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Sixty-ninth year

7096th meeting

Monday, 20 January 2014, 10 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Juden (Jordan)

<i>Members</i>	Argentina	Mr. Estreme
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Errázuriz
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Araud
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Luxembourg	Mr. Asselborn
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Cho Tai-yul
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Rwanda	Mr. Nibishaka
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Power

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General and the ministers and other representatives present at today's meeting. Their participation is an affirmation of the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Brazil, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Guatemala, Iceland, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Namibia, Norway, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Turkey 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 the meeting, in accordance with the

provisional rules of procedure and previous practice in this regard.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to participate in this meeting.

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

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

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

The Secretary-General: I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important meeting on the situation in the Middle East.

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The year 2014 will be decisive in helping Israelis and Palestinians draw back from a perilous and unsustainable status quo. United States Secretary of State Kerry has worked diligently to lay out a framework on all core issues to address Israeli and Palestinian aspirations in a fair and balanced manner and to allow for continued negotiations towards a final status agreement. I also pay special tribute to Jordan for its essential role.

Israeli and Palestinian leaders will be required to make bold decisions and painful compromises for peace. They must prepare their peoples for these necessary steps. The failure of political progress could fuel a downward spiral on the ground. I am alarmed by recurrent violence and incitement on all sides, as well as by continued settlement activity, which is illegal under international law. Building settlements is not consistent with building a long-lasting peace agreement. Both parties must act responsibly and with restraint. Gaza also remains a cause for concern. Ultimately, a sustainable two-State solution will require Palestinians to overcome their divisions.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) will begin 2014 with an expected end-of-year shortfall of \$67 million under its regular budget. I encourage all Member States to explore ways to strengthen their cooperation with UNRWA and provide additional funding, in particular to its regular budget.

I hope that the parties will reach a framework understanding. It must be fair and consistent with principles on all core issues outlined in Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles — including land for peace — the [road map](#) and the [2002 Arab Peace Initiative](#). Palestinians must be able to realize their legitimate aspirations to statehood, self-determination, dignity and freedom, including an end to the occupation that began in 1967, with a just solution to the plight of refugees and a resolution of the status of Jerusalem. Israelis must be able to live in peace and security within recognized borders, paving the way for their increasing integration in a stable and secure region.

The realization of the Arab Peace Initiative will yield socioeconomic, trade, and security benefits for all the peoples of the Middle East. For Palestinians, a comprehensive peace settlement holds the promise of becoming a fully recognized Member State of equal standing. There is no substitute for negotiations to achieve this end. Only then can the United Nations relationship with Palestine be truly transformed so as to fully implement and complete the Palestinian statebuilding agenda.

For Israel, too, only a negotiated solution will bring security and recognition in the region and beyond. Israel would be in a position to reap the full benefits of all forms of cooperation within the United Nations system. The United Nations and its Members would, in turn, greatly benefit from what Israel has to offer. I do not underestimate the difficulties, but the risks of inaction or surrender are far greater. We face possibly the last attempt to salvage the two-State solution. Quite simply, this is too important to fail.

My message to President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu is clear. If they are prepared to take the bold decisions required, I will push ahead on the positive agenda of peace dividends for both sides and ensure that the United Nations works towards realizing the legitimate aspirations of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples within the framework of a comprehensive regional settlement. We must make the most of the prospect that Secretary Kerry has unlocked in order to see the creation of two States living side by side in peace and security that their peoples so desperately desire and deserve.

The President (spoke in Arabic): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement. I appreciate his commitment and diplomatic activities. In the light of ongoing events, I understand that he will now have to leave the Chamber. I therefore wish him every success in his good offices today.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I thank Mr. Nasser Judeh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Jordan, for presiding over this meeting, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing. I reaffirm the State of Palestine's gratitude for the principled efforts they have respectively and consistently exerted for peace and a just solution to the question of Palestine.

It is with immense pride that we see Jordan assume the presidency of the Security Council, and we convey our congratulations and wishes for success during its tenure. Likewise, we extend sincerest congratulations to the other new non-permanent members — Chad, Chile, Lithuania and Nigeria — confident in their adherence to the Charter and abilities to fulfil the serious responsibilities of this organ, including vis-à-vis the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the goal of a just, comprehensive solution, which is a matter central to international peace and security.

On this occasion, we also express congratulations to the outgoing members of the Council — Azerbaijan, Guatemala, Morocco, Pakistan and Togo — on the completion of their tenure, and reaffirm our appreciation for the principled positions they have taken regarding Palestine during the Council's deliberations over the past two years. I also welcome the ministers who are among us today to participate in this deliberation.

Today, 20 January, is being observed in the United States in commemoration of the life of the great civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr. Mr. King's wisdom inspired and transformed a generation, changed the course of history, and continues to inspire today. We recall today his declaration that

“[i]njustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly”.

This principle lies at the heart of the United Nations aim to promote peace, security, human rights, development and dignity for all peoples. It is a principle acutely applicable to the injustice that continues to be borne by the Palestinian people — an injustice that has harmed our people, our region and global aspirations to peace, security and friendly relations among nations.

This is why the Palestine question has remained on the United Nations agenda for nearly seven decades. That is why the General Assembly has repeatedly affirmed the permanent responsibility of the United Nations until the question is justly resolved. That is also why the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is annually observed on 29 November. And it is why the Assembly rightly proclaimed 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The grave impact of this conflict — and, conversely, the multitude of benefits that a peaceful solution would have for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, the Middle East and the international community as a whole — are facts widely recognized. That was recently echoed by United States Secretary of State John Kerry, who continues to expend tireless efforts, along with the Arab Ministerial Follow-up Committee, the Quartet members — the European Union, the Russian Federation and the United Nations — and many countries from all over the globe in support of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and a peaceful settlement. Secretary Kerry has stated that

“[t]he stakes here are much bigger than just Israel and Palestine. This is a conflict that is felt around the world. It is a conflict that has implications with every leader I have met anywhere in the world as Secretary of State or a Senator.

“And President Obama is determined that the United States of America and his Administration will do everything in our power to exhaust the possibilities of finding that peace.”

