



## Security Council SC/9655

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Security Council  
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### SECURITY COUNCIL PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT REITERATES URGENT NEED FOR RENEWED

#### EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE COMPREHENSIVE PEACE IN MIDDLE EAST

#### Ministerial Meeting Endorses Two-State Solution as Basis for Ending Conflict

The Security Council reiterated today its call for renewed and urgent efforts by the parties and the international community to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on the vision of a region where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, would live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders.

According to a statement read out by Council President Sergey V. Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, vigorous diplomatic action was needed to attain the goal set by the international community – lasting peace in the region, based on an enduring commitment to mutual recognition, freedom from violence, incitement and terror, and a two-State solution, building upon previous agreements and obligations.

While encouraging ongoing work by the Middle East Quartet to support the parties' efforts for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, the Council called upon those parties to fulfil their obligations under the performance-based [Road Map](#) and refrain from any steps that could undermine confidence or prejudice the outcome of negotiations on all core issues.

Further by presidential statement S/PRST/2009/14, the Council called on all States and international organizations to support a Palestinian Government which was committed to the Quartet principles and the Arab Peace Initiative, and which respected the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and encouraged tangible steps towards intra-Palestinian reconciliation. It expressed support for the Russian Federation's proposal to convene an international conference on the Middle East peace process in Moscow in 2009.

At the outset of the meeting, in which seven foreign ministers participated, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted that, following the inconclusive results of negotiations in 2008 and the bloodshed in Gaza, there had been almost no progress on two key recent Council resolutions – [1850 \(2008\)](#) and [1860 \(2009\)](#). Hopefully, today's meeting would help provide direction and momentum.

He said there was a deep crisis of confidence among ordinary people on the ground, and for good reason. Palestinians continued to see unacceptable unilateral actions in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, such as house demolitions, intensified settlement construction, settler activity and oppressive restrictions on movement. "The time has come for Israel to fundamentally change its policies in this regard, as it has repeatedly promised to do, but not yet done." On the other hand, ordinary Israelis continued to seek reassurance that a future Palestinian State would guarantee their right to live in peace and security. Indiscriminate Palestinian rocket attacks into southern Israel were not only deeply unacceptable, but counterproductive, and must stop.

The provisions of Council resolution 1860 (2009) must be fulfilled, he said. They included a durable and fully respected ceasefire; preventing the illicit supply of weapons into Gaza; reopening border crossings; and progress on Palestinian reconciliation under the legitimate Palestinian Authority. The Arab Peace Initiative remained a key framework within which a comprehensive approach to peace could and must be built.

He said he continued to believe strongly in the potential for activating the regional tracks of the Middle East peace process alongside a rejuvenated Palestinian track, including that between Israel and Syria, on the basis of land for peace.

Speaking in his national capacity, Mr. Lavrov recalled that, in December, the Council had adopted resolution 1850 (2008), calling for comprehensive negotiations on all tracks, on the basis of common accepted principles. However, the subsequent crisis in Gaza and the elections in Israel were new conditions that called for a rapid resumption of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The most pressing topic was to reaffirm the international legal basis for a two-State solution, and it was especially important to back the Arab Peace Initiative, relevant Council resolutions and the Road Map.

He said the focus of attention should be compliance by Israelis and Palestinians with commitments undertaken, including a cessation of settlement activities, among other things. The intra-Palestinian dialogue and the restoration of Palestinian unity were also important. The Council's task was to ensure progress in the negotiations and a rapid resumption of the peace process, unhampered by emotions. The Moscow conference, which stood to contribute substantially to peace in the Middle East, would be the next important step.

Susan E. Rice, Permanent Representative and Cabinet member of the United States, said her country had revitalized its efforts to make a reality out of the vision of a secure, lasting and comprehensive peace that must include a two-State solution. Terrorism and rocket fire directed into Israel was simply intolerable, but a future without hope for Palestinians was also intolerable. The Palestinian Authority must combat terrorism against Israel, which for its part must halt settlement activity, dismantle outposts and allow Palestinians freedom of movement and access to economic opportunity. All States in the region must create an atmosphere supportive of peace. The United States intended to integrate the Arab Peace Initiative into its approach.

All Member States, including those in the region, must work together to ensure an end to the smuggling of arms into Gaza, she said, voicing strong support for the reopening of the Gaza border crossings in a controlled and sustained manner and with an appropriate monitoring regime. Regarding Lebanon, the United States looked forward to the upcoming elections, which must be free, fair and free of intimidation. There was a need for full implementation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006) to protect the country's sovereignty and independence. There was also a need to insist on an end to arms smuggling to and rearming of Hizbullah.

