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VIABILITY OF TWO-STATE SOLUTION AT RISK WITHOUT CREDIBLE WAY OUT OF DEADLOCK

IN ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE PROCESS, SECURITY COUNCIL TOLD

State-building Efforts Also in Jeopardy, Top Official Warns As Delegates Consider Bid for Palestine Statehood, United Nations Membership

Without a credible path out of the profound, persistent deadlock in the Middle East peace process, coupled with far-reaching steps on the ground, the viability of the two-State solution and the Palestinian Authority's state-building agenda was in jeopardy, the Secretary-General's Personal Representative warned today.

"I cannot but describe the situation where Palestinian state-building has matured in the West Bank, but the political track has failed to converge, as dramatic," said Robert Serry, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative for the Secretary-General, as he briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. "Progress towards peace is more urgent than ever."

He said that, while the Palestinian Authority had made real security and economic gains in the West Bank, where it was ready to assume the responsibilities of statehood in the near future, the Quartet's 11 July meeting in Washington had not resulted in a statement on how to translate the parameters on borders and security, as presented in May by United States President Barack Obama, into an internationally agreed framework for the parties to resume direct negotiations.

Mr. Serry called on the international community to shape a legitimate, balanced way forward to help Israelis and Palestinians overcome their differences and return to the talks. Moreover, Israel must take steps to curb the occupation and allow for the expansion of Palestinian urban centres to accommodate population growth and industrial activity. Bold measures to that end had been lacking recently and the implementation of those announced, including the February 2011 package agreed with Quartet Representative Tony Blair, had been slow, he added.

Expressing worries over the Palestinian Authority's financial woes precisely at a time when its state-building plan was meant to reach fruition, he urged donors to ensure that the Authority could pay salaries and finance measures for security. He also cautioned that the longer implementation of the May intra-Palestinian reconciliation accord remained stalled, the more developments on the ground would push the West Bank and Gaza further apart, with grave consequences for a viable prospective Palestinian State.

In the ensuing day-long debate, the Permanent Observer for Palestine said the coming months would be critical, and September remained the target for effecting a change that could create the momentum necessary to achieve a breakthrough. Forthcoming decisions would be critical to reviving the peace process; the relevant United Nations resolutions; the Madrid principles, including land-for-peace; the Arab Peace Initiative; and the Quartet's "Road Map".

In August, the Palestinian Authority would finish implementing its two-year state-building programme, he said, stressing: "We have fulfilled our responsibilities and are ready to govern ourselves; the only remaining obstacle is Israel's 44-year military occupation." That illegal occupation had continued relentlessly, in breach of international law, he noted, recalling that, last month alone, Israeli settlers, clearly emboldened by the extremist tendencies of their Government, had conducted more than 139 terror attacks against Palestinian civilians. The diplomatic Quartet's failure to adopt clear, fair parameters for the resumption of credible negotiations was a missed opportunity and a serious setback, he said, blaming that failure on Israel's refusal to accept the legitimate and internationally supported basis for talks.

Israel's representative retorted that his Prime Minister had stated openly and repeatedly that he would accept a Palestinian State, alongside a Jewish State, but the Palestinian leadership had not done the same. Moreover, despite the Palestinian Authority's economic gains in the last two years, it had

yet to create a functioning Palestinian State that could live in peace with its neighbours. The most basic conditions for statehood did not exist, he said, pointing out that the Palestinian Authority lacked effective control over its territory, while the Hamas terrorist organization maintained de facto control in Gaza, he said.

There was much uncertainty about the future Palestinian Government, its acceptance of the Quartet conditions, the peace process and control over its security forces, he continued. It would take at least until after the 2011 Palestinian elections before it was clear what Palestinian unity really meant, he said. "Now is the time for the international community to tell the Palestinian leadership what it refuses to tell its own people: there are no shortcuts to statehood." Existing attempts to find a framework for re-launching the peace process must be consistent, taking into consideration the vital interests of both sides, he said, emphasizing that security and recognition of Israel as a Jewish State were "absolutely essential" to ensuring its future.

Lebanon's representative said, however, that Israel was to blame for the stalled negotiations because it had failed last September to renew the freeze on its settlement activity, prompting the Palestinian side to seek recognition of their statehood and United Nations membership as an alternative. While Arab leaders had welcomed the lines drawn by President Obama as constructive elements of the long-awaited Quartet parameters for negotiations, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel had responded with his "resounding four nos" — no freeze on settlements, no return to the 1967 borders, no negotiations over Jerusalem's future status, and no right of return for Palestinian refugees. Palestine already met all four criteria for statehood, but remained occupied, he noted. "It is our duty to help Palestine put an end to occupation and achieve independence."

Egypt's representative, speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, strongly condemned the law passed by Israel's Knesset earlier this month, which penalized people or organizations calling for a boycott of Israeli settlements, deemed illegal under international law. Recent declarations on establishing thousands more settlement units affirmed Israel's bad intentions and belied its Government's alleged commitment to the peace process and a two-State solution.

Reiterating the Movement's call for the Council to demand that the occupying Power abide by its legal obligations, he stressed the need to compel Israel to lift fully its illegal blockade of Gaza, while condemning the Israeli military's 19 July seizure of the French civilian vessel *El Karama* en route to Gaza, where it had intended to provide much-needed support to the blockaded population. Moreover, he reaffirmed that all Israeli measures to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan were null, void and without legal effect, while condemning in the strongest terms the killing of unarmed civilian protestors on 15 May and 5 June, and calling for those responsible to be brought to justice.

For his part, Syria's representative said that some Council members had exaggerated recent internal events in his country, and were trying to engage the Council in events beyond its purview. He defended his Government, saying that President Bashar al-Assad had declared a comprehensive reform programme to enhance democracy and pluralism and expand citizen participation in the political and economic process. Instead of ignoring Syria's serious reform efforts and relying on statements that were fabricated or based on false information, Council members should have condemned Israel's firing upon peaceful Palestinian demonstrators in May and June.

Council President Werner Hoyer, Minister of State at Germany's Federal Foreign Office, also addressed the meeting, as did representatives of the United States, Nigeria, China, South Africa, France, Gabon, Portugal, Brazil, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, India, Colombia, Cuba, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, Uganda, Iceland, Kuwait (on behalf of the Arab Group), Nicaragua, Pakistan, Venezuela, Republic of Korea, Bangladesh, Morocco, Kazakhstan (on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation) and Iran.

Other speakers addressing the Council today were the Acting Head of the Delegation of the European Union and the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

The meeting began at 10:06 a.m. and suspended at 1:17 p.m. Resuming at 3:07 p.m., it ended at 5:03 p.m.

Background

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

Briefing

ROBERT SERRY, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative for the Secretary-General, said the process was in a "profound and persistent deadlock", marked by differences and lack of trust between the parties. The Quartet had engaged throughout the year to promote meaningful negotiations. On 11 July, the Secretary-General had joined Quartet partners in Washington in an attempt to translate the 19 May speech by President Barack Obama of the United States, which laid out parameters on borders and security, into an internationally agreed framework for the parties to resume negotiations. The Secretary-General appreciated the "substantive discussion", he said, adding that the Quartet had not issued a statement to help chart the way forward, though its efforts continued.