We recognize and commend that serious engagement by the international community, and we urge that this support be translated into intensified efforts for the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace during this year. As negotiations are ongoing between Palestine and Israel, the international community and the Council have clear responsibilities and cannot remain on the sidelines. For decades, time, energy and resources have been heavily invested towards the realization of a two-State solution based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map. Now is the time to follow-through on that investment with political will and courage.

The long-standing consensus on the parameters of the solution must be reaffirmed, not set aside — completely ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967; achieving the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security based on the pre-1967 borders; and ensuring a just solution to the Palestine refugee problem based on the relevant resolutions, including General Assembly [resolution 194 \(III\)](#).

The Security Council has a duty to ensure respect for its resolutions, which form the backbone of a fair and sustainable solution. The welcomed international pledges to support and ensure the implementation of a future peace agreement are surely based on the premise that this will be a lasting peace, not one that does not survive as more than ink on paper. That requires respect for the principles of a just solution of all core issues — refugees, Jerusalem, borders, settlements, security, water and prisoners. It is vital that the international community stand by those principles and persuade Israel, the occupying Power, to respect them. That is what will facilitate a permanent agreement and guarantee its viability. And, in the immediate present, that is what will foster an environment conducive to credible negotiations, real progress and the ultimate achievement of our collective goals.

On our part, the Palestinian Government and people are committed to peace and justice and are exhausting all efforts, conducting ourselves on the basis of international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, including those of the Council, the well-known parameters of the peace process and the agreements reached from 1993 onwards. We have responsibly participated in all stages, rounds and initiatives of the peace process for more than 20 years, including the current negotiations. And we are doing so on the basis of historic compromise and great sacrifice.

Yet the challenges we face on the ground are formidable. Mistrust, cynicism and despair are rising among the Palestinian people, as they continue to witness and endure illegal Israeli practices, which, far from bringing an end to the occupation, are further entrenching it, deforming the two-State solution, impeding socioeconomic development, inflicting vast human suffering and diminishing the hopes that the current peace process will lead to the realization of their freedom and rights.

Since the resumption of negotiations, Israel has announced plans to construct more than 7,600 settlement units, along with the construction under way on thousands more units throughout the occupied State of Palestine, including in and around East Jerusalem. Israel is also continuing the construction of its wall, destroying the contiguity of our land with such illegal colonization measures. Israel is almost daily continuing military raids in Palestinian areas, perpetuating the violent, destructive face of the occupation. Palestinian civilians continue to be killed and injured by the occupying forces. Settler terrorism is rampant. Provocations against Christian and Muslim holy sites, including at Al-Haram Al-Sharif and Al-Aqsa Mosque, in occupied East Jerusalem, persist, inflaming religious sentiments and high tensions.

Moreover, despite the welcomed release of long-term Palestinian prisoners, during 2013 alone at least 4,553 Palestinians, including children, were arrested or detained, adding to the ranks of the more than 5,000 Palestinians currently in Israeli jails. Also, Israel demolished at least 200 Palestinian homes in the past year, forcibly displacing hundreds of people. And the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip continues to deepen the isolation, poverty and humanitarian hardships of our people, particularly our vulnerable refugees, whose subsistence has been almost totally reliant on the support of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

None of that engenders confidence in, or popular backing for, the negotiations. On the contrary, the continuation of Israel's illegal actions and provocative declarations further destabilize the situation and poison the atmosphere, obstructing progress and preventing peace from taking root on the ground and in the hearts and minds of our peoples.

Of course, making peace requires negotiations. But making peace also requires respect for international law and requires a change in mentality, behavior and discourse, consistent with the goals of the peace process and essential for preparing the public for new realities. The negotiations cannot be an objective in themselves or be used as cover to perpetuate the status quo.

There must be an immediate halt to Israel's settlement activities and its attempts to assert control over more territory, whether in Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley or elsewhere, as well as a halt to the arrest of Palestinian civilians, the demolition of homes and the forced displacement of Palestinian families, and all policies of collective punishment against our people, including in Gaza. That is imperative for creating trust and an appropriate environment for negotiating an end to the conflict, whereby the independent, sovereign and contiguous State of Palestine and the State of Israel can coexist in peace and security and just solutions can be reached on all outstanding core issues.

A lasting solution must be founded on respect for international law and human rights. Peace and security cannot take root in the absence of those elements, as justice and rights are essential for peace to prevail anywhere. Therefore, in reaffirming Palestine's commitment to a peace based on two States, we reaffirm also our commitment to redressing the injustice borne by our people and fulfilling their national aspirations and rights, including the right to return and the right to self-determination.

The Palestinian leadership is acutely aware of this moment's significance and, despite the Israeli obstructions, is negotiating in good faith. If the opportunity for peace before us is lost, it will not be for a lack of effort by Palestine or by the international community, including the Arab States, whose historic Peace Initiative stands and is backed by intensive efforts, including the support of the 57 member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Should Israel choose to persist with colonization, annexation and oppression rather than choosing the path of peace, the response by the international community, including the Council, must be firm and based on the law and the global consensus on the conflict. The message to Israel must be clear: illegal actions entail consequences, and Israel will be held responsible should its actions lead to the collapse of peace efforts and the two-State solution.

Once again, before concluding, I must convey our grave concerns about the tragic situation of Palestinian refugees in Syria. As the conflict rages, our refugees, like other civilians in the country, continue to suffer death, injury, destruction and displacement, even including the starvation to death of children, women and men. The plight of thousands of Palestinian refugees trapped in the Yarmouk camp is shocking and inhumane. It is a humanitarian catastrophe. We urgently appeal for humanitarian access to the camp and to all civilians suffering in the conflict, in line with international law.

This crisis reconfirms the extreme vulnerability of the Palestinian refugees and the need for a just solution to their plight in the context of any peace agreement and of regional peace. We commend the efforts of UNRWA and other humanitarian organizations that are providing emergency aid to the Palestinian refugees in Syria and to those who have fled to Lebanon, Jordan and other countries. As the Geneva Conference approaches, we appeal for the exertion of maximum efforts to ensure the protection of all civilians in Syria, including the Palestinian refugees, and to find a political solution to end this horrific conflict.