Bernard Kouchner, Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, stressed that the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people must be realized. The way to achieve that was the creation of a viable, independent Palestinian State. It was just as necessary that people believe in the possibility of peace. Little by little they were losing all hope. It was necessary to create the right conditions for negotiations. There could be no peace without a complete cessation of settlement activities, which was the main obstacle to peace. In the long term they posed a threat to Israel's security.

While most speakers stressed the importance of the Road Map, Bruno Stagno, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, said it was fatally flawed and lacked a destination. The process must be inverted, with final-status parameters clearly agreed from the start, in order to guarantee all the necessary interim arrangements and the irreversibility of the process. Since multiple actors in and near the region wished to frustrate the process, it made no sense to make final status negotiations conditional on the fulfilment of certain difficult, but not fundamental, issues that affected but did not resolve the process.

Other speakers today included the Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of Austria, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Burkina Faso, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Japan, State Secretary for European Integration in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Croatia, and the Permanent Representative and Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam.

Also delivering statements were the Permanent Representatives of Mexico, Uganda, China and Libya.

The meeting began at 10:40 a.m. and ended at 12:55 p.m.

#### Presidential Statement

The full text of presidential statement S/PRST/2009/14 reads as follows:

"The Security Council stresses the urgency of reaching comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Vigorous diplomatic action is needed to attain the goal set by the international community – lasting peace in the region, based on an enduring commitment to mutual recognition, freedom from violence, incitement and terror, and the two-State solution, building upon previous agreements and obligations.

"In this context the Security Council recalls all its previous resolutions on the Middle East, in particular resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1850 (2008), 1860 (2009), and the Madrid principles, and the Council notes the importance of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative.

"The Security Council encourages the Quartet's ongoing work to support the parties in their efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

"The Security Council reiterates its commitment to the irreversibility of the bilateral negotiations built upon previous agreements and obligations. The Council reiterates its call for renewed and urgent efforts by the parties and the international community to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on the vision of a region where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders.

"The Security Council further calls upon the parties to fulfil their obligations under the Performance-Based Road-map refraining from any steps that could undermine confidence or prejudice the outcome of negotiations on all core issues.

"The Security Council calls on all States and international organizations to support the Palestinian Government that is committed to the "Quartet" principles and the Arab Peace Initiative and respects the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Council encourages tangible steps towards intra-Palestinian reconciliation, including in support of Egypt's efforts, on this basis. It calls for assistance to help develop the Palestinian economy, to maximize the resources available to the Palestinian Authority and to build Palestinian institutions.

"The Security Council supports the proposal of the Russian Federation to convene, in consultation with the Quartet and the parties, an international conference on the Middle East peace process in Moscow in 2009."

#### Background

The Security Council met this morning to discuss the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

#### Statements

Council President SERGEY V. LAVROV, speaking in his capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, noted that little time had passed since the meeting in December when the Council had adopted resolution 1850 (2008), which called for comprehensive negotiations on all tracks, based on common accepted principles. (See Press Release [SC/9539](#) of 16 December 2008.) However, the subsequent crisis in Gaza and the elections in Israel were new conditions calling for a rapid resumption of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The most pressing topic was to reaffirm the international legal basis for a two-State solution, and backing the Arab Peace Initiative, relevant Council resolutions and the Road Map was of special importance.

The Arab Peace Initiative had become an integral part of the Middle East peace process, in which there was no place for terrorism, he said. The focus of attention should be the need to achieve compliance by Israelis and Palestinians with commitments undertaken, including a cessation of settlement activities, among other things. The intra-Palestinian dialogue and the restoration of Palestinian unity was also an important factor. The task before the Council was to ensure progress in the negotiations and the rapid resumption of the peace process, which should not be hampered by emotions. The Moscow conference would be the next important step. A schedule had been agreed, taking into account the views of the main stakeholders. That conference stood to contribute substantially to peace in the Middle East.

BAN KI-MOON, Secretary-General of the United Nations, said the Council was meeting at the outset of a very important few weeks for peace in the Middle East. Following the inconclusive results of negotiations in 2008 and the bloodshed in Gaza, there had been almost no progress on two key recent Council resolutions – 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009). Hopefully, today's meeting would help provide direction and momentum.