Noting that both President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel continued to reiterate their desire to negotiate, he pointed out that, without a framework for meaningful talks, and in view of continuing Israeli settlement activity, the Palestinians were actively exploring approaching the United Nations. President Abbas said he remained committed to negotiations and that the Organization's efforts would help preserve the two-State solution. Israel, however, opposed that course of action. The Palestinians were consulting closely with the Arab League, and both parties were intensively engaging members of the international community. "We hope that the international community can be united in fora of collective decision-making — now, in September and after September, too — and shape a legitimate and balanced way forward that helps the parties overcome their differences and ultimately return to negotiations," Mr. Serry said, adding that the United Nations would continue to work with Quartet partners to seek urgent action in that regard.

"We must not lose sight of what is at stake," he emphasized, citing the unprecedented achievements of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, where it had reached, in key areas, a level of institutional performance sufficient for a functioning State and was ready to assume the responsibilities of statehood in the near future. Real security and economic gains had been made. But more political and physical space was needed to fulfil the agenda, he noted. "This requires Israeli steps to roll back measures of occupation, and continuous donor support." The United Nations had repeatedly called on Israel to allow the expansion of Palestinian urban centres to accommodate population growth and industrial activity, he said. Bold measures to that end had been lacking recently and the implementation of those announced, including the February 2011 package agreed with Quartet Representative Tony Blair, had been slow.

"Indeed, we see many negative actions in Area C," he said. "Demolitions of Palestinian structures have surged." This year, 700 people had been displaced following the demolition of 370 structures — the highest number since 2006, he noted, adding that water and sanitation systems had been specially targeted. Settlement activity continued in many of the most sensitive areas of East Jerusalem and Area C, and in the past month, 40 units had been approved in Kamei Shomron in the northern West Bank. "I am particularly concerned that, for the first time in several years, on 26 June 2011,

Israel confiscated 19 hectares of private Palestinian land in the village of Karyut, also in the northern West Bank," he said. An outpost, illegal even under Israeli law, was located on that land, a departure from Israeli public undertakings not to build new settlements or set aside land for new ones. The seizure set a worrying precedent for the further legalization of outposts which, under the Road Map, should be removed, he said, emphasizing that settlements were illegal under international law and prejudiced final-status discussions. They must cease.

Mr. Serry went on to note growing calls by civil society groups and political figures for intensified peaceful protests against the status quo, and for action towards the realization of the Palestinian right to self-determination. Meanwhile, precisely at the time when the state-building plan was meant to reach fruition, the Palestinian Authority faced setbacks due to its fiscal position and shortages in donor funding, which had forced it to cut back on security expenditures and to pay only half-salaries in June. "I urge donors to ensure that the Palestinian Authority can pay salaries and meet its other financial obligations, including members of the Arab League, who are meeting on this issue today in Cairo," he said. "I urge Israel to do more to empower its moderate, committed and peaceful Palestinian partner."

He expressed concern that the calm between Israel and Gaza, restored in early April, had been challenged by the firing of some 18 rockets into Israeli territory since 23 June. During the same period, Israel conducted three incursions and 16 air strikes, killing two Palestinian militants and one civilian, while injuring eight militants and injuring 14 civilians. On the economic front, a nascent recovery was under way in Gaza, where real gross domestic product (GDP) had reached 15.1 per cent in 2010 and 17.9 per cent in the first quarter of 2011. However, that growth was measures from a very low base and driven in part by public expenditure, donor aid, tunnel traffic, increased imports from Israel and limited exports. Unemployment in Gaza was still very high at 31 per cent, and 54 per cent of households remained food-insecure, with 38 per cent of people living in poverty.

The Rafah crossing for people moving from Gaza into Egypt now operated six days a week, he said, urging Israel to allow the entry of aggregate, iron bars and cement for use by the enclave's private sector, and to further enable exports to foreign countries and the West Bank. Much freer movement of people to and from the Strip was vital to enabling Gazans to enjoy basic rights, normal interaction with the outside world, and human dignity, he stressed, calling for the full reopening of all legitimate crossings, while urging continued vigilance to combat the smuggling of weapons into the territory. He went on to note that most vessels involved in the recent flotilla had not received authorization from the maritime authorities of countries in the region to sail for Gaza. On 19 July, Israeli naval forces had intercepted a small boat carrying some 10 activists intending to set sail, directing it to the Israeli port of Ashdod. Unnecessary confrontation at sea had been avoided, as urged by the Quartet.

Expressing concern over the detonation of a bomb near a compound of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East in Gaza on 25 June, he said it had caused material damage to the perimeter wall, and underscored the challenging security environment facing the Organization in the Strip. He added that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) faced an unprecedented funding shortfall of \$61.4 million for core programmes and operations, as well as for emergency food and employment. "I urge donors to provide decisive and speedy support to UNRWA, without which assistance to Gazans could be significantly curtailed come October," he warned.

Pointing out that implementation of the May intra-Palestinian reconciliation accord was stalled, he cautioned that the longer reconciliation was delayed, the more developments on the ground would push the West Bank and Gaza further apart, with grave consequences for prospects for a viable Palestinian State. "Progress towards peace is more urgent than ever," he emphasized. "I cannot but describe the situation where Palestinian state-building has matured in the West Bank, but the political track has failed to converge, as dramatic." He urged both sides to find a way forward, saying that without a credible political path, accompanied by more far-reaching steps on the ground, the viability of the Palestinian Authority and its state-building agenda, and of the two-State solution itself, could not be taken for granted.

Statements

RIYAD MANSOUR, Observer for Palestine, said the Council's debate was taking place "at a moment requiring serious reflection and candid deliberation" on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and international efforts to resolve it, as well as the wider Arab-Israeli conflict. "We are all aware that the answers lie in the legal principles and just positions at the core of relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions," he said, adding that only the political will to uphold international law and implement those resolutions was missing. While numerous good-faith regional and international efforts had been exerted, they had failed due to Israel's relentless violations of the law, and the failure to hold that country accountable for its illegal actions and compel it to change course in such a way as to make possible the realization of a two-State solution.

He went on to note that his delegation had continually informed the Council of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in a series of letters highlighting illegal Israeli activities "that have not ceased for even a single moment". Some of those actions included its illegal settlement campaign, in breach of its obligations under international law; last month's more than 139 terror attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians, clearly emboldened by the extremist tendencies of their Government; collective punishment of the population in the Gaza Strip, under illegal blockade, the obstruction of international reconstruction efforts and any semblance of normal life; military air strikes against civilian neighbourhoods in Gaza; and the use of excessive force against Palestinians and others, including Israelis, peacefully demonstrating against the wall and settlements.