I thank you, Mr. President, and the Secretary-General and the members of the Council, including the Ministers of Luxembourg and the Republic of Korea, for participating in the meeting and for their attention to these important matters.

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

Mr. Prossor (Israel): ... The Middle East is known as the cradle of civilization — the birth place of history's greatest empires and three world religions. The region was once admired for its inspiring art, striking architecture and significant innovations. Today, the world looks at the Middle East and sees a region shaken by violence. From the Arabian Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, not a day goes by when we do not read about brutality and bloodshed, or new threats looming on the horizon. Amid that sea of hostility, Israel is an island of stability and democracy. It is a nation in which the majority governs, but the minority enjoys equal rights, a nation that embraces diversity and welcomes diverse opinions, a nation that leads the world in human rights and encourages women to be leaders.

Israel is proud of its democracy and yearns for peace with its neighbours and security on its borders.

The people of Israel are still mourning the loss of their legendary statesman and soldier, Ariel Sharon. He was a fearless leader who knew the heavy price of war and was willing to take bold steps for peace. The State of Israel is still willing to take courageous steps for peace and is committed to serious and meaningful negotiations with the Palestinians. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the United States, in particular Secretary Kerry for his tireless devotion to promoting peace in our region.

Twenty years ago, I recall watching King Hussein and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin meet in the Arava Desert to sign the historic peace treaty between our two countries. At the signing, King Hussein said,

“This is a peace with commitment. This is our gift to our peoples and the generations to come.”

Fifteen years after his death, King Hussein's legacy of peace lives on. Israelis from across the political and religious spectrum still admire King Hussein's towering morality and his profound belief in the sanctity of life and the dignity of every human being. I and most Israelis will never forget the sight of King Hussein consoling the Israeli families whose children had been killed in a terrorist attack. After learning that a Jordanian soldier had murdered seven Israeli schoolgirls, King Hussein travelled to Israel to visit the homes of the bereaved families. One by one, he sat with the grieving parents, held their hands, offered words of condolence and hugged and kissed them. King Hussein told them,

“I feel that if there is anything left in life, it will be to ensure that all the children enjoy the kind of peace and security that we never had in our times.”

That is the legacy that his son, King Abdullah, proudly continues today.

Contrast that picture with a picture from just a few weeks ago. In December, Israel once again made the heartbreaking decision to release convicted Palestinian

terrorists in an effort to advance the peace process. The released terrorists were given a heroes' welcome by the Palestinians and embraced by President Abbas. Murderers were met with fireworks and festivities and showered with candies and congratulations. The Palestinian Authority (PA) is rewarding terrorists with tens of thousands of dollars. The motto of the PA's pension plan seems to be "the more you slay, the more we pay." Is that coexistence? Is that tolerance?

Is that mutual respect? Grieving Israelis watched as Palestinians celebrated men like Abu Harbish, who threw a firebomb at a bus, murdering 26-year-old Rachel Weiss and her three young children. To everyone in the Chamber I ask, How would you feel if you had to watch your family's murderers being celebrated? Would you call into question the so-called peaceful intentions of your neighbours? President Abbas could learn a great deal from King Hussein of Jordan about demonstrating his commitment to making peace.

Since peace talks began in July, hundreds of examples of Palestinian incitement against Israelis and Jews have occurred. From cradles to kindergartens and from schools to soccer stadiums, Palestinian children are besieged by messages of hate. They are born in hospitals named after violent Palestinian groups, attend schools named after terrorists and are taught from textbooks that equate Zionism with racism. In their free time, Palestinian children play on sports teams named after murderers and watch television programmes that teach that Jews are "our enemies and should be killed."

Rather than condemning that incitement, the Palestinian Authority is amplifying the messages of intolerance. President Abbas' Fatah party regularly displays maps that erase Israel. In one map, for example, the Palestinian flag flies over the entire geographic area of the State of Israel. This map extends from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River and is entitled "Palestine". In a speech on Christmas day, President Abbas declared that Jesus was a "Palestinian messenger" and suggested that Israel was to blame for the exodus of Christians from the Holy Land. That is a blatant attempt to rewrite history and erase any connection between the Jewish people and the land of Israel. Today we are witnessing a mass exodus of Christians from the Palestinian territories and the Arab world because of the constant persecution and discrimination that they face by the Arab States. Abbas's made-up maps and mythical accounts could join the fables of the book *The Thousand and One Nights*. We have already lost an entire generation to incitement. How many more children will grow up being taught hatred instead of peace, violence instead of tolerance, and martyrdom instead of mutual understanding? The international community must finally confront Palestinian leaders and publically demand an end to incitement.

The glorification of terrorists, combined with unrelenting messages of hatred, are having deadly consequences. In 2013, there were 1,500 attacks against Israelis, 700 of which occurred after peace negotiations had begun in July. In recent months there has been a sharp increase in terrorist attacks, including the murder of five Israelis. Just last month, a Palestinian sniper murdered 20-year-old Saleh Abu Latif, an Israeli Bedouin civilian. Two days later, a bomb exploded on a civilian bus in a suburb just outside Tel Aviv. Had it not been for the quick thinking of the bus driver and an alert passenger, dozens of people would have been killed. A successful attack could have had disastrous consequences for the peace talks.

In the face of the violence and bloodshed, we have yet to hear President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority utter a single word denouncing those attacks. They even remained silent when it was revealed that one of the bus bombers was, surprisingly, a member of the Palestinian police force. While most police forces have officers that uproot terrorism, that police officer was busy planting bombs.

The Palestinian leadership has yet to learn that real peace requires real commitment. You cannot condemn terrorism to international media and congratulate terrorists on Palestinian media. You cannot victimize others and then insist that you are the victim. And you cannot use this forum to spread destructive messages and then expect constructive results.