In the period ahead, President Barack Obama of the United States would host the Israeli and Palestinian leaders as well as key regional parties in Washington, D.C., he said. The Middle East Quartet was expected to meet soon for close consultations with the League of Arab States. The challenge was to begin implementing transformative changes on the ground and to kick-start a renewed, irreversible drive to achieve an Israeli-Palestinian agreement aimed ultimately at creating an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living in peace and security with Israel, and achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive regional peace.

Resolving the conflict was necessary for the well-being of both peoples and the world, he emphasized. The Council, the Quartet, States in the region, the international community and the Secretary-General must all play their respective full roles. They must all be determined, patient, insistent, supportive, principled and empathetic to the very real concerns of both parties. They needed confidence that the process would address their vital interests and that commitments made would be monitored and kept.

There was a deep crisis of confidence among ordinary people on the ground, and for good reason, he said. Palestinians continued to see unacceptable unilateral actions in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, such as house demolitions, intensified settlement construction, settler activity and oppressive movement restrictions due to permits, checkpoints and the barrier, which were intimately connected to settlements. "The time has come for Israel to fundamentally change its policies in this regard, as it has repeatedly promised to do, but not yet done."

He continued: "Action on the ground, together with a genuine readiness to negotiate on all core issues, including Jerusalem, borders and refugees, based on Israel's commitments, will be the true test of Israel's commitment to the two-State solution." Ordinary Israelis continued to seek reassurance that a future Palestinian State would guarantee their right to live in peace and security. Indiscriminate rocket attacks, which had caused casualties, civilian suffering and property damage, were deeply unacceptable and counterproductive, and must stop.

The Palestinian Authority must continue efforts to consolidate progress in developing and deploying an effective security strategy and functioning institutions of a future State, he said, stressing that Israel must facilitate those efforts. It should refrain from using excessive force that killed and injured civilians, as it had done recently in Gaza. Firm and full respect for international humanitarian law on the part of all parties was indispensable.

The beginning of Palestinian self-empowerment had been a key achievement of efforts in 2008 and must not be imperilled by the Palestinian Authority's financial crisis, he said, appealing to donors to meet unfulfilled commitments, including those concerning budget support and the reconstruction of Gaza. The situation in and around the enclave was extremely worrying, with internal Palestinian divisions and Israeli-Hamas tensions trapping the civilian population in a vortex of hopelessness.

He emphasized that the United Nations continued to support fully Egypt's efforts to achieve Palestinian reconciliation and would engage a Government that united Gaza and the West Bank within the framework of the legitimate Palestinian Authority. It would welcome, as an interim measure, practical steps that could help Palestinians in Gaza focus on reconstruction, security issues and preparations for elections.

Israel's continuing closure policy did not weaken its adversaries in Gaza, he said. However, it did cause untold damage to civilian life. Four months after the conflict, during which 3,800 houses and 2 health centres had been destroyed and 34,000 homes, 15 hospitals, 41 health care centres and 282 schools damaged, only food and medicine were allowed into the territory. That was completely unacceptable. Israel should respond positively to repeated calls to allow glass, cement and other building materials into Gaza. The United Nations sought the support of all Council members, as well as the Quartet, for its efforts in Gaza. The Organization was ready to work with local businessmen to help start action to repair and rebuild houses, schools and clinics.

The provisions of Council resolution 1860 (2009) must be fulfilled, he continued. Those included a durable and fully respected ceasefire; preventing the illicit supply of weapons into Gaza; reopening border crossings in accordance with the Agreement on Movement and Access; and progress on Palestinian reconciliation under the legitimate Palestinian Authority. Efforts on those issues, as well as an exchange of prisoners, were the only way meaningfully to alter the dynamics on the ground for the better. The Arab Peace Initiative remained a key framework under which a comprehensive approach to peace could and must be built.

He said he continued to believe strongly in the potential for activating the regional tracks of the peace process, alongside a rejuvenated Palestinian track, including between Israel and Syria, on the basis of land for peace. The United Nations supported the convening of an international conference in Moscow, and looked to Arab and other countries in the Middle East to play a positive role in the internal Palestinian situation by urging all parties to renounce violence and weapons acquisition, and to work for reunification under one Palestinian Authority committed to the principles of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Arab Peace Initiative.

MICHAEL SPINDELEGGGER, Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of Austria, said the new Government of Israel was engaged in a strategic review while the Palestinians faced the challenge of reunion. In such a period of transition, the international community must engage with the parties in order to move towards substantial negotiations for a lasting settlement. The Council must reconfirm its support for the peace process and freedom from violence and terrorism, on the basis of a two-State solution. The presidential statement to be adopted today could serve as a guideline for the parties to re-engage in negotiations on all tracks.

