating the two-State solution in the context of a just, comprehensive and full peace that would guarantee the emergence of a viable Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the entrenchment of peace and security for peoples throughout the region, without exception.

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**Mr. Li Baodong** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): ...

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As always, China remains firmly committed to just Arab causes, including the just demands of the Palestinian people for the restoration of their legitimate national rights. China supports the establishment of a Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders, with full sovereignty and independence, with East Jerusalem as its capital and with eventual peaceful coexistence between the two countries of Palestine and Israel.

The peace process in the Middle East is currently at a stalemate. There was another increase in tension in Gaza last week. China is deeply worried about that development. Any stagnation or setback to the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks can only bring about more turbulence and conflict. The more conflict there is and the more grim the situation becomes, the more that the international community should intensify its diplomatic efforts and push for an early resumption of talks between the two parties. China appreciates the efforts made by the Middle East Quartet. We support a greater role by Mr. Annan in achieving peace in the Middle East.

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**Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri** (India): ...

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The international community also needs to be galvanized to expeditiously resolve the long-pending problem of the West Asian and North African region, namely, the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Israeli-Palestinian problem. That problem cannot be allowed to be lost in the din and preoccupations of other developments in the region. Quite apart from the fact that without a resolution of that conflict, developments in West Asia and North Africa cannot be adequately addressed, we seriously run the risk of violence if the people of Palestine feel marginalized and sense a complete loss of attention to their plight. Their protests may get radicalized unless concrete action is taken to end the occupation of Arab lands, so that all peoples in the region can live in peace in their respective homelands and build cooperative relations. Moreover, the call of the international community for democratic and political reforms sounds hollow to Palestinians and other people in the region living under occupation. In that connection, some important and immediate measures need to be taken, including putting an end to all settlement activities and favourable consideration by this Council of the Palestinian application for membership in the Organization.

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**Mr. Sangqu** (South Africa): ...

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Whereas the Arab Spring has brought a glimmer of hope to many in the Arab world, it has unfortunately left some of the long-standing issues of human rights abuses and colonization unresolved. In that regard, we are reminded of the plight of the people of Western Sahara and Palestine, who still yearn for freedom despite the seismic political and economic shifts that have engulfed the region.

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**Mr. Mehdiyev** (Azerbaijan): ...

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We regret seeing the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process. At the same time, Azerbaijan commends and highly values the consistent efforts of Jordan to revive the dialogue and resume the negotiations towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution.

Azerbaijan is deeply concerned about the continuing illegal settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories. Apart from the impact on the rights, freedoms and everyday lives of the Palestinians, settlements cause serious damage to the peace process and, more dangerously, threaten a two-State solution and the emergence of a viable Palestinian State.

In that regard, I would like to stress once again that, in contrast to some other well-known situations involving groundless and illegitimate territorial claims, including those under the concocted pretext of care for ethnic minority groups, the right to self-determination and statehood of the people of Palestine has been recognized.

With respect to the occupied Palestinian territories and similar situations in other parts of the world, we proceed from the importance of reaffirming the continuing applicability of all relevant international legal norms, achieving the invalidation of activities aimed at the consolidation of military occupations, initiating urgent measures towards removing the adverse effects of such activities and discouraging any further practices of the same or a similar nature.

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**Mr. Haroon** (Pakistan): ...

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The Foreign Minister of Jordan, Mr. Nasser Judeh, made a remarkable statement on 29 February to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament that I keep going back to time and time again. He told the Committee that there can be no complete Arab Spring or Arab awakening without peace in the Middle East. And there will never be peace in the Middle East without a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This, then, is the context of my speech — the winter of Arab discontent. Can we usher in a vast spring with that winter consistently raising its head? I do not think so. The denial of the Palestinian right to self-determination is at the heart of unrest in the region. If peace in the Middle East is to be lasting, progress on the Syria-Israel and Lebanon-Israel conflicts is necessary as well. Israel must withdraw completely from the occupied Lebanese lands and the occupied Syrian Golan, in compliance with relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

With the continuation of Israeli settlement activity, hope for the Palestinians to have a viable State of their own is fading fast. We have had grim reminders of that delivered to the Council in the recent briefings by representatives of the Department of Political Affairs and a number of Member States. There is a general belief that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory is becoming increasingly volatile. Given such factors as the ever-increasing settlement activity and settler violence, the continued blockade of the Gaza Strip, diminished economic prospects for the population, vandalism of the holy sites, the plight of Palestinian prisoners, and so on, it is understandable that the people should be on tenterhooks. A small spark could turn into a big fire.

We also condemn any pipe bombs being fired from the Gaza Strip, but we believe that the biggest threat to international peace and security arises from one particular aspect. Yet the Council continues to do nothing cogent for the Palestinians. Each time that Council members meet, we are told that the Quartet is now discussing the matter. I await the day that the Quartet will produce a result that will substantially change the plight of these people.

One of the best things to do, and we have so moved, is that if it is agreed that Gaza should be given provisions, we should take a flotilla, land on the beaches and deliver to the inhabitants, through the United Nations, the security and the food that they require. We strongly feel that now is as appropriate a time as any to send a strong, unified signal to the occupying Power to stop its activities, specifically in land-grabbing.

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I will conclude this segment by reiterating our support for the Palestinian people in their just struggle for peace and the right to self-determination and their membership, as was said by my Indian colleague, in the United Nations at the earliest. We feel that Palestine will remain the biggest challenge of the Middle East. That opportunity is being afforded by this wave of fulfilment of aspirations in the name of the people of the Middle East through the Arab Spring. I feel that the Palestinians should also benefit, and not lose. I reiterate that without resolution of this core issue, as was said by the Foreign Minister of Jordan, we will not be able to see real peace in the region.

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I would also like to address five crucial points raised by the Secretary-General in his statement. I believe that those are crucial points, as he himself says.

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There must be regional peace for the Palestinians. If there was a Balfour Declaration that brought the State of Israel to where it is today, then let us have a Balfour Declaration for the Palestinians as well.

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*The meeting rose at 12:30 p.m.*

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