How many times have we heard that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the major conflict in the Middle East, and that if we solve that conflict we will solve all of the conflicts in the Middle East? Some in this Chamber have even repeated that fiction. Really? The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the major conflict in the Middle East? Wow. People who say that need an eye doctor to help them to see clearly — beginning, maybe, with the ophthalmologist from Damascus, Bashar al-Assad, who is butchering his people every day. I am sure that is really connected to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Shiites fighting Sunnis fighting Alawites; extremist groups battling one another in Libya, Yemen and Tunisia; Al-Qaida forces overrunning major cities in Iraq — all of that is, of course, caused by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That is a revelation. The truth is that Israel is an island of stability in a sea of tyranny.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose legacy is being celebrated today, once described Israel as

"one of the great outposts of democracy in the world and a marvellous example of what can be done — how desert land can be transformed into an oasis of brotherhood and democracy. Peace for Israel means security, and that security must be a reality".

I think it should be obvious that the violence and instability afflicting the Middle East have nothing to do with Israel. We must solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on its own merits because it is important for us. Solving the conflict is not a prescription for curing the epidemic of violence plaguing the Middle East. Despite what is constantly heard, the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has never been about borders or settlements. The major obstacle to peace remains the refusal of the Palestinian leaders to accept the Jewish State in any border. We will never hear President Abbas or any Palestinian leader utter the phrase "two States for two peoples".

Let me understand that. The Palestinians call for an independent Palestinian State, but want millions of their people to flood the Jewish State. It will never happen. It is a complete non-starter. Many in this Chamber are very vocal in telling Israel what to do, but begin to stutter, mumble and fall silent when it comes to telling the Palestinians what they must do. Each and every one present here must tell the Palestinians that there will never be peace as long as they refuse to recognize Israel as the nation State of the Jewish people and insist on a so-called right of return.

Despite what many believe, Israel dedicates a great deal of its energy and resources to assisting the Palestinian people. Today, more than 100,000 Palestinians earn their living in Israel and their income constitutes more than 10 per cent of the Palestinian gross domestic product. Israel helps generate solutions to energize the Palestinian economy. We transfer millions of dollars in electricity, water and natural gas to power Palestinian homes, schools and hospitals. When a giant storm struck last month, Israel delivered humanitarian aid and water pumps and facilitated the passage of fuel and cooking gas to Palestinians in need.

Yet for every truckload in the name of coexistence, we seem to be feeding a Palestinian opposition that challenges our very existence. It is time for Palestinians leaders to lead; it is time for them to set a course towards coexistence; and it is time for them to build the Palestinian people up, rather than to tear Israel down.

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In the Gaza Strip, Iran backs the Hamas terrorist organization, which uses Palestinian schools, hospitals and mosques to launch rockets at Israeli citizens. We are barely three weeks into the new year, and Hamas has already launched 17 rockets at Israel, attacks that have closed schools and kept tens of thousands of children in southern Israel at home.

The international community has yet to find the time to utter even a single word of condemnation of those attacks, attacks that could derail the peace process. It has also yet to condemn Hamas for deliberately exploiting children. Schools in Gaza have become the training ground for the next generation of terrorists. Last week, Hamas graduated 13,000 students from paramilitary camps geared at training children to fight Israel.

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The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I will now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign and Expatriate Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

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We have no doubt that the continued absence of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace between the Arabs and Israel is the source of most tensions in the Middle East. Hence the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace would give rise to dynamics that would lead to the elimination of other tensions in the region. The key to a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace lies in the implementation of the two-State solution, with an independent and fully sovereign Palestinian State established within the 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living in peace and security and within secure borders with all countries in the region, including Israel. Such a solution should be in line with the relevant terms of reference adopted in this regard, including the numerous resolutions adopted by the Council, such as resolutions [242](#) (1967), [338](#) (1973), [1397](#) (2002) and [1515](#) (2003), in addition to the Arab Peace Initiative, whose importance has been repeatedly acknowledged by the Council. Based on that conviction, we support the ongoing, much-appreciated efforts led by the United States and undertaken personally by its Secretary of State, Mr. John Kerry, aimed at reaching a Palestinian-Israeli agreement that adopts the two-State solution and addresses all core issues, namely, refugees, Jerusalem, security, borders, water and settlements, in accordance with the aforementioned international terms of reference and resolutions of international legitimacy. We also deeply appreciate the efforts being made by Secretary Kerry to ensure that an agreement is reached by the bodies directly concerned and not by proxy. We have consistently stressed this issue.

In that context, I deem it imperative to stress that we in Jordan believe that the implementation of the two-State solution and the establishment of an independent and fully sovereign Palestinian State within the June 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, constitute a higher interest for Jordan. In fact, all of the core issues directly affect higher, factual Jordanian interests. We are the world's largest host of Palestinian refugees, and most of the refugees on our territory are Jordanian citizens in addition to their status as refugees. The protection and restoration of their legitimate rights, as recognized by the international terms of reference pertaining

to the peace process, lies at the heart of our responsibilities.

As a host country, we, in turn, have rights owing to the burdens we have shouldered. Regarding East Jerusalem, His Majesty King Abdullah II is ensuring the maintenance and protection of Christian and Islamic holy sites there, as part of the historical Hashemite custodianship of East Jerusalem. We will continue to play that role and to address all Israeli violations, which continue in defiance of several resolutions issued by the Security Council that stipulate that all Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem are null and void and should be halted immediately, and that the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem must end. Moreover, the world rejects Israel's settlement activity, which is illegal and continues even as we speak. In addition, the issues of security, borders and water directly affect the security of Jordan and its interests.

Accordingly — and although we are not a party to the negotiating process yet are a main party in the context of the process as a whole — let me stress that all agreements on the core issues should take into full account and, indeed, meet Jordan's vital and higher interests. Our unyielding commitment to achieving peace is based on our firm conviction that ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would lead to an end to the broader Arab-Israeli conflict, which would, in turn, result in the elimination of many other sources of tension in the region. I cannot fail to point to the tragic humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in the Gaza Strip, and urge the international community to shoulder its responsibilities in that regard.

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Mr. Asselborn (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): ... First, I would like to address the Middle East peace process. There is today a historic opportunity to build peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The announcement six months ago of the resumption of negotiations was an important first step. It is now our shared responsibility to support the efforts of the United States and the indefatigable commitment of Secretary of State John Kerry in order to help the parties take the difficult yet indispensable decisions to realize the vision of the long-term interests of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. To succeed, the negotiations process requires a favourable political environment and measures that strengthen mutual trust. Some steps still need to be taken. Unilateral acts that feed the logic of distrust must cease.