Describing the lack of progress in the reconstruction of Gaza as unacceptable, he expressed support for coordinated action by all parties to prevent the flow of arms into the territory. Austria also called on Israel to allow the supply of everyday goods and reconstruction materials into Gaza. Together with its European Union partners, Austria had contributed funds for vulnerable Gaza residents, but they could not be disbursed. Innocent citizens must not be held hostage by Israel because of the irresponsible policies of the Government in Gaza. Current policies imposed on Gaza deprived the population of human dignity.

Trust must be built through respect for the rule of law and international humanitarian law, he said. The findings of the Board of Inquiry were disturbing. Allegations of violations of international humanitarian law must be investigated, no matter who committed them. Austria was also concerned about the lack of a political process in the West Bank, where roadblocks continued. Settlement construction and the destruction of homes in East Jerusalem weakened the credibility of the political process and played into the hands of extremists.

Calling on the Palestinian leadership to reconcile, he said reconciliation was the key to the peace process and implementation of reconstruction efforts in Gaza. A Palestinian Government must be fully committed to a two-State solution and other principles of the peace process. The parties had the firm support of the international community, and the international conference to be held in Moscow would provide another important occasion to demonstrate that support.

BEDOUMAALAIN YODA, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Burkina Faso, expressed hope that the Council's discussions would contribute to a comprehensive, lasting solution. Peace in the Middle East was at the very heart of international peace and security, and the international community must leave no stone unturned to make that happen. The war in Gaza and other recent events had thwarted progress. In adopting resolution 1850 (2008), the Council had illustrated its commitment to implementing the Annapolis agreements. He called for the resolution's full implementation. He also reaffirmed the principles of the Madrid agreement and the Quartet's efforts, and called on the parties to abide by those agreements and to give up the language of weapons. There must be an independent, viable Palestinian State living side by side with Israel and its neighbours. He stressed the need to restore a genuine climate of trust by adopting the necessary measures to end extremist rhetoric by all parties. Israel must do its part by ceasing construction of the separation wall and Jewish settlements, while Hamas must stop firing rockets.

He said there was a pressing need to ensure Palestinian unity, and he thanked Egypt for its efforts in that regard. While stressing the need for long- and mid-term solutions, he said the immediate needs of the people in Gaza must be addressed urgently, including reconstruction. Promises made during the pledging conference in early 2009 should be implemented, and building and reconstruction materials must reach Gaza unimpeded. The challenges in the Middle East remained great. Peace was the only option. He expressed confidence that the yearning for peace and security would prevail over war-mongering behaviour. Ongoing attention to that issue must be promoted. The Council had a primary role to play, including by finding ways to guarantee implementation of the many decisions made. The Council's credibility and that of the United Nations was at stake. A comprehensive, just and lasting solution in the Middle East required the commitment of the parties themselves. They must show greater political will and a heightened sense of responsibility.

AHMET DAVUTOĞLU, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, said the pace of developments in the Middle East required the international community to be alert at all times, through there was no room for pessimism. Recent diplomatic activities and the determination of the international community raised hopes for the future. It was no longer feasible to address the problems of the Middle East in isolation. The peace process should advance on all tracks without delay, and the rift among the Palestinians must come to an end. Turkey hoped that reconciliation talks in Egypt would succeed. It was also encouraged by the cessation of rocket launches into Israel.

Expressing hope that the Israeli Government would renew its commitment to a two-State solution, he also voiced his concern about its settlement activities, its restrictions on movement and goods, and its actions that could change the character of East Jerusalem. Those actions were all contrary to the commitments agreed under the Road Map. The Arab Peace Initiative provided a sound basis for peace, and Israel should give it the attention it deserved.

The presidential statement to be adopted today could have been more precise, he said, emphasizing that the objective of a comprehensive peace could only be achieved through a reintegration of all tracks. There could be no turning of a blind eye to the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian Territory. Turkey called for the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) and unimpeded access to Gaza. Turkey was committed to contribute to efforts for a comprehensive peace, with Israel and Palestine living side by side within internationally recognized borders. Destined to live together, Israelis and Palestinians could remain enemies and suffer together, or live in peace and prosper together.

BERNARD KOUCHNER, Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, stressing that insufficient progress had been made thus far, recalled that countries had met at the Council four months ago to call for a lasting ceasefire in Gaza. Since then the most difficult phase of the conflict had ended, but resolution 1860 (2009) had not been implemented and the goals that it called for were far from being achieved. The situation in Gaza remained extremely alarming, with the humanitarian crisis continuing, the blockade still in place and reconstruction impossible. The border crossings must be opened for all goods to enter Gaza.