"All of these illegal actions and provocations are indicative of the Israeli Government's extremely right-wing and anti-peace agenda," he declared, adding that Israel was obstructing peace in both word and deed, sabotaging the small remaining opportunity to achieve a two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. "The facts must be faced head-on, and all empty excuses and illogical pretexts for such illegal actions must be rejected," he stressed. "The fragility of the situation and the rapid rise of tensions require immediate redress by the Council, in line with its Charter duty." Continuing to appease Israel's expansionist agenda risked further harming prospects for peace and security, with serious short- and long-term consequences, he warned.

"We are determined to overcome the obstacles in the way of peace," he continued, emphasizing the need for both an honest assessment of the situation and a determination of the appropriate course of collective action to deal with the obstacles and "truly advance just and lasting peace, security and coexistence". In that regard, the failure of the diplomatic Quartet to adopt clear and fair parameters for resuming credible negotiations was a missed opportunity and a serious setback for its efforts to shepherd the peace process towards the objective of ending the Israeli occupation, and the conclusion of a peace treaty that would end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in all aspects.

"This failure was caused by Israel, which refused to accept the legitimate and internationally supported basis for negotiations," he said, adding that the Palestinian side continued to abide by its commitments and was ready to resume serious talks within a limited time frame based on clear parameters, including the understanding that the pre-June 1967 borders must be the foundation from which negotiations would proceed. Israel, however, continued "arrogantly and dangerously" to reject that basis, making the revival of negotiations impossible at the present. "The aim is not to place blame, but it is necessary to confront the truth in order to act collectively to overcome impediments to achieving a peaceful solution," he said, cautioning that if the international community continued to absolve Israel's "unilateral and illegal behaviour", it would have no incentive to change its behaviour. "If we are serious about opening the doors of the two-State solution, then Israel must be held fully responsible for its actions," he declared.

"The decisions that must be made at this moment are critical to reviving the peace process, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid

principles, including land-for-peace, the Arab Peace Initiative, and the Road Map,” he said. Any steps taken by the Palestinian leadership would be transparent and consistent with the goals of the peace process. The coming months would be critical, and September remained the target for effecting a change that could create the positive dynamics and momentum necessary to achieve a breakthrough, he said. In August, the Palestinian Authority would complete the implementation of the two-year state-building programme launched by Prime Minister Fayyad, he said, adding: “We have fulfilled our responsibilities and are ready to govern ourselves; the only remaining obstacle is Israel’s 44-year military occupation.”

Yet, the Palestinian people had legitimate hopes and demands, he said. “A new process has been set in motion, a process awakened by the failings of a 20-year peace process [...] the time for change is now; there is no justification for the denial of the rights and freedom of the Palestinian people.” They would, therefore, continue to appeal for recognition of a State based on the pre-1967 borders, adding that United Nations actions, whether in the Security Council or the General Assembly, could contribute to achieving “the peace we all seek”. That would not be a unilateral action, he stressed. On the contrary, it would be multilateral, and the consecration of a two-State solution in bold resolutions – including recognition of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and admission as a full member of the Organization — would help make a two-State solution inevitable. “This is a decisive measure that could finally convince Israel [...] that its occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people is completely rejected by the world, and that it must abandon its destructive course,” he said. “Why should the Palestinian people be forced to languish yet another year — or even one more day — under foreign occupation?” he asked, declaring: “This is the time for Palestine’s independence. This is the time for Palestine and Israel to live side by side in peace and security, and this is the time for a new Middle East.”

RON PROSOR ([Israel](#)) said unilateral action would not bring peace to the region. Many had recognized that the Palestinians’ attempts to create a State by bypassing negotiations were “picking out a chimney for one’s house before laying its foundation”, seeing the potential consequences of mistrust and unmet expectations that could lead to violence. Palestinians like Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and Nabil Amr, a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Central Council who had called on the Palestinian Authority to delay its statehood bid, saw the practical reality that any such declaration would be in violation of the bilateral agreements that were the basis for Israeli-Palestinian cooperation, and would create expectations that could not be met. “Now is the time for the international community to tell the Palestinian leadership what it refuses to tell its own people: there are no shortcuts to statehood,” he emphasized.

He went on to underline that existing attempts to find a framework for re-launching the peace process must be consistent, taking into consideration the vital interests of both sides. Security and recognition of Israel as a Jewish State were “absolutely essential” to ensuring the future of that State. Recalling that Hamas and Hizbullah had fired 12,000 rockets into Israel since its withdrawal from Gaza and southern Lebanon, he said that, without clear security arrangements, there was no guarantee that terrorists, arms and munitions would not flow into the West Bank under a future Palestinian State, just as they were being smuggled into Gaza today. Lasting peace must be based on a demilitarized Palestinian State and on education that would promote peace, tolerance and mutual understanding.

Israel’s Prime Minister had stated openly and repeatedly that he would accept a Palestinian State, alongside a Jewish State, he continued, pointing out that the Palestinian leadership had not done the same. Without such an acknowledgement, it would remain unclear whether the Palestinian quest for statehood was part of an effort to end the conflict with Israel or a pretext for continuing it. Palestinian leaders claimed that they would be prepared for statehood by September 2011, he noted, adding that he recognized the Palestinian Authority’s progress in the past two years, with the West Bank economy having grown 10 per cent in 2010.

However, much remained to be done in creating a functioning State that would live in peace with its neighbours, he cautioned, pointing out that even the most basic conditions for statehood did not exist. The Palestinian Authority had no effective control over all its territory nor hold a monopoly on the use of force, he pointed out, adding that Hamas maintained de facto control in Gaza. Turning to the Permanent Observer for Palestine, he asked: “On behalf of whom will you present a resolution in September? Mr. Abbas or Hamas? Will it be on behalf of both the Palestinian Authority and the Hamas terrorist organization, which advances a charter calling for the destruction of Israel and the murder of Jews?”

There was much uncertainty about the future Palestinian Government, its acceptance of Quartet conditions, the peace process, and control over its security forces, he said. It would take at least until after the 2011 Palestinian elections before it was clear what Palestinian unity really meant. As for other challenges in the Middle East, the international community could not allow Iran to fall off the radar screen, he stressed, describing that country as the centre of terrorism in the region. The international community could not underestimate the danger of long-range missiles and short-range missiles, and could not stand by as the regime sought to assemble a dangerous mix of extremist ideology, missile technology and nuclear radiology.

ROSEMARY DICARLO ([United States](#)) said she was committed to a just and fair resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and that commitment had been evident in President Obama’s speech in May. The United States continued to believe that direct negotiations between the parties, not international forums such as the United Nations, were the only means by which to resolve permanent-status issues, adding that her country continued to promote such a negotiated path and to support the building of Palestinian statehood institutions. At the same time, Palestinian leaders must recognize that their goals would not be achieved if Hamas insisted “on a path of aggression and rejection”.