The year 2013 ended on a positive note, with Israel's freeing of a third group of 26 Palestinian prisoners. However, we remain deeply worried about the pursuit of the Israeli settlement policy, which is illegal under international law and represents a real threat to peace and goes against the principle of good faith negotiations. Nobody will believe that the efforts to achieve peace can succeed if settlement activities continue, if the Gaza blockade persists, if the separation wall keeps on grabbing Palestinian land, and if the destruction of Palestinian infrastructures intensifies.

We are also highly worried by the continuing rocket attacks launched by certain Palestinian factions from the Gaza strip against Israeli territory. Nothing justifies that blind and unacceptable recourse to violence, which clearly does not serve the Palestinian cause. We must end every kind of provocation and respect the borders of the Palestinian people and the security of the Israeli population; both are closely intertwined.

The American initiative is probably the last chance to end the occupation, implement the two-State solution based on the borders of 1967 and create a sovereign, independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with Israel, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States. We must take advantage of this opportunity, and Luxembourg will continue to engage with its European Union partners to contribute to the ongoing efforts, in close cooperation with key stakeholders, the Quartet and the countries of the region.

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Mr. Cho Tae-yul (Republic of Korea): ... It is an indisputable fact of life that the prompt and long-overdue settlement of the Middle East peace process constitutes a foundation for peace and stability in the entire Middle East region. In that regard, the Korean Government commends Israel and Palestine for remaining committed to peace negotiations, and notes with appreciation the continued efforts of the United States Government to make progress in the right direction. We believe that working towards an agreed framework that establishes concrete guidelines to deal with the core issues will lead to the much-needed breakthrough in the ongoing peace talks.

At the same time, we sincerely hope that the continued settlement activities and the demolition of Palestinian buildings will come to an end. We condemn the continued rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza, which threaten the fragile peace. It is also important that security in the West Bank improve in order to foster the necessary confidence and enable the negotiations to move forward.

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Ms. Power (United States of America): ... Yarmouk provides another tragic example. It has been under constant siege since July 2013. Recent reports of more than a dozen malnutrition-related deaths among children and other Palestinian residents are horrifying and should shock the conscience of all of us. We received reports from the United Nations in recent days that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East was finally able to carry in a small amount of food parcels — 200 parcels, which will feed 1,000 people for one month. There are 18,000 people in Yarmouk who are under siege, lacking food and medicine. It is devastating to imagine how starving people will divide up the food parcels. Humanitarian providers who managed to deliver those food parcels literally had to dodge sniper fire.

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Turning to the subject of Middle East peace, the United States is continuing its efforts to assist the Israelis and Palestinians in reaching a final status agreement that recognizes two States for two peoples, living side by side in peace and security. Secretary of State Kerry returned to the region earlier this month in support of a proposed framework that addresses all core issues. As the parties consider the difficult decisions ahead, the United States remains convinced that the benefits of peace for both sides can best be achieved through the kind of process in which we are presently engaged. Accordingly, the United States reiterates its view that all parties should refrain from actions that might undermine the atmosphere required for ongoing negotiations. Steps that diminish trust, such as continued settlement activity, only feed scepticism on both sides.

Further, we are deeply troubled by the escalation of violence leading to civilian casualties. We condemn rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel and the attempt to kill civilians by placing a bomb on a public bus in Tel Aviv. We are also seriously concerned about the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, and urge all parties to cooperate in expanding access for people, goods and humanitarian supplies.

The consistent support of peace efforts by key partners is essential. We particularly welcome the European Union's generous pledge last month to provide unprecedented political and economic support for Israel and the Palestinians in the context of a final status peace agreement. We are gratified as well by the decision of the League of Arab States, whose representatives met with Secretary Kerry in Paris on 12 January, to reaffirm its commitment to those negotiations.

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Mr. Quinlan (Australia): ... We all know that 2014 will be a critical year — maybe a decisive year — for the Middle East peace process. The final status negotiations under way offer the best chance for peace in the region, and Australia of course fully supports those negotiations towards a just and lasting two-State solution, with Israelis and Palestinians living side by side in peace and security within internationally recognized borders. We appreciate United States Secretary of State Kerry's perseverance and the effective engagement of all parties in the negotiations. Great courage and statesmanship will be required in equal measure to achieve peace, and we offer our full support to Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas at this critical juncture in the negotiations. For this best chance to succeed, we call on both parties to avoid any provocative actions that would undermine confidence in the talks. Australia itself stands ready to assist in any way it can to support the negotiations.

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Mr. Estremera (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): ... Argentina views with cautious optimism the fact that the Palestinians and Israelis are continuing to participate in the negotiations on the peace process. However, progress is slow and extremely difficult. We believe that, in order to make greater progress, it is necessary to move forward on the basis of the long and broadly agreed principles, without questioning the parameters of the two-State solution enshrined in international law and supported by the vast majority of the international community. Two States on the basis of the 1967 borders, with the agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the future capital of the two States, the necessary security arrangements and a fair solution to the refugee issue should be the foundation for any negotiation.

Furthermore, although gestures have been made, such as the release of Palestinian prisoners prior to the Oslo Agreement, there continue to be other developments that are completely incompatible with the peace process, exacerbate the lack of trust and do not help towards creating favourable conditions for dialogue. Those include, in particular, the recent announcements of illegal settlements on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, the approval by the Ministerial Committee for Legislative Affairs of the State of Israel of a bill for the annexation of the Jordan Valley, the marked increase in attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and the missile launches from the Gaza Strip and the resulting military responses, as well as the continual rhetoric of confrontation. We call on the parties to renew their commitment to the peace process and to abstain from all action that may undermine efforts to move forward in the pursuit of a lasting peace.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the coming months will be decisive in ending an occupation that has lasted more than half a century and violates international law. It also is morally reprehensible, politically unacceptable and strategically unviable.