He said there was no lasting ceasefire and rocket attacks continued. Neither Israeli Corporal Shalit nor any Palestinian prisoners had been released. Yet it was essential to look to a future characterized by peace. While resolution 1850 (2008) clearly referred to the irreversibility of that process, its adoption had been followed by the war in Gaza. However, one could not conclude that the time was not right to continue with the peace process. There was an urgent need to address the situation in Gaza and the financial situation of the Palestinian Authority. The international community must not lose track of the Palestinian elections planned for 2010.

The legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people must be realized, which could only be achieved through the creation of a viable, independent Palestinian State, he said. It was just as necessary that people believed in the possibility of peace. Little by little they were losing all hope, he said, emphasizing the necessity to create the right conditions for negotiations. There could be no peace without a complete cessation to settlement activities, which was the main obstacle to peace. In the long term they posed a threat to Israel's security.

Calling on the Palestinian Authority to continue its efforts to combat terrorism, he said the trafficking of weapons into Gaza was also unacceptable and must end. The entire region must be involved in seeking a lasting peace. The international community was wedded to the Arab Peace Initiative, but the situation today was far different from that prevailing in 2002. It was crucial to think about the measures of trust needed to implement the initiative. Violations of international humanitarian law in Gaza could not be ignored.

He said his country had supported the creation of the Board of Inquiry to investigate attacks on the United Nations compound in Gaza. That issue would need to be taken up in the next few days. France underscored the need for stronger involvement by the international community to guarantee effective compliance with the peace agreement in terms of manpower and logistics. On several occasions France and the European Union had voiced their readiness to participate in the negotiations required for possible solutions. They were ready to breathe new life into the peace process. The situation could wait no longer.

DAVID MILIBAND, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, said today's meeting came a week before the start of intensive visits to and consultations in Washington, D.C. The duty of the international community and the Council was to unite in word and deed in support of a new plan for peace. Conflict could erupt at any time. Resolution 1860 (2009) had been a hard-fought achievement, but there was overwhelming evidence that it had not been implemented fully. More work was needed to end arms smuggling and open border crossings. The report of the Board of Inquiry was an issue.

The West Bank was in economic limbo while settlement activities continued, including in East Jerusalem, and rockets continued to land in Israeli towns, he said. The rearmament of Hizbullah contravened Council resolutions. There was indeed a crisis of confidence, but the broad shape of peace was clear: a comprehensive peace based on a two-State solution, with Jerusalem as the capital of both, as well as settlement of the refugee problem. Short-term measures included the wish of the Palestinian people for a freeze on all settlement activities, opening of the Gaza border crossings and a Palestinian Authority properly funded by all its donors. Israelis wished to see an end to terror and the release of Corporal Gilad Shalit. Now was the time to exert the political will to find a solution.

Welcoming the commitment of the new Israeli Government to the political, economic and security tracks, he said Israelis needed peace with the whole Arab world while Palestinians needed its support. The Arab Peace Initiative could provide both. The Initiative was in fact an Arab "deposit" that should be matched. Nothing would motivate Europeans more than a movement towards peace in order to offer financial support, which was the European deposit. A Russian deposit had been made in the form of the upcoming conference and ensuring that Iran would comply in the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The message of the international community to Israelis, Palestinians and the region was undivided: "We support peace and expect peace."

BRUNO STAGNO, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, said the international community must insist that the parties most directly involved in the conflict negotiate and accept from the outset that the end solution would not meet all their aspirations, claims or even what they considered fair. It was time to abandon rigid positions based on a past that no longer existed. The biggest injustice was the past six decades of disagreement, clashes, setbacks and disappointments which had deprived both peoples of the right to live free from fear. The only possible peace was one upon which both parties mutually agreed

and reached with the international community's firm support. "But this international community must be committed to reaching a settlement, and not see it merely as an opportunity for some who are seeking diplomatic muscles to recover past glories or reap their own rewards, or even as a bill of exchange to be used in other chess matches."

He described the Road Map as "fatally flawed", saying it had no destination. The Road Map process must be inverted, with final-status parameters clearly agreed from the start in order to guarantee all the necessary interim arrangements and the irreversibility of the process. All must commit themselves to the final destination. Since multiple actors in and near the region wished to frustrate the process, it made no sense to make final status negotiations conditional on the fulfilment of certain difficult, but not fundamental, issues that affected but did not resolve the process. "This false logic has offered too many opportunities for those who live off intolerance and violence to sabotage the peace." The international community must recognize the existence of two States and support a peaceful, definitive solution. It was time to call the core issues by their proper name and support the parties so they could reach concrete, verifiable and sustainable final agreement.