Noting that today’s debate would be the Council’s last on the situation in the Middle East before the opening of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, she said that symbolic acts to isolate Israel in the United Nations would not be supported, and her country would not support unilateral campaigns in September or at any other time. The only path to a two-State solution was by mutual agreement of the parties themselves, she emphasized. “This is the goal and this is the vision, but there are no shortcuts,” she said, calling for the avoidance of that would undermine trust or place “symbolism over the hard work of reaching agreement”. She also stressed the United States Government’s long-held objection to Israel’s continuing settlement activities, and called on its Israeli counterpart to deter and prosecute Israeli settlers who perpetrated anti-Palestinian violence.

Turning to the ongoing crisis in Syria, she said that, in the face of popular protests, to which the regime had responded with violence, brutality and mass arrest, the country was headed towards a new order, shaped by the people, adding that “a transition to democracy is already under way”. Indeed, President Bashar al-Assad might delay, but he could not stop, the transition taking place “at this very moment”. The United States would support a democratic Syrian Government that protected and promoted the rights of all citizens, regardless of religion, sect or ethnicity. Human rights abuses and other violence must end, and human rights monitors must be allowed into the country, she said, emphasizing that the Council had a responsibility to address the situation in Syria, including the Government’s ongoing repression.

RAFF BUKUN-OLU WOLE ONEMOLA ([Nigeria](#)) expressed concern that both sides seemed to be contemplating a host of unilateral actions that would endanger furtherance of the peace process. Yet, no matter how frustrating the current impasse might seem, both parties must recognize that they must negotiate the parameters of a two-State solution, he said, emphasizing that, in light of the Quartet’s failure to set out clear parameters on the path ahead, direct talks on all permanent-status issues was the only way to avoid political confrontation. He urged both parties to avoid actions that would inflame tensions in the region.

Turning to the situation in Lebanon, he welcomed the formation of the new Government and urged Israel to implement its proposal to withdraw forces from the northern part of that country. Meanwhile, the situation in Syria remained a major concern, he said, calling for maximum restraint on all sides and urging the Syrian Government to enter into serious dialogue, implement promised reforms and grant humanitarian agencies access to those in need.

NAWAF SALAM ([Lebanon](#)), recalling that Arab leaders had welcomed the lines drawn by President Obama as constructive elements of the long-awaited Quartet parameters for negotiations, said they continued to support the convening in Moscow of an international conference on the Middle East while welcoming the recent French initiative to hold another one in Paris. But that attitude had been met by Mr. Netanyahu's reiteration of his "resounding four nos" – no freeze on settlements, no return to the 1967 borders, no negotiations over the future status of Jerusalem, and no right of return for Palestinian refugees. While the Palestinians had been accused of seeking recognition of their statehood and United Nations membership as an alternative to negotiations, negotiations had been non-existent since September, when Israel had failed to renew the freeze on settlement activity.

He went on to praise President Abbas for steadfastly reiterating three days ago that the Palestinians continued to opt for negotiations over any other path, agreeing with the Palestinian leader that there could be no comprehensive solution without genuine talks on final-status questions. However, statehood had never been among those questions, as it was an inalienable right that could neither be surrendered nor negotiated, he emphasized. Palestine met all four criteria for statehood, but remained occupied. "It is our duty to help Palestine put an end to occupation and achieve independence," he said.

Responding to the claim that the Palestinian quest for recognition of statehood and United Nations membership was in violation of previous bilateral agreements, he reiterated that the basis for statehood preceded any such agreements, and thus could not logically or practically be in violation of them. Palestinian statehood was rooted in General Assembly resolution 181 of 1947. The international community had endorsed the two-State solution in the Quartet Road Map and Council resolution 1850 (2008), and continued to encourage the Palestinians to consolidate and strengthen their Government and national institutions. As for claims that the Palestinian quest for recognition of its statehood was a unilateral step, he stressed that recognition by most United Nations Member States could not by any means qualify as unilateral. Rather, it was an expression of the collective will of the majority of Members in the international system's most multilateral forum.

Unilateral action continued on the ground, however, jeopardizing the resumption of negotiations and the viability of the two-State solution, he pointed out. Israel's continuous building of settlements, demolition of Palestinian houses, eviction of Palestinians from their ancestral homes, and building of the separation wall were unilateral, illegitimate actions that must stop, he stressed. "Seeking recognition for the State of Palestine and granting it full membership in the United Nations is not about de-legitimizing Israel. It is about upholding a legitimate right of the Palestinians and de-legitimizing Israel's decades-long occupation," he added.

WANG MIN ([China](#)) said differences should be resolved through political and diplomatic channels, on the basis of the land-for-peace principle, the Road Map and relevant United Nations resolutions so as to create a fully independent Palestinian State, existing alongside Israel. Settlements were the direct cause of the political stalemate and a major obstacle to the resumption of peace talks, he said, appealing to Israel immediately to cease its settlement activities. Welcoming the reconciliation between the Palestinian parties, he expressed hope that they would use it as a basis for strengthening unity. Emphasizing that the international community's involvement was essential to resolving the conflict, he expressed hope that it would show the political wisdom and courage to facilitate resumption of the peace talks, saying his delegation supported a greater role for the Council towards that end. Peace talks between Lebanon and Israel, and between Syria and Israel, should be conducted in parallel, he added. China continued to support the just cause of the Palestinian people, he said, expressing hope that a State would be created for them at an early date.

BASO SANGQU ([South Africa](#)) said he had hoped that Palestine's final status would be resolved this year and that the United Nations would welcome another new member alongside the Republic of South Sudan. Sadly, owing to intransigence and a lack of political will, peace seemed more distant than ever, and the Quartet's failure to outline a way out of the impasse must be addressed. South Africa stood ready to help the Quartet Principals bring the parties back to the negotiating table for a mutually agreed outcome. Illegal Israeli activities, including settlement construction, aimed to change the facts on the ground and made it difficult to start negotiations, he noted, adding that violence by both parties, including rocket fire into Israel, further eroded hopes for progress. Welcoming Palestinian efforts to seek statehood, he urged all Member States that had not yet done so to recognize Palestine as soon as possible.

GÉRARD ARAUD ([France](#)) emphasized the need to chart a path, through negotiations, for dealing with issues such as refugees and the status of Jerusalem, based on the priorities of both sides, including Israel's security. Despite the Quartet's failure to outline a way forward, France called on the parties to avoid all actions that would further erode the situation or inflame political tensions, he said, condemning the ongoing settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and calling on Israel to cease such activity immediately. As for the regional context, he urged all parties to press ahead with implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) on Lebanon, while stressing that the Syrian regime must end its repression of civilians.

NOEL NELSON MESSONE ([Gabon](#)) said the international community must continue to support efforts to re-launch direct negotiations, expressing particular support for the Quartet meeting held in Washington on 11 July. Gabon also supported the Palestinian Authority's plan to present a request for the admission of Palestine as a United Nations Member State. Regarding the wider region, he welcomed the formation of Lebanon's new Government, saying he hoped it would continue to resolve security issues with non-State armed groups. While still concerned about the situation in Syria, he hailed the adoption of a new law authorizing political pluralism, and urged the Government to continue efforts to restore trust among the population. Returning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he condemned the construction of settlements on Palestinian land and expressed hope that both parties would return to the negotiating table to end the present stalemate.