Argentina wholeheartedly believes in the importance of the international community's meaningful assistance in the negotiations. The lack of progress or a new failure in that effort might seriously harm the two-State solution, with serious consequences. In that connection, we reiterate our belief that the Security Council must pronounce itself on the situations I have mentioned, take concrete steps to complement the negotiations and show the way towards a two-State solution — for example, by accepting Palestine's request to become a State Member of the United Nations, as a follow up to General Assembly [resolution 67/19](#). It is for the Council, in compliance with its obligations, to send out clear messages, and not to remain indifferent in the face of actions that undermine regional and international efforts to provide a solution to the conflict.

Ms. Murnokaitė (Lithuania): ... Let me now turn to the Middle East peace process.

Lithuania strongly supports the current United States-backed direct peace negotiations and commends the personal involvement and commitment of Secretary of State John Kerry. We applaud the political courage and statesmanship shown by both Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas. That is a unique opportunity for a breakthrough in the peace process, which could lead to a viable two-State solution and enable Israel and Palestine to live side-by-side in peace and security. It is crucial, therefore, that both parties — Israel and Palestine — refrain from any unilateral actions that could undermine the negotiations. In that context, new settlement announcements by Israel could potentially be very damaging and could derail the process. Rocket attacks from Gaza to Israel and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza are both a great concern and do they not contribute to the peace process. We underline the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative in achieving peace in the Middle East. All the relevant parties should do everything possible to ensure that those negotiations succeed. Together with our European Union partners, we look forward to working with everyone to achieve a lasting success.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): ... Two decades after the signing of the Oslo Accords between the State of Israel and the then Palestine Liberation Organization, the transitional provisions have given way to a status quo that unfortunately continues to this day. Thus, after 20 years of progress and setbacks in the negotiations, there is still no sign of the desired two-State solution reflecting the principles established in the pertinent United Nations resolutions to allow the creation of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel, within secure and internally recognized borders. The peoples of Israel and Palestine and their future generations deserve no less.

Chile recognized the State of Palestine in 2011. In that same year, it supported Palestine's full membership in UNESCO. Subsequently, in 2012, we were a sponsor of General Assembly [resolution 67/19](#), which accorded Palestine the status of a non-member Observer State at the United Nations. We view that policy as a contribution to the peace, as it strengthens the capacities of the Palestinian State.

Owing to the foregoing, Chile welcomes the fact that the parties resumed direct negotiations under United States auspices last August. In particular, we welcome the personal commitment shown by Secretary of State John Kerry, who has visited the region on numerous occasions. In order for the negotiations to move forward, the parties must strengthen dialogue and build trust. That requires ongoing actions and the avoidance of unilateral acts that undermine or destroy confidence. The release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners is pointless if, at the same time, Israel announces the construction of thousands of homes in the settlements located in Palestinian territory, in contravention of international law.

It is also necessary to more strongly condemn the attacks affecting the civilian population of Israel, and measures must be taken to avoid provocative acts and incitement. I take this opportunity to reiterate my country's condemnation of all terrorist acts, in whatever form and whatever their motivation. Terrorism has no place in the world.

Chile supports the Palestinian reconciliation process between Fatah and Hamas, agreed in Doha and Cairo in 2012. We believe that the Islamic Resistance Movement must renounce the use of arms and recognize Israel's right to exist. Chile will continue to encourage the constructive, consistent commitment of Palestine and Israel to the current peace negotiations aimed at achieving a just and lasting peace in accordance with international law. It is our hope that that will be possible.

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Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): ... The General Assembly has designated the year 2014 the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Russian Federation shares the Secretary-General's belief that the year represents an important stage in achieving the two-State solution and stands ready to make every effort to ensure that it becomes a reality. However, as in any quarrel, the resolution of this out-dated dispute must be worked out by the conflicting parties. We are carefully following the Palestinian-Israeli settlement process, including attempts — first and foremost by the United States of America — to bring the parties towards an agreed framework to define the future principles of the final status solution.

Russia is in favour of a comprehensive, equitable, long-term settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, based on the well-known international framework of the establishment of an integral, independent Palestinian State within internationally recognized borders, existing in peace and security with all of its neighbours. Naturally, any solution must be acceptable to both sides; imposed or inequitable solutions will not last long. We continue to actively participate in negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis on a bilateral or multilateral basis and, especially, within the framework of the international mediators of the Middle East Quartet. In that context, we note the scaling-up of efforts at the level of Special Representative, in which context the most recent meeting took place in Paris on 12 January. We believe that that meeting was most useful. It is our continuing belief that the Quartet's efforts should also draw upon the work of the League of Arab States. In our contacts with Palestinians and Israelis, we continue to urge both sides towards substantive negotiations on all final status issues. In two days, my country will welcome the President of Palestine, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, to Moscow.

We are extremely concerned regarding the situation on the ground. Settlement construction continues, effectively annulling even small good-will gestures, such as the freeing of Palestinian detainees who had been in Israeli prisons since the signing of the Oslo accords. We are also concerned about continuing raids by the Israeli military in the West Bank, which have resulted in the killing and wounding of many Palestinians, as well as rampant settler violence.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the number of Palestinians evicted from homes that were demolished by Israel in 2013 totalled 1,100, representing a 25 per cent increase over the previous year. We also adamantly condemn the launching of rockets against Israeli territory, whatever justification might be presented. Security breaches along the Gaza Strip must cease. All of these aggravating incidents are far from conducive to the holding of negotiations.

The situation in the Gaza Strip is not improving; on the contrary, the isolation of Gaza from the rest of the world is growing, which only exacerbates the negative social, economic and humanitarian consequences. The problem of Gaza should be resolved comprehensively, including through the full lifting of the Israeli blockade and the restoration of a united administration in the Palestinian territories. We remain convinced that bridging the existing Palestinian split on the basis of the Palestinian Authority's platform and the Arab Peace Initiative would be in line with the aspirations for peace for Israel and Palestine. Achieving a comprehensive Palestinian-Israeli solution — and, even less likely, consolidating its results — will clearly be impossible without Palestinian unity.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the representative of the State of Israel and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine for their statements.