It was time to turn the focus to interested parties and neighbouring States that suffered the consequences of the conflict, he said. The more involved they were in determining the peace initiative, the greater their commitment would be to promptly and effectively implementing it. The solution lay within and ultimately it took more courage to agree than to disagree. Meanwhile, it was necessary to facilitate unimpeded, sustained and timely access to humanitarian aid for the population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It was also imperative to reverse the growth of illegal settlements and refrain from actions that would alter their demographic character or exacerbate Palestinian living conditions. Palestine had a responsibility to continue strengthening ways to combat violence, extremism and terrorism. Egypt and Jordan were essential to following up the process and Saudi Arabia had much to contribute. It was time to end the cruel irony of the only democratic Arab State besieged by a foreign occupation.

SUSAN E. RICE, Permanent Representative and Cabinet member of the United States, said the meeting underlined the priority that the international community placed on a secure, lasting and comprehensive peace that must include a two-State solution. The United States had revitalized its efforts to make that vision a reality. President Obama was personally committed to it and continued to lead directly. In his recent address to the Turkish Parliament, he had noted that the parties had committed themselves to those goals in the Road Map and the Annapolis process.

She said terrorism and rocket fire directed into Israel was simply intolerable, but a future without hope for Palestinians was also intolerable. George Mitchell, the United States Envoy for the Middle East, had completed his third trip to the region and was working intensively to help create the conditions for a peaceful resolution of the problems in the region, to establish an independent and viable Palestinian State and to prevent more violence. In the coming weeks, President Obama would be meeting with key regional leaders.

The Quartet remained the most effective instrument for bringing lasting peace to the Middle East, she said, adding that all parties must meet their obligations under the Road Map. The Palestinian Authority must combat terrorism against Israel, which for its part must halt settlement activity, dismantle outposts and allow Palestinian freedom of movement and access to economic opportunity. All States in the region must create an atmosphere supportive of peace. The United States intended to integrate the Arab Peace Initiative into its approach.

The international community must work together in support of the Palestinian Authority as it continued efforts to improve the lives of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank while supporting the legitimate Palestinian leadership, she said. States in the region had a particular responsibility in that regard. It must be demonstrated to the Palestinian population that negotiations, not terrorism, was the path towards a viable State. The principles of the Road Map included renouncing violence, recognizing Israel and respecting former agreements. They were also the building blocks of a future Palestinian State.

All Member States, including those in the region, must work together to ensure an end to the smuggling of arms into Gaza, she said, voicing strong support for the reopening of the Gaza border crossings in a controlled and sustained manner and with an appropriate monitoring regime. That would not happen through terrorist intimidation and violence. Regarding Lebanon, the United States looked forward to the upcoming elections, which must be free, fair and free of intimidation. There was a need for full implementation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006) to protect the country's sovereignty and independence. There was also a need to insist on an end to arms smuggling to and rearming of Hizbullah.

SHINTARO ITO, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Japan, affirming that the Security Council should continue to play a constructive role in the Middle East peace process, called strongly on the Israeli Government to fulfil its obligations under the Road Map and Council resolution 1850 (2008). A top priority in that light was improving humanitarian conditions in Gaza. At the same time, he condemned rocket attacks on Israel and called on Arab States to play a more active role, calling the Arab Peace Initiative a "solid foundation" for a comprehensive peace.

Outlining Japan's extensive humanitarian assistance to Palestinians and its support for Middle East peace, he stressed the importance of a balanced approach in the area, one that valued resolving root causes over the use of force. Economic development, pluralism, multiculturalism, tolerance and moderation were important, he said, adding that dialogue among civilizations in that context would reap benefits for generations to come. The ultimate goal of diplomacy was the creation of a global society in which people of different cultures, religions and ideologies could live together in peace. He pledged his country's continued contributions, both financial and intellectual, in order to realize a two-State solution in the Middle East.