JOSÉ FILIPE MORAES CABRAL ([Portugal](#)), emphasizing that negotiations were the only way to achieve a final settlement, described developments on the ground as "extremely worrying", particularly the accelerated Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. He condemned the launching of rockets from Gaza into Israel, and urged Israel to end its closure of Gaza. On the wider region, he welcomed Lebanon's new Government, while expressing concern over the grave situation in Syria, including the rising death toll and the Government's rejection of a United Nations fact-finding mission. The only solution would be an immediate end to the violence, the start of a national dialogue and the launch of reforms. He called on the Syrian Government to cease violence against citizens and allow full humanitarian access.

MARIA LUIZA RIBEIRO VIOTTI ([Brazil](#)) said it was unfortunate that the unprecedented transformations under way in the Middle East had so far failed to bring change to the unsustainable status quo of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. "The Palestinian aspiration for statehood is not an abstraction; it is the cornerstone of democracy, dignity, freedom and human rights for the Palestinian people," she said, adding that the international community could not hope for the "winds of freedom" to blow across the Middle East and North Africa, but not Palestine. It was troubling and dangerous that the main partners in the peace process remained unable to help the two sides move beyond the current impasse, she said.

In that context, it was no surprise that the Palestinian leadership had reiterated its intention to ask the United Nations to recognize a Palestinian State, she said. The Quartet's inability to endorse the parameters for bringing the parties back to the negotiating table added to the legitimacy of the Palestinian request. "We are of the view that the recourse to the United Nations by the Palestinians is not a unilateral move; it is precisely the opposite," she said, emphasizing that bringing the matter to the General Assembly could not in any way be compared to Israel's illegal settlement activity, which continued, in violation of international humanitarian law. Moreover the very concept of a two-State solution stemmed from the multilateral system; the General Assembly had endorsed the "partition plan" in 1947, so the recognition of a Palestinian State would be the completion of that 64-

year-old promise, she said, stressing that it was time for the United Nations to support the Palestinian people's capacity to build a peaceful, democratic and prosperous State of their own.

IVAN BARBALIĆ (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said he remained "deeply concerned" about the absence of any progress on the process, stressing that the current impasse was not in the interest of either side, especially since the scheduled time frame for concluding negotiations was rapidly approaching. The international community could not afford further delays in resuming serious and responsible negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. "The resumption of direct negotiations is the only realistic and possible way forward," he said, adding that, at such a critical juncture, it was vitally important for the Council, the Quartet, the Arab League and other international and regional actors to continue their efforts to jump-start direct substantive talks.

Reaffirming his delegation's commitment to a two-State solution, he stressed that the upheavals in the Middle East had created a "new environment" in which the Israeli-Palestinian peace process could rebound. "We hope that the interested parties will recognize this new-found momentum and, by taking up the chance for substantial negotiations will join the stream of positive change in the Middle East," he said. At the same time, he said he was concerned about Israel's continuing settlement construction, and called for an end to such activities in occupied Palestinian lands. Furthermore, despite the recent approval of materials for new construction in Gaza, much more must be done to redress the "unsustainable and unproductive" situation in the Strip, he stressed.

ALEXANDER PANKIN (Russian Federation) said that, in order to restore trust, the parties must avoid steps that prejudiced the outcome of a final settlement. Both sides must refrain from violence and be willing to compromise. It was crucial that Israel cease all settlement activities. The ultimate aim of negotiations must be to give the Palestinians their own independent State, he said, expressing support for their efforts to cement national reconciliation and unification. However, the Russian Federation was alarmed about tensions in Gaza, he said, strongly advocating the complete lifting of Israel's blockade, as well as its unconditional and strict compliance with all relevant Council resolutions. The Quartet's mediation was needed now more than ever, he added.

MARK LYALL GRANT (United Kingdom) condemned the continuing heavy violence in Syria and the murderous attacks on the French and United States embassies there. The regime risked inflaming sectarian tension, he said, adding that President Assad must implement the reforms he had promised. Council action demanding an end to the violence and calling for a peaceful Syrian-led process was long overdue. As for the Palestinians, he said they must be able to realize their goal of an independent viable State. It would be a great shame if the hopes of the Palestinian people were left unfulfilled while the region around them was transformed. The parties to the conflict should redouble their efforts to break the impasse and achieve two States based on the pre-1967 borders and with the requisite security arrangements. The current stalemate could not become the status quo, he emphasized, stressing also that Israeli settlement activity must stop. While Israel had legitimate security concerns that must be safeguarded, more must be done to improve access to Gaza and improve the local economy.

HARDEEP SINGH PURI (India) expressed hope that Hamas would not only accept the reality of Israel, but also cooperate with the Palestinian Authority on Israeli security concerns. However, the stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks appeared to be "giving rise to a sense of desperation in the Palestinian territories", a situation not helped by the Quartet's failure to present a clear path out of the deadlock. Despite the commendable state-building efforts of the Palestinian leadership, the stalemate in peace talks and the grim humanitarian situation in Gaza could further complicate an already fragile situation, he cautioned. India agreed with the wider international community that Israel's freezing of settlement construction in the Palestinian territories could enable the resumption of negotiations. Unless that essential step was taken and the talks were restarted, growing desperation "might lead the parties to actions that can spiral out of control", he warned. Indeed, India feared that unless the talks resumed quickly, unilateral steps by the parties would ensue, further increasing the distance between them and making a comprehensive settlement that much more difficult to find.

NESTOR OSORIO (Colombia) advocated a lasting and structured solution to the unstable situation in the Middle East, calling upon all sides to end the use of force and end terrorism. Colombia was committed to addressing the myriad issues at stake in the region, through the application of democratic principles and with the aim of ensuring peace and security. Colombia also understood the Palestinian people's aspirations for a State of their own, he said, adding that his country's support continued the ongoing objective of creating such a State and was concerned about the suspension of peace talks. The parties should resume negotiations as soon possible, as that was the only way to achieve a lasting solution, he said. "We are convinced that, without an agreement by the parties, we would be repeating the mistake of 1947," he said.

Council President WERNER HOYER, Minister of State, Federal Foreign Office, Germany, speaking in his national capacity, said it was more urgent than ever to reach lasting peace between the Israelis and Palestinians. Both sides must assume their respective responsibilities and take bold steps to resume direct, substantive talks. Clear parameters were a prerequisite for successful talks, he said, pointing out that President Obama had set out a balanced approach on 19 May. An international endorsement of the parameters was needed to create a basis for genuine negotiations, he said calling on the Quartet to intensify its efforts to set out a fair, balanced framework for negotiations. Acknowledging the Palestinian Authority's remarkable progress in state-building, he stressed the political process must urgently catch up with that progress, emphasizing also that everything must be done to preserve achievements on the way to statehood.