I shall touch on several points — the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the situation in Syria — before saying a few words about Lebanon.

In the Middle East, everything must be done to ensure that the efforts of the United States Secretary of State are crowned with success. France lends its full support to the efforts of the United States, particularly those of the Secretary of State, to drive forward the negotiations that are under way. The parameters for a solution are well known and have been set forth in several Security Council resolutions. The eventual acceptance by the parties of an initiative by the United States on a framework for the negotiations, broadly outlining a resolution to the conflict, could constitute significant progress towards a definitive peace agreement. Twenty years after Oslo, any interim formula must be discarded.

In order to ensure progress in the current efforts, the parties must refrain from any gesture likely to undermine the process, particularly as far as settlements are concerned. Along with its European partners, France has condemned the publication of a call for proposals by the Israeli authorities, on 10 January, to build more than 1,800 homes in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, following the approval given on 5 January to build new homes in the settlements of Ofra and Kamei Shomron in the West Bank. The French President called on the Israeli authorities to totally and finally halt the settlements when he visited Israel and Palestine from 17 to 19 November 2013.

In its [conclusions of 16 December](#), the European Union presented the details of the unprecedented special privilege partnerships that would be offered to the parties in the event of a definitive agreement, which is of course the goal of the current efforts. That partnership would cover economic, political, security and social aspects, thereby allowing for stronger cooperation between the European Union and the two States, bolstering and helping with the construction of the Palestinian State and promoting trade and economic and human development in the region.

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Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): ... Our intervention will focus on three aspects: peace between Israel and Palestine; Syria; and Lebanon. We believe, first, that the immediate attainment of peace between Israel and Palestine is central to the normalization of the situation in the Middle East and also of vital importance to global peace and security.

I take this opportunity to reiterate Nigeria's support for a two-State solution that would allow Israel and Palestine to live together side by side in peace and security. Peace between Israel and Palestine, we believe, will not only have a beneficial impact on both countries, but also constitute the key to peace in the Middle East as a region.

On 29 July 2013, direct final-status talks between Israel and Palestine resumed after a long hiatus. We commend the efforts of the United States Government and Secretary of State John Kerry's personal commitment in restarting the talks. The international community can lend momentum to this effort by supporting the current peace process.

We note that a period of nine months was decided upon within which a comprehensive settlement of all outstanding issues would be reached. We are now in the sixth month, and we urge all parties to make greater strides in their efforts towards the attainment of peace.

The United State-brokered peace talks are now at a critical stage. The recent announcement of the Israeli Government's plan to build 1,400 housing units in Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank may not be helpful to the peace process. We urge Israel to reconsider this plan, which is capable of derailing the peace talks.

Nigeria is not unmindful of the need to guarantee Israel's security and continued existence as a sovereign State. It is for this reason that we support the comprehensive discussion of all final-status issues so as to leave no room for continuation of the conflict, which has lasted far too long for any side's comfort or interest. We encourage both sides to carefully examine the United States plan for security arrangements, with a view to moving forward towards the adoption of an accord that would address those proposals.

We also note that the members of the Quartet met at the highest level on 27 September 2013 and reaffirmed their determination to lend effective support to both parties. We wish to stress, however, that efforts to strengthen the Palestinian economy and build Palestinian institutions should be seen as supportive of the peace process and not necessarily as supplanting it. We believe that priority must be given to the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State.

We note and welcome the meeting held in Amman between King Abdullah II and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last Thursday, 16 January, to discuss the peace process and seek ways to move it forward. We encourage such exchanges as confidence-building measures and transparent attempts in the search for lasting peace in the Middle East.

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Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): Mr. President, I welcome your Foreign Minister's presence in the Security Council today, and I should like also to thank the Secretary-General for his statement and the representatives of Palestine and Israel for their contributions to this debate.

As we enter 2014, we are at a moment of opportunity for the Middle East peace process. Entering back into direct negotiations last year was a bold step forward. It was a welcome move towards peace in a troubled area. It is the responsibility of all of us here to support the parties, led by the United States, to capitalize on this opportunity.

My Government continues to put its full support behind Secretary Kerry and his team, and we urge the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to continue their admirable focus and commitment.

This year started on a positive note, with the implementation of Israel's brave decision to release the third tranche of Palestinian prisoners. The United Kingdom firmly believes that such steps, despite their difficulty, are important to achieving a lasting peace and security.

However, we are very concerned by Israel's decision to announce further settlement-building in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. My Government condemns these announcements and considers such actions as a serious threat to peace. We urge Israel to avoid any further illegal settlement activity and to reverse the advancement of plans. The United Kingdom has also been clear that for this process to be a success, the people on the ground, both Israelis and Palestinians, need to see the real and tangible benefits of peace. We therefore remain deeply concerned about the 663 Palestinian-owned homes and livelihood structures demolished in Area C and East Jerusalem in 2013. Demolitions and evictions are harmful to the peace process and in all but the most limited circumstances are contrary to international humanitarian law.

Reports of price tag attacks, including on a mosque in Deir Istiya village on 15 January, are also of serious concern. We condemn such acts and urge the Israeli authorities to bring those responsible to justice. We are also concerned about rocket fire from the Gaza Strip into Israel and, in particular, condemn the rockets fired at Ashkelon on 16 January in violation of international law. All parties must respect the 12 November ceasefire agreement in full. The people of Gaza and Israel will only lose from further violence.

There will be difficult decisions in the months ahead, but we urge all those involved to keep their shared goal in mind — a negotiated two-State solution leading to a sovereign, viable and contiguous Palestinian State living in peace and security alongside a safe and secure Israel. The United Kingdom stands ready to do its part. That is why we strongly back the European Union's readiness to offer an unprecedented package of political, economic and security support to both parties in the event that a final status deal is reached.

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Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, we warmly welcome you to the Security Council and congratulate you on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Council.

I would like first of all to commend the Council for its initiative to include the situation in the Middle East on its agenda and for the constant interest it has shown in that question. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and the representative of Israel and observer of the State of Palestine for their statements. I would also like to welcome all delegations that have joined the list to speak in the Council today.

