

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil):

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important open debate today. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and to acknowledge the statements made by the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine.

After five years of protracted hostilities and human suffering, it is heartening to acknowledge that the cessation of hostilities in Syria is creating the conditions for a gradual advance towards stabilization and peace. There has been an overall decrease in casualties since February. Important cities such as Palmyra are no longer controlled by the self-proclaimed Islamic State. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports a positive trend with respect to humanitarian access. Besieged or isolated areas are being reached for the first time in years.

Nevertheless, growing violations reported by both sides to the conflict in recent weeks may threaten the significant progress that has been made. We call on the parties to fully respect the cessation of hostilities. We should spare no effort in working towards a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition aimed at establishing credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance, drafting a new constitution and ending the war, as established by resolution 2254 (2015).

In that regard, we welcome the new round of intra-Syrian negotiations launched last week in Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations and with the assistance of the International Syria Support Group. Brazil reaffirms its steadfast support for the efforts of Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura and those of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, led by Mr. Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro.

But we are also concerned about the negative humanitarian impact of unilateral sanctions on Syria. As a study commissioned by a group of experts recently confirmed, unilateral economic and trade measures often create insurmountable practical barriers to the work of humanitarian organizations attempting to deliver food, medicine, fuel and other essential items to civilians affected by the conflict. The sanctions also hinder the establishment of conditions conducive to refugees' safe and voluntary return to Syria, thereby exacerbating the massive displacement crisis currently affecting many Middle Eastern and European societies. Lastly, they obstruct key initiatives aimed at restoring and rebuilding Syria's economy and infrastructure.

It is worth recalling that the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, set up by the Human Rights Council, has spoken out against such sanctions. Brazil has long held that unilateral sanctions are counterproductive and incompatible with international law. The Security Council is the only body with a clear legal mandate to impose coercive economic measures, and I would like to recall here that, in its resolution 70/185, the General Assembly states clearly that unilateral coercive economic measures constitute a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and contravene the basic principles of the multilateral trading system.

The absence of any positive signs of concrete developments on the question of Palestine is alarming. The peace process remains stalled, acts of violence continue to occur and we are witnessing disrespect for the principle of due process of law, leading to more violence. Illegal settlements, demolitions and land expropriations proliferate in the West Bank, and the humanitarian situation remains dire, particularly in Gaza. If left unchanged, this intolerable status quo will continue to destabilize the Middle East and erode the credibility of the Security Council. Brazil expects the Council to live up to its responsibilities by acting decisively to establish parameters for the end of the occupation. The only viable solution remains a Palestinian State that is fully sovereign, economically sustainable and territorially contiguous, with borders based on the internationally recognized 1967 lines, living in

peace and security with Israel. In that regard, we are following with interest the initiative of holding an international conference aimed at garnering broad support for the peace process, as proposed by France. Reports of a draft resolution that would require Israel to freeze the construction of settlements and set a time frame for arriving at a two-State solution are also encouraging.

Concerning Yemen, the cessation of hostilities initiated last week and the resumption of peace negotiations in Kuwait under the auspices of Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the SecretaryGeneral, are a much-needed step towards ending a conflict that has left innocent civilians unprotected and exposed them to many extreme forms of strife. As reported by international human-rights organizations, air strikes have repeatedly hit protected areas such as hospitals, as well as populated regions. A particularly grave incident was the bombing of a market in Mastaba, which killed at least 97 civilians, including 25 children. We call on all parties to fulfil their obligation to respect international humanitarian and human-rights law, including the fundamental rules of distinction, proportionality and precaution. Brazil continues to uphold the imperative of a sustainable and inclusive political solution to the Yemeni crisis achieved through non-military means.

While Libya remains deeply unstable, recent developments suggest that a measure of progress has been made towards solving the country's significant political and security challenges. We welcome the arrival in Tripoli of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord, endorsed by resolution 2259 (2015), as well as reports that it has already consolidated authority over key ministries and State institutions. Brazil reiterates its support for Special Representative Martin Kobler and urges all the parties to work to restore peace and national unity in Libya.

As a general thought, and in line with the overall template that underpins the three reports submitted in 2015 on peace operations (S/2015/682), sustaining peace (S/2015/560) and on women and peace and security (S/2015/716), the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, should privilege and revitalize preventive measures and diplomatic efforts to solve disputes through peaceful means, especially those in the Middle East.

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