Expressing support for the establishment of a Palestinian State, which would join the United Nations, he said "progress in this direction is a matter of urgency". However, he expressed deep concern over continuing settlement construction in occupied Palestinian territories and in East Jerusalem, as well as new construction plans and recent land confiscations in the West Bank, the first since 2008. Emphasizing that settlements were illegal under international law, and, therefore, should cease immediately, he also strongly condemned the recent resumption of rocket and mortar attacks on Israeli territory. There was a need to sustain the positive developments initiated by the Palestinian Authority. As for the wider region, he said he was deeply shocked by events in Syria and concerned about acts of violence between followers of different creeds. Urging the Syrian Government to stop playing the sectarian card, he said it must immediately stop the violence and all repression against the people.

MAGED ABDELAZIZ (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said it was regrettable that all serious efforts to date had not led to a resumption of direct negotiations. It was equally alarming that the simple issuance of a Quartet statement had itself become an issue, underscoring the serious need to improve the efficiency of that mechanism, vis-à-vis its efforts. The Movement strongly condemned the law passed by the Israeli Knesset earlier this month, which penalized people or organizations calling for a boycott of illegal Israeli settlements, he said, noting that many Israelis found it unconstitutional and anti-democratic.

Recent declarations on establishing thousands more illegal settlement units affirmed Israel's bad intentions and belied its Government's alleged commitment to the peace process and a two-State solution, he continued, adding that Israel was clearly choosing settlements over peace. He reiterated the Movement's call for the Council to demand that the occupying Power abide by its legal obligations, and stressed the need to compel Israel to lift fully its illegal blockade of Gaza. He also condemned the Israeli military's boarding and seizure of the French civilian boat *El Karama* en route to Gaza on 19 July to give much-needed support to Gazans.

Strongly condemning the continued detention and imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians in Israeli jails, where ill-treatment and torture was widespread, he stressed the importance of the Declaration on Palestinian Political Prisoners, adopted by the Movement's Ministerial Conference last May. He also condemned Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty and recurring serious breaches of Council resolution 1701 (2006). He reaffirmed that all Israeli measures to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan were null, void and had no legal effect, while condemning in the strongest terms the killing of unarmed civilian protestors on 15 May and 5 June, and calling for those responsible to be brought to justice.

RODOLFO BENÍTEZ VERSÓN (Cuba) said that Israel's settlement policy prevented the creation of a Palestinian State based on the 1967 borders and undermined the possibility of a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Cuba was also deeply concerned about the situation in the Gaza Strip and reiterated its call for the immediate and unconditional lifting of the "cruel and illegal" blockade, and for the free circulation of supplies to and from the enclave area, as well as sustained humanitarian access. The Security Council could not remain impassive on the matter, he said, emphasizing that no conflict today posed a greater threat to international peace and security. The United States veto was holding the Council hostage, he said, describing that delegation's veto threat as a "sword of Damocles" that stifled action, and emphasizing the need to address that unsustainable and anti-democratic situation.

HASAN KLEIB (Indonesia) urged those States that had not yet extended recognition to a Palestinian State to do so as soon as possible. Hopefully, in September, all those gathered in the General Assembly would welcome the birth of a new nation — the State of Palestine. While hoping that dream could be realized, he acknowledged that the Palestinian people's journey remained beset by hurdles, especially as Israel continued, with "infamous ingenuity", to combine persistent hostility towards the Palestinians with determined efforts to frustrate the peace process. Summary evictions, house demolitions and the expansion of settlements on Palestinian lands, were all part of Israel's grand design to construct a new reality. "Such efforts mimic the strategy and tactics of a colonial Power," he said, stressing that Israel must recognize that the world had changed and that no country could live with a clear conscience while resorting to brutal oppression. Israel had many choices, he said, but the most honourable and reasonable one would be to conduct direct negotiations with the Palestinians, leading to realization of their dream of statehood, "nothing more, nothing less", he said.

ABDOU DIALLO (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said that the surge in violence in and around Gaza required the Council to take urgent and appropriate action, in line with resolution 1860 (2009), in order to protect civilians. The illegal economic blockade of Gaza should be lifted, and efforts to achieve Palestinian reconciliation supported. The stalemate in the peace process was unacceptable at a time when so many had pinned their hopes on September, he said.

Calls for the resumption of negotiations must necessarily be accompanied by measures to compel Israel to abide strictly by its obligations under international law, he continued. Inaction on the Council's part invited Israel to intensify its illegal policies, as evidenced by the explosive growth of its settlements. It was deplorable that the Quartet's much-anticipated meeting had not allowed it to create clear parameters, similar to those endorsed by the European Union, to guide Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, he said.

Since the Council's last debate on the Palestinian question, the Committee had made every effort to promote a two-State solution and peace between the Israelis and Palestinians, he said. In April, it held the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People in Helsinki, to mobilize support for the Palestinian state-building programme. In June, it had held the United Nations Meeting in Support of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process in Brussels, to take stock of European and other international initiatives towards a two-State solution, he said, adding that he had been heartened by the growing number of States recognizing Palestine.

PEDRO SERRANO, Acting Head of the European Union Delegation, expressed full support for the continued efforts of the European Union High Representative within the Quartet to create a credible perspective for re-launching the peace process, most recently in Council conclusions adopted on 18 July. He reiterated the European Union's readiness to recognize a Palestinian State when appropriate. Negotiations should include all final status issues. Recalling the bloc's suggested parameters to serve as a basis for resuming negotiations, he said they included agreement based on the pre-1967 borders, with mutually agreed land swaps; security arrangements; a just solution to the refugee problem; fulfilment of the aspirations of both parties regarding Jerusalem; and an end to the construction of illegal settlements in the West Bank.

The European Union remained a major supporter and contributor to Palestinian state-building, he said, adding that it expected a future Palestinian State to continue the Palestinian Authority's institution-building efforts and to uphold current standards in terms of transparent and efficient public finance management. Intra-Palestinian reconciliation was an important element for the unity of a future Palestinian State, he stressed. On the wider region, he said it was deplorable that the Syrian leadership had ignored repeated calls by the international community and continued its policy of violently repressing peaceful protestors. The violence must stop immediately in order to prevent further bloodshed, he stressed.

TALAI BEK KYDYROV (Kyrgyzstan) said the continued involvement of the Quartet in the search for a lasting settlement should be based on the objectives set out in relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet-backed Road Map. Noting that the time to consider the accession of Palestine as a United Nations Member State was approaching rapidly, he said it was extremely important to make speedy progress in the peace process to "overcome the current worrisome impasse". He urged the parties to demonstrate their unwavering commitment to peace, and to eliminate all obstacles impeding the resumption of direct negotiations.

FAZLI ÇORMAN (Turkey) said that, while transformation and major upheavals in the Middle East and North Africa ran their course, the Palestinian question remained in limbo. Millions of Palestinians, whether in Gaza, the West Bank or in refugee camps across the region, continued to suffer "an unfortunate fate not of their own making". In truth, he said, the situation was at the heart of many disputes in the region, and the international community could not expect the momentum for positive change, under way since the beginning of the year, to be maintained while occupation and subjugation were the day-to-day reality of the Palestinian people. "If we are to win the hearts and minds of the Arab people and support them in meeting their aspirations, we must be able to show them our collective determination towards reaching a just and viable peace in the regions that everyone can relate to," he said.