DAVOR BOŽINOVIC, State Secretary for European Integration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Croatia, said now was an opportune moment to harness and achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East. At its heart was the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. He said it was important not to lose sight of the regional dimension of the peace process, pointing to the role of regional partners and the Arab Peace Initiative. He commended the United States' role in that regard and President Obama's early engagement with regional actors. Today's meeting came at a critical time. All efforts were needed to preserve the momentum and build on progress achieved. He stressed the importance of the Annapolis framework and the opening of the regional tracks between Israel and Syria and between Syria and Lebanon. That momentum must not be lost. He supported the convening of the Mbscow conference. Resolution 1850 (2008) was an important benchmark; it emphasized the irreversibility of the peace process. He stressed the importance of the two-State solution.

He urged the parties to continue to engage in direct and substantial negotiations at all levels, while recognizing the challenges they faced. The dynamics in Gaza could not be separated from the regional peace process. Gaza needed dire reconstruction assistance, with its long-term recovery requiring a stable environment. The border crossings into Gaza must be opened, as called for in resolution 1860 (2009). Hamas must put an end to arms smuggling. He thanked Egypt for its mediation efforts. Unquestionably, the Gaza crisis had interrupted peace negotiation efforts, and the political and diplomatic process was inextricably linked to the situation on the ground. Hopefully, both parties would adhere to the Annapolis agreements. Also critical to peace was development; the two were mutually reinforcing. The ability of the Palestinian Authority to build credible institutions and to combat terrorism and anarchy remained essential for State-building. The current period was beset by challenges for both sides, which made it all the more important for the Council to help them.

LE LUONG MINH, Permanent Representative and Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam, said he was heartened by an increasing international consensus rejecting violence in support of a peaceful solution in the Middle East, the positive outcome of the International Conference for the Reconstruction of Gaza, held in Sharm el-Sheikh in March, and the continued efforts to translate such positive steps into concrete actions in support of the National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza presented by the Palestinian Government. Yet, such positive developments could not eclipse the scope of the remaining challenges. Three months after a temporary ceasefire, both Israeli military incursions into the Occupied Palestinian Territory and rocket attacks against populated areas in Israel persisted. As Gazans continued to struggle with the consequences of a 22-month siege, tension in the West Bank was rising, owing to Israel's expansion of illegal settlements and construction of the separation wall.

Emphasizing that a lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict must be comprehensive and take into account the legitimate rights of all concerned, he said

Viet Nam supported the collective efforts of the United Nations, the Quartet, the League of Arab States and regional countries to reach a two-State solution. He urged all parties concerned to lift restrictions on Gaza and to facilitate humanitarian relief operations there. Viet Nam took note of the report from the Board of Inquiry, prepared at the Secretary-General's request, and supported investigations to determine the culprits. His delegation hoped that all Palestinian parties would soon reconcile and establish a national unity Government. It also hoped that parliamentary elections in Lebanon, scheduled for 7 June, would be held in optimal conditions of security, transparency and fairness, and that Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) would be fully implemented.

CLAUDE HELLER ( [Mexico](#) ) said that, despite recent efforts, the situation in the Middle East remained critical. Rocket attacks on southern Israel continued, as did retaliation by Israel with incursions into Gaza. The difficulty of access for humanitarian assistance, fuel and cash into Gaza had exacerbated living conditions there and generated a feeling of unfairness among the Gaza population. In the West Bank, there were reports of confrontations between settlers and Palestinians, Israeli incursions and terrorist attacks against Israel. There were restrictions on movement while settlement and demolition policies in the West Bank and East Jerusalem continued. All actors should abide by the provisions of humanitarian law at all times.

He warned that the peace process might not only remain stagnant, but that there was also a risk to revert to the status quo ante. The Israeli and Palestinians must resume negotiations as soon as possible, for which the support of neighbouring States and the international community was also required. It was necessary to unreservedly comply with resolutions of the Council, in particular resolution 1850 and 1860. Both parties must comply with all central themes of the Road Map and avoid any action that would undermine trust. He deplored the continued practice of colonization, demolition and settlement. Intra-Palestine reconciliation was indispensable. Reconstruction and humanitarian access would only be possible when there was a monitoring mechanism that guaranteed a lasting ceasefire, the opening of crossings and an end to arms smuggling.

He invited Israel and Syria to resume their indirect talks, and called upon Lebanon, Israel and Syria to abide fully by the provisions of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2005) and 1701 (2006). Mexico urged Israel and Palestine to hold a substantive dialogue without preconditions. The presidential statement to be adopted by the Council later was a supreme and timely contribution to the promotion of dialogue. It would lead towards long-term peace in the Middle East.

