

Security Council
6816th Meeting (AM & PM)

No Breakthrough Reached in Effort to Restart Talks between Israelis-Palestinians in Past Month, amid Worrying Developments on Ground, Security Council Told

Special Coordinator for Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry Briefs; Israel, Palestine Observer, More Than 40 Delegations Take Floor in Debate

Warning that the hope for a two-State solution for Israeli-Palestinian peace continued to fade as a stalemate continued both on the ground and at the negotiating table, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process this morning called on the parties to take the necessary steps, despite growing challenges.

“The international community should understand that, absent a credible political horizon for the establishment of a Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel, its own efforts in pursuit of this goal will increasingly lack credibility,” Robert Serry, who is also the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, said ahead of an open debate that heard from over forty speakers on the peace process, Syria and other regional issues.

Mr. Serry said that in the past month the efforts to restart direct talks continued and had “not reached a breaking point, but there had not been a breakthrough either and that is increasingly a concern”, as it took place amid worrying developments on the ground. Talks remained stalled, as events on the ground moved in the wrong direction.

Mr. Serry added that what he called “quiet direct exchanges between the parties” were being conducted on a package of measures that would create an environment conducive to talks and pave the way for high-level contacts. In that context, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas was emphasizing prisoner releases and permission for delivery of weapons to Palestinian security forces.

Other urgently needed enabling steps or measures to bolster the Palestinian Authority had not been carried out, however, he said, and extensive settlement activity continued, as did clashes between settlers and Palestinians, rocket fire from Gaza, Israeli incursions in both Gaza and the West Bank, financial crises of the Palestinian Authority and a stall in Palestinian reconciliation. In that context, diplomatic efforts of Quartet members and the Arab League had little effect, he said.

“The parties must now do their part to overcome admittedly difficult obstacles and take the steps necessary to enable an environment conducive to serious engagement,” he said, adding: “But I fear time is running out”.

Turning briefly to Syria, he said that the entire region was increasingly impacted by the crisis. He said that security operations by Syrian forces in the area of operations of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), including the “area of separation”, had continued, as did Syrian violations of the Lebanese border, including intermittent shelling. Incidents within Lebanon, in addition, reflected factional tensions exacerbated by the conflict in Syria. “The commitment of the country’s leaders to safeguarding Lebanon from the impact of regional tensions at this difficult time is particularly important,” he said.

Following Mr. Serry’s presentation, the Observer of Palestine spoke, followed by Israel’s representative. The Observer warned that time was running out for a peaceful, negotiated resolution of the conflict, saying that Israel’s settlement activity ran counter to the “land for peace” formula on which the entire Middle East peace process was built. He called on the international community to compel Israel to abandon expansionism and aggression. Now should be the time, he stressed, to realize the long-awaited aspirations of Palestinians, and not allow “a tragic missed historic opportunity with far-reaching ever-more tragic consequences”.

Surveying turmoil in the Middle East, Israel’s representative said that the region’s leaders could follow the road represented by Iran — of terrorism and intolerance — or take the road of compromise and negotiation. In that context, he urged Palestinians to drop preconditions and rejoin direct negotiations on all final status issues, end incitement

against Israel and acknowledge that the Jewish people had a connection to the land. His Government and people were prepared to work hard and make painful compromises for peace, but Palestinians continued to take unilateral steps that “will not bring us one inch closer to peace”. The people of the region had already sacrificed so much, he concluded, adding: “It is time for the leaders of the Middle East to make the right choices”.

After those statements, representatives of Council members and other speakers reiterated positions on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, as well as on the situation in Syria and other situations in the Middle East. Most reaffirmed support for a two-State solution, urged work towards reconvening of direct negotiations on final status issues and supported bolstering of the Palestinian Authority. Differing views continued to be expressed on the wisdom of recognition of a Palestinian state before a negotiated solution was reached.

Most speakers criticized Israel’s settlement activity and maintenance of obstacles to movement in the West Bank, with some pointing to specific reports of new plans for building in the West Bank and many urging the end of the Gaza blockade. At the same time, many speakers also called for an end to rocket fire from Gaza and for achievement of Palestinian reconciliation. Many speakers, in addition, condemned the terrorist attack that targeted Israeli tourists in Bulgaria last week, extending condolences to the victims’ families.