That was why it was crucial that the quest for a lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian issue not take a back seat to developments in the wider region, he emphasized. At the moment there was "neither peace nor process" and the parties seemed to be drifting farther apart, he said, adding that the region's people wanted solutions from their leaders, not empty rhetoric. Overall, there was a prevailing sense of uncertainty, and no meaningful engagement that inspired confidence on both sides could occur while settlement activity continued. Israel's recent decision to construct 300 new units was an example of its illegal and unacceptable activities, he said, stressing that in the absence of any meaningful peace process, the Palestinian people could not be expected to remain Israel's prisoners forever. The international community must not turn a blind eye to their desire for recognition as a full Member of the United Nations, he said.

TSUNEO NISHIDA (Japan) said his country had been encouraging both sides to resume direct negotiations in cooperation with the international community, and to take steps to create an environment conducive to restarting the talks. Japan did not recognize unilateral measures that prejudged the outcome of final-status negotiations. The parties must abide by their obligations under previous agreements, notably the Road Map, he stressed, calling on Israel to freeze all settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. He also called on the Palestinian Authority to continue efforts to improve security and fulfil its commitments to cease violence and work against incitement. Japan strongly supported the Palestinian

Authority's state-building efforts and would continue to provide aid for them, he pledged.

EIHAB SAMI SALEM OMAISH ([Jordan](#)) said Israel continued to procrastinate and miss opportunities for peace. There must be a return to a practical solution, he stressed, adding that bold decisions required courage. Negotiations would be in vain as long as settlement construction continued. He said he was deeply concerned about Israel's occupation of Arab territories, including many Christian and Muslim holy places, and called for international intervention to end such violations, as well as the suffering of Palestinian prisoners and detainees. Welcoming the Palestinian national reconciliation agreement as a correct step on the path to Palestinian reunification, he called on the international community to demand that Israel lift its blockade of Gaza, saying it could no longer remain silent.

SHAZELINA ZAINUL ABIDIN ([Malaysia](#)), stressing that 40 years was a long time to "languish under the thumb of another", said Israel's illegal policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory sought to erase history and render a two-State solution more elusive than ever. Indeed, she noted, this month marked the fourth year of Israel's inhumane blockade of Gaza, which had left more than 1.5 million people dependent on international aid, robbing them of their right to live in dignity. That unacceptable situation, in addition to Israel's continued settlement expansion and construction of the separation wall, showed that it was past time to find a just solution. The parties must abide by their obligations, including the parameters for peace laid down in the Arab Peace Initiative, the Road Map and the Madrid principles, so as to break the current stalemate, she said.

ARTHUR KAFEERO ([Uganda](#)) said the present "defining moment" was a test of statesmanship for both Palestinian and Israeli leaders. While the international community's support of the peace process was vital, primary responsibility for negotiating a comprehensive and lasting peace rested with the parties themselves, he said. Uganda reiterated its call on Israel and the Palestinians urgently to summon the necessary courage to take bold decisions, bearing in mind that the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for statehood "cannot be delayed much longer and the legitimate security concerns of Israel must be addressed". He called on Israel to cease its settlement activity, and expressed concern about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, calling on Israel to lift the years-long blockade of the enclave.

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GRÉTA GUNNARSDÓTTIR ([Iceland](#)) said her country was ready to support an Assembly resolution on a Palestinian State based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as a resolution on Palestine's full membership in the United Nations. Recognition of a Palestinian State did not contradict the wish for a negotiated settlement of the conflict, she said, adding that, on the contrary, it might be seen as a means to stimulate serious negotiations. Emphasizing the need to improve the situation in Gaza, she urged Israel to lift the blockade, while describing its decision to continue its settlement activity as a serious concern. The international community should be careful not to send out messages that could be perceived as an accommodation of existing illegal settlement activities, she emphasized, adding that settlements were "reversible". She also voiced concern about increasing settler violence against the Palestinians, including their so-called "price tag policy", and called on Israel to do its utmost to prevent such violence and ensure that those responsible were held to account.

MANSOUR AYYAD ALOTAIBI ([Kuwait](#)), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, said the peoples and States of the region attached high hopes to the international community's willingness to pursue its legal and moral responsibility to end Israel's intransigence and arrogance, and to compel it to comply with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. Israel's illegal and aggressive measures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory added to its continuing violations of Palestinian human rights, he said, noting that such practices made "pure fantasy" of any talk about the existence of an Israeli partner in the peace process. Israel's continuing and intensifying campaigns to construct thousands of settlements affirmed its expansionist intentions, he added.

The situation in Gaza was yet another form of Israel's violations of Council resolution 1860 (2009), he said. Palestinian civilians continued to be subjected to collective punishment, which had led to an unemployment rate of 65 per cent. The international community must demand that Israel lift the blockade immediately, he said, adding that it must be punished for persistently violating international law. The Council must demand that Israel fully withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan and cease its continuing violation of Lebanese sovereignty, including infringement of air space and territorial waters. A comprehensive settlement could only be attained through implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions and within the principles of the Madrid Peace Conference and the Quartet's Road Map. The Arab Group fully supported the Palestinian bid for full United Nations membership in September, he said.

DANILO ROSALES DIAZ ([Nicaragua](#)) condemned illegal Israeli policies, including its attempts to separate the West Bank from the rest of the Palestinian territory by constructing a wall and large numbers of settlement units. The struggle of the Palestinian people, and the sacrifices they had made, had been met by increasing illegal activities, more home demolitions, more denial of rights and more assassinations of Palestinian leaders. Calling for an immediate end to such practices, he urged the Council to assume its responsibilities, regardless of the threat of veto by Israel's "main accomplice". It was time for the Council and the Assembly to recognize a Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders, he said, adding that that was the only way to end an untenable and unacceptable situation.

RAZA BASHIR TARAR ([Pakistan](#)) said numerous independent sources had confirmed that statehood by September was well within reach. "It is in our common interest to embrace and strengthen the achievements of Palestine as an invaluable opportunity for lasting peace in the region," he said, stressing that positive development could only be sustained with the active engagement of the international community. It was, therefore, incumbent upon the Council and the Quartet to honour their long-standing commitments to a final settlement, and to work in tandem to that end. He noted that, while the international community must do its part, Israel must end its expansionist policies and lift its blockade of the Gaza Strip.

JORGE VALERO BRICEÑO ([Venezuela](#)) said that Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes, forced removal of Palestinian families, intensifying settlement activity, and prohibition of new Palestinian construction deserved condemnation and were obvious examples of the country's apartheid system. Such illegal, inhuman actions, carried out with total impunity, exposed the Council's lack of action. In line with the people's right to self-determination, Venezuela supported immediate recognition of the State of Palestine and its incorporation as a full Member State of the United Nations, he said. Describing the delicate humanitarian situation suffered by the Palestinians as deplorable, he said the blockade of Gaza was inhumane and

illegal, as was the separation wall. He demanded an immediate end to those inhuman, illegal and unilateral measures. Turning to the wider region, he voiced concern over the serious events that had taken place in the occupied Syrian Golan on 15 May and 5 June, in which many Palestinians had been massacred by Israeli soldiers while protesting peacefully against the Israeli occupation.