RUHAKANA RUGUNDA ( [Uganda](#) ) said today's debate was a clear testament to the Council's efforts to address the conflict and secure lasting peace in the region, which could only be achieved through negotiations. Uganda supported efforts by all parties to achieve a comprehensive peace based on a two-State solution, as envisaged in resolution 1860 (2009). Israel and the Palestinian Authority must remain committed to the irreversibility of the peace process and to previous agreements and obligations.

Welcoming the Secretary-General's report on the Board of Inquiry, he noted, however, that the situation remained fragile. There was still no permanent ceasefire and violence continued. There was an urgent need for a durable ceasefire, an end to arms smuggling and opening of the border crossing points into Gaza, as envisioned in resolution 1860 (2009). Uganda commended Egypt's mediation role, but was concerned about persisting divisions among the Palestinians and called on them to reconcile their differences.

He noted with concern that, while \$4.5 billion had been pledged for Gaza's reconstruction in March 2009, urgently needed construction materials were not being allowed into the territory, mainly due to Israel's blockade. Uganda called on all the parties concerned to ensure that their pledges were put to use. Another cause for concern was the significant rise in the number of settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israel must end all settlement activities. Uganda also commended renewed diplomatic relations between Lebanon and Syria.

ZHANG YESUI ( [China](#) ) recalled that, while resolution 1860 (2009) had brought about a ceasefire and created conditions for the resumption of the peace process, it had not been fully and effectively implemented. Israel should open the crossings to Gaza in order to facilitate reconstruction efforts and access for humanitarian assistance. It should also halt its settlement activities in the West Bank. The Palestinian side should strengthen its internal unity.

Stressing that political negotiation rather than the use of force was the only way to lasting peace, he said the cycle of violence would only exacerbate hatred. Both parties must refrain from actions that undermined trust and work towards the creation of favourable conditions for the resumption of negotiations. The Palestinian question was at the core of problems in the region, and the ultimate way out was the two-State solution. It was to be hoped that both sides would bear in mind the fundamental interests of their respective peoples.

Peace would depend on the settlement of all issues, which should be promoted in a holistic approach, he said. The parties concerned should strengthen mediation efforts and consider establishing a multilateral mechanism to provide oversight of the peace process. China supported the efforts of the Quartet and the Moscow conference, and two weeks ago, its Foreign Minister had visited the region and held in-depth consultations with leaders there. China also provided reconstruction assistance to the Palestinians.

ABDURRAHMAN MOHAMED SHALGHAM ( [Libya](#) ) said that after 60 years the situation was still urgent and complicated. The core of the so-called Middle East problem was the fact that the Palestinian people had been evicted from their land. Their identity was demolished. Thousands were in Israeli prisons, as their resistance was criminalized. Inside Israel, extremism was emerging, and along with that, the denial of the rights of others and discrimination towards Arabs in general. The Palestinian Government was called extremist and the resistance in Lebanon was described as terrorism. But nobody was describing Israel's Government, which was building a separation wall and launching wars, as extremist. The Palestinian Authority had held peace talks with the Israelis in various international forums. But the end result had been an increase in the construction of Israeli settlements and the destruction of Palestinian homes. Today, more than 60,000 Palestinians in Jerusalem alone were slated to have their homes destroyed. Israel also planned to build a subway near a Palestinian mosque, destroying the mosque in its wake.

He said Israel wanted everything — the land, security and peace — while offering nothing in return. Israel refused Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homeland. It refused to stop acquiring weapons of mass destruction and it refused to withdraw from the Golan Heights. It also refused to allow for the creation of a Palestinian State. There were more than 11,000 Palestinians in Israel's jails, but no one was talking about their suffering. In the West Bank alone, more than 600 Israeli checkpoints made daily life torturous for the Palestinians. Israel had launched an all-out war in the Gaza Strip. Thousands were killed and wounded with internationally banded weapons. He supported the findings of the Board of Inquiry and the fact-finding mission on Israeli crimes during that aggression. Rights and justice must prevail. Everyone must call for a renunciation of violence and all forms of racism.

It was necessary to create a situation similar to the one that had existed in the past in Andalusia, in which Muslims, Christians and Jews lived together, in the spirit of coexistence and tolerance, he said. Saif al-Islam Muammar al-Gaddafi had published in his white book a proposal for a one-State solution in which people of all religions and races lived equally and with equal rights. He expressed confidence in the ability of the international community to realize that dream, similar to what had been achieved in South Africa. Under that proposal, Muslims, Christians and Jews would share land and water equally. Although Libya did not agree with much of the draft presidential statement, because it did not address Israeli settlements in Palestinian areas and the Syrian Golan, Libya would, in the interest of consensus, not object to it.