On Syria, Council members reiterated their positions expressed in last week’s meetings, with some pointing to the latest violence as the cause of even greater concern. Speakers continued to agree on the urgent need for the end of violence but differed on means to end it. Venezuela’s representative, for example, criticized meddling by other countries, which he said exacerbated the crisis, while Saudi Arabia’s representative called for stronger action by the international community and announced that the matter would be taken by Arab States to the General Assembly, if the Security Council could not act.

Syria’s representative strongly criticized those who he said were distracting the Council from the subject of Israel’s policies of occupation and aggression through their calls for such action, in a lengthy statement that also blamed foreign support for armed groups for the continuation of the fighting.

Also speaking today were the representatives of the United States, Guatemala, France, Azerbaijan, China, Russian Federation, Portugal, India, Morocco, Germany, United Kingdom, South Africa, Pakistan, Togo, Colombia, Lebanon, Egypt (on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement), Canada, Japan, Brazil, Turkey, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Kazakhstan (On behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation), Iceland, Iran, Qatar, Tunisia, Norway, Sri Lanka, Cuba and Maldives.

The head of the European Union delegation and the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People also made statements.

The meeting was opened at 10:20 a.m., suspended at 1:57 p.m., reconvened at 3:34 p.m. and finally adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

Background

The Security Council met today to hear a briefing by Robert Serry, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, and to hold an open debate on that topic, including the Palestinian question.

Briefing

ROBERT SERRY, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, condemning in the strongest possible terms the 18 July terror attack against Israelis in Bulgaria, said that the past month had been characterized by a continuation of the effort to restart Middle East peace talks amid continued worrying developments on the ground. “Quiet direct exchanges between the parties are ongoing in an attempt to reach agreement on a package of measures that would create an environment conducive to talks and pave the way for high-level contacts,” he said.

In that context, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas emphasized prisoner releases and delivery of weapons to Palestinian security forces. Mr. Serry added that it was concerning that other urgently needed enabling steps or measures to bolster the Palestinian Authority had not been carried out. Describing diplomatic efforts of Quartet members and the Arab League, he said “In sum, the effort to restart direct talks has not reached a breaking point, but

there has not been a breakthrough either and this is increasingly a concern. While talks remain stalled, events on the ground continue to move in the wrong direction”.

One challenge was the threat to the financial solvency of the Palestinian Authority, he said, noting that it announced that all June salaries for its employees could not be paid on time. He called on donors, particularly those from the Gulf other than Saudi Arabia, which had already made a large contribution, to provide the Authority with respite. He reiterated that further improvements needed to be made in Israeli transfers of VAT revenues. He welcomed a July announcement of 5,000 more permits for Palestinian construction workers in Israel, but added that more needed to be done to ease access and movement and enable economic growth throughout the West Bank and Gaza.

He said that settlement announcements continued, with tenders published for hundreds of units, and 13 Palestinian structures were demolished in the West Bank. He expressed concern over reports of orders of demolition of Palestinian villages near Hebron for military training facilities, as well as plans for an upgrade of educational facilities in the settlement of Ariel, which he called a further encroachment into the West Bank. He noted that a committee formed to consider the status of construction in the West Bank submitted a report on 9 July claiming the Israeli presence in the West Bank was not a military occupation and that settlement activity should be facilitated. Although the Government had not endorsed the report, he said that such proposals contradicted international law and Israeli commitments under the road map, and settlement activity should stop.

Clashes between Israeli settlers and Palestinians had continued, he said, citing a variety of incidents in the West Bank. Citing security, Israeli forces conducted 477 operations in the West Bank, an increase from previous months, resulting in 185 Palestinian injuries, including eight children, and injuries to two Israeli soldiers. A total of 246 Palestinians were arrested. Most Palestinian injuries and arrests occurred during demonstrations against the barrier and other protests; he reiterated that the right of protest must be upheld and that all protests should be strictly non-violent. Two former Israeli police officers were sentenced for the negligent death of a Palestinian in 2008.

He said that Palestinian security operations continued, with more than 150 suspects apprehended by them. A senior Fatah member was shot and injured in Jenin, he added, noting as well the inauguration of the Palestine College for Police Sciences during the reporting period. On a positive note, he said that the agreement to end the mass prisoner hunger strike on 16 July led to family visits from Gaza relatives of detainees, the first time since 2007 such visits were allowed. Four detainees had continued hunger strikes, while the Speaker of the Palestinian Parliament was released after six months of administrative detention.