KIM YONG SONG (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that last May's final agreement on reconciliation between Palestinian political forces would strengthen intra-Palestinian unity, but challenges still lay ahead, stressing that Israel must withdraw from the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Settlement activity was the root cause of the current political deadlock in the peace talks, he said, adding that the growing support for the creation of an independent State of Palestine was more than justifiable. He expressed full support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people's justifiable struggle to secure their national rights, including an independent sovereign State.

MOHAMMAD SARWAR MAHMOOD (Bangladesh) said that a durable and sustainable resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Palestinian question, "must be our collective strategic objective". All Member States should pledge complete commitment to that objective and throw their full moral, diplomatic, political and economic support behind its early realization. The Palestinian people, including Palestinian refugees, were being denied their fundamental rights and were suffering unacceptable deprivation under Israel's prolonged occupation, he said, expressing concern about the extensive destruction of Palestinian homes, property, economic institutions and farmland, all of which had exacerbated the already dire socio-economic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. He also expressed concern about Israel's military operations in the region, its policy of closures, and restrictions on the movement of goods and people in the Gaza Strip.

MOHAMMED LOULICHKI (Morocco) expressed deep concern that the international community remained unsuccessful in its attempts to jump-start direct negotiations, especially in light of the wide support expressed for a two-State solution and for recognition of the Palestinian people's legitimate aspirations. It was incumbent upon all concerned parties and stakeholders to create a positive and enabling environment for the resumption of negotiations at the earliest possible date, he said, stressing that his delegation would continue to watch with hope the activities of the United States and other parties to that end. He went on to highlight his concern on a number of issues, including Israel's efforts to change the character of Jerusalem and other areas. The international community must hold Israel accountable for its actions and work harder to bring the parties back to the negotiating table, he stressed, adding that the Palestinian Authority, through its state-building and other activities, continued to show that it was a credible partner for peace. Israel must in turn end all activities detrimental to the peace process.

BYRGANYM AITIMOVA (Kazakhstan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), said she was shocked and extremely disturbed by the escalation of Israel's illegal practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It had intensified military operations throughout the West Bank and even raided a Palestinian children's summer camp, subjecting the children to harsh interrogation, she said, condemning Israel's flouting of international law and calling for an end to such illegal actions. She said she was highly perturbed by its attacks on Palestinian civilians, peace activists and volunteers of international non-governmental organizations.

She went on to say she was also disturbed that in the last four years about 1.5 million Palestinians had suffered under immeasurably grave conditions in Gaza due to Israel's illegal, inhumane blockade, which must be lifted immediately. Israel must also comply with all its legal obligations under international humanitarian law, she said, expressing deep concern over the stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Last month in Astana, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Council of Foreign Ministers had reiterated the need for an early settlement of the Palestinian question and expressed full support for the Arab Peace Initiative, she recalled. All Israeli measures to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan and its institutional structure were null, void and without legal effect, she said, demanding that Israel abide fully and immediately by Council resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw from the Golan.

LOUAY FALOUH (Syria) said that, although the Council should not discuss issues outside the historical definition of the current agenda item, some delegates had tried to do so today. While the Council was trying to engage effectively in reviving the peace process, the reality on the ground showed a systematic Israeli pattern that contradicted basic international law. It was the biggest armed robber in colonial history, as evidenced by its settlement activity, separation wall, occupation of East Jerusalem, extended support for extremists and unjust blockade of Gaza.

Noting that Israeli forces had fired live bullets on unarmed Palestinian demonstrators on 15 May and 5 June, claiming the lives of many martyrs, he said it persisted in its refusal to return the Golan to Syria, and to implement the applicable United Nations resolutions, specifically Council resolution 497 (1981), while continuing its policy of intimidating Syrians in the Golan. A comprehensive and fair Middle East peace could only be achieved through Israel's full withdrawal from all Arab territories and the creation of an independent Palestinian State, he emphasized.

He said some permanent Council representatives had used language that exaggerated recent internal events in his country and were trying to engage the Council in events beyond its purview. The President of Syria had declared a comprehensive reform programme to enhance democratic national reconstruction and expand citizen participation in the political and economic process, he said, adding that the aim was to build unity and guarantee law and order for all citizens. The President had written to the Secretary-General, explaining his position on recent events in the country, including a move towards pluralism through political consultations. He had also proposed the creation of a supreme human rights council and a political committee to review the Constitution, and promote human rights and social justice.

Regarding statements by certain delegations on the recent demonstrations in front of the United States and French embassies in Damascus, he underscored the Syrian authorities' commitment to protecting both embassies. Those people advocating reform from outside the country should not ignore Syria's serious reform efforts and rely on statements that were fabricated or based on false information about Syria. They should not ignore the sabotage and crimes committed by armed terrorist groups inside the country, he cautioned, stressing that they should have condemned Israel's firing of bullets on peaceful Palestinian demonstrators in May and June.

ESHAGH AL HABIB (Iran) said that for six decades the question of Palestine had been one of the biggest challenges facing the entire world. The occupation of Palestinian land "forms the most painful and biggest tragedy in modern history", and was characterized by massacres, home demolitions, abductions, imprisonment and violations of international law. The Israeli regime continued to defy international law in its pursuit and implementation of unlawful and inhuman blockades against the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

"In the history of the Israeli regime there is nothing but crimes, killings, use of banned weapons, blind assassinations [and] attacks against civilians and humanitarian convoys," he said, adding that such human acts had become routine for the brutal occupiers. Stressing that the attainment of a peaceful and just settlement of the question of Palestine was imperative for lasting peace and stability in the wider Middle East and beyond, he said reaching that objective would require justice, and an end to the occupation, as well as to the "discriminatory and racist" policies in place in the Palestinian territory.

Turning to the situation in Syria, he said the "enemies of humanity" sought to sow sectarian divisions in their mischievous attempts to keep the people divided and dispossessed. Yet, the Syrian people knew that the key to their independence and dignity lay in unity and resistance to "mischief and subversion" at the hands of hegemonic regimes.

As for references to Iran by representatives of the Israeli regime, he said that in levelling baseless allegations about his country's nuclear programme, the Zionist regime was, preposterously, "attempting to deflect attention from its long, dark catalogue of crimes and atrocities". Moreover, while it was widely recognized that Israel's clandestine development and possession of nuclear weapons posed a uniquely grave threat to regional and international peace and security, regrettably, the international community's failure to deal with the matter had only emboldened "this dangerous regime". The Council was expected to condemn Israel's possession of nuclear weapons, urge it to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and place all its nuclear facilities under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), he emphasized.

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