When talking about the situation in the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict comes first to mind despite the seriousness of the Syrian crisis and its impact on its neighbouring countries such as Lebanon. Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — which, given its enduring nature, complexity and regional implications, remains a major concern of the international community — we, like many others, believe that in the absence of a final, just and equitable solution that will guarantee security for Israel and an independent and viable State for the Palestinians,

it would be difficult to claim that an effective and lasting peace has been achieved in the Middle East. In that regard, legal frameworks and possible potential solutions to conflicts having disastrous consequences that have lasted for far too long are already contained in the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 and existing agreements between the two parties.

Therefore, Palestinians and Israelis must make greater efforts to continue negotiations to reach a comprehensive resolution of all issues inherent in final status that will put an end to the occupation and conflict. These include the issues of territory, security, the status of Jerusalem, refugees, settlements and water, all of which should be based on the principle of two States living side by side, where each party recognizes the legitimate right of the other to live in peace and security. In our humble opinion, only a negotiated, just and lasting settlement is likely to enable the Palestinian people to regain their basic rights and the Israeli people to live in peace and security within the borders of 1967.

The option for peace is naturally incompatible with the continued colonization of the occupied territories, the continued blockade of Gaza, air strikes on civilians and rocket attacks against innocent Israeli citizens. Those actions not only undermine the peace process but also undermine the efforts of the international community, which is working towards the two-State solution.

For us, it is clear that the time has come to recognize a State of Palestine alongside the State of Israel. We must have the courage to take that step as it is essential to advancing peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. In that regard, we welcome the General Assembly decision in [resolution 67/19](#) to grant to Palestine non-member observer State status in the Organization and UNESCO's decision to admit Palestine as a member. In any event, we welcome and encourage the efforts of the international community in general, and of the United States of America, in particular, to revive direct negotiations between the two parties to the conflict. Those efforts, however laudable, are insufficient in and of themselves; both parties must still demonstrate a genuine political will to overcome the current impasse so that a new impetus can be given to negotiations.

We therefore urgently call on the entire international community, including the United Nations, the European Union, the League of Arab States, as well as States with influence on both parties, to further encourage the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to take steps to build mutual trust in order to resume direct negotiations.

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Mr. Nibishaka (Rwanda): Allow me to express my gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, as well as on the peace prospects in the region.

Rwanda wishes to express its appreciation to all stakeholders involved in the Middle East peace process, particularly the United States Government through Secretary of State John Kerry. We commend his tireless efforts in bringing both sides to direct negotiations, and we hope that the parties will seize this opportunity to chart the way forward towards a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The current negotiations are at a critical moment that requires both sides to demonstrate not only trust, decency and sincerity, but also readiness to sacrifice some of their important positions so as to reach a genuine peace agreement.

Rwanda is confident that the two parties can reach a two-State solution for both peoples, with a viable independent State of Palestine living side by side in peace with a secure Israel. In order to reach that agreement, there must be an intentional show of good will and confidence-building between Israel and the Palestinian people, such as refraining from cross-border attacks and from all provocations, including negative media propaganda and all forms of incitement to violence that would jeopardize the ongoing negotiations.

In that regard, we commend the Israeli Government for continuing to honour its commitment by releasing the third batch of 26 Palestinian prisoners, and we welcome the recent measure undertaken by the Palestinian Authority and facilitated by the Government of Israel to respond to the direct impact of the recent storm, which included permitting the delivery of water pumps, humanitarian assistance and 1.2 millions litres of industrial fuel to the Gaza power plant, as part of the Qatari donation. However, my delegation strongly condemns the continued rocket attacks into southern Israel from Gaza, which remain a significant concern of ongoing negotiations. We call on all parties concerned in Gaza to participate in the peace process, which is the only viable channel to the stability of the region. Acts of that kind threaten to worsen the already fragile situation on the ground and could derail the ongoing negotiations.

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Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): ... The question of Palestine has always been a core issue of the situation in the Middle East. It has remained unresolved for a long time, which has not only brought severe suffering to the Palestinian people but also made it impossible to achieve peace between Palestine and Israel, much less peace and stability in the Middle East. Establishing an independent State of Palestine and the peaceful coexistence of Palestine and Israel are the only way forward and also an important guarantee for achieving long-term peace and stability in the Middle East.

China has always maintained that the parties concerned should adhere to the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map for peace in the Middle East, and, on this basis and through political negotiations, establish an independent State of Palestine, with full sovereignty based on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

China supports the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli peace talks, which are at a critical juncture. If they do not forge ahead, they will suffer a setback. Palestine and Israel should recognize each other's right to exist and accommodate the other's reasonable concerns. This is indispensable for the progress of any negotiations. We sincerely hope that Palestine and Israel will seize this opportunity, seek common ground and demonstrate good will so as to promptly find a definitive solution and promote early substantive progress in the peace talks.

China is opposed to Israeli settlement activities in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and other occupied Palestinian territories. In the current circumstances, an end to settlement activities and violence against innocent civilians, as well as the full lifting of the blockade against the Gaza Strip, are of critical importance to maintaining an environment conducive to the peace talks.

The General Assembly has designated 2014 the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. With the ongoing turbulence in the Middle East, the international community should proceed on the basis of the overall goal of maintaining peace and stability in the Middle East, strengthen the sense of urgency in seeking a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli question, and enhance efforts to encourage the relevant parties to achieve peace through talks. China hopes that the Quartet will take concrete measures in that regard. We support the Security Council in playing a greater role in finding a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli question.

China has always attached great importance to the question of the Middle East and is committed to promoting the peace process. In May 2013, for the first time ever, China received simultaneous visits from Palestinian and Israeli leaders. President Xi Jinping put forward a four-point proposal for a solution to the Palestinian question, fully demonstrating the Chinese Government's sincerity and positive attitude in promoting peace in the Middle East. In December 2013, Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs Wang Yi visited Palestine and Israel and further encouraged both parties to achieve peace through talks. China will continue to follow the four-point proposal put forward by President Xi Jinping, work hard to promote peace talks between Palestinians and Israelis, and play a greater role so as to make it due contribution to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): There are a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.20 p.m.

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