Internal political dynamics remained fluid, he said, noting the Kadima party's exit from the Israeli Government coalition, stirring expectations for renewed momentum in the peace process. Palestinian reconciliation was again delayed when de facto authorities in Gaza decided to suspend voter registration. He reiterated his disappointment with that development.

In Gaza, he said fragility was exacerbated by an urgent funding shortfall of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). United Nations construction work in Gaza, now totalling some \$360 million, has helped the employment situation, but that was a temporary fix. Deeper and more fundamental change was required, beginning with authorizing exports to Israel and other countries, as well as transfers to and from the West Bank. He urged more openings for the entry of all construction materials, as well as continued donor funding, in addition, of United Nations reconstruction work in Gaza through the Palestinian Authority-United Nations Trust Fund.

A total of 183 projectiles were fired from Gaza during the reporting period, with some intercepted by Israeli defence systems. Heavy machine gun fire was also directed at a commercial plaza in southern Israel on 9 July. Israel conducted six incursions and 31 airstrikes into Gaza, resulting in nine Palestinian deaths and 54 injuries. He condemned the rocket attacks and urged Israel to show maximum restraint. Noting that the de facto Government of Gaza executed three Palestinians by hanging, for murder, he reiterated that it ran counter to the moratorium called for by the General Assembly.

Turning to Syria, he noted that extensive briefings had been given specifically on the crisis, but said that each day brought to light new atrocities and new suffering. In addition, the region was increasingly impacted. He said that security operations by Syrian forces in the area of operations of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

(UNDOF), including the “area of separation”, had continued, and the Mission had lodged protest with the Syrian authorities. Civilians had also been seen traversing improper lines.

Noting the Council’s statement expressing deep concern over cross-border fire, incursions, abductions and arms trafficking across the Lebanese-Syrian border, he said a pattern of Syrian army violations of the border had continued, including intermittent shelling, with the Lebanese army authorized to fire back. Adding to almost 30,000 Syrian refugees registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), last week’s surge was estimated at some 18,000 over a two-day period, many of whom subsequently travelled back into Syria. Incidents within Lebanon, in addition, reflected factional tensions exacerbated by the conflict in Syria, with fresh clashes between groups from Sunni and Alawite neighbourhoods, coinciding with a speech by Hizbullah’s leader reiterating support for the Syrian regime. The opposition March 14 Coalition decided to boycott the third session of the National Dialogue; he hoped obstacles to continuing it would be overcome. “The commitment of the country’s leaders to safeguarding Lebanon from the impact of regional tensions at this difficult time is particularly important,” he said.

The situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) remained “cautiously calm and stable, while Lebanon deployed some troops out of the South Litani Sector to reinforce the north-eastern border and UNIFIL increased operational activities in that area. The Lebanese Armed Forces assured UNIFIL that troops would be sent back to the south as soon as the situation allowed. Israeli air violations, meanwhile, continued on an almost daily basis.

In conclusion, recalling his warnings that the two-State possibility was increasingly moving toward a one-State reality, said that “continuous negative trends, as reported today and in previous briefings, are just further manifestations that this reality is consistently undermining our common goal of a negotiated two-state solution that will end the conflict and end the occupation that started in 1967. The international community should understand that, absent a credible political horizon for the establishment of a Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel, its own efforts in pursuit of this goal will increasingly lack credibility. The parties must now do their part to overcome admittedly difficult obstacles and take the steps necessary to enable an environment conducive to serious engagement. But I fear time is running out”.

Statements

RIYAD H. MANSOUR, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, said he regretted that he could report no positive developments on the ground, as Palestinians continued to find themselves in a situation that had “precariously worsened at all levels”, taking them farther away from the shared goal of ending Israel’s more than 45 year military occupation. Nothing widened the gulf towards peace more than the continuation of Israel’s illegal settlement campaign, waged in an attempt to seize more Palestinian land and entrench Israeli control over Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. He compelled the international community to “finally take serious and practical action” to stop Israel, the occupying Power, from completely destroying the viability of the two-State solution.

Drawing attention to what he called Israel’s “many other illegal actions and measures against the Palestinian civilian population living under the ruthless occupation”, he said, among others, Israel had forged ahead with demolition of Palestinian homes and civilian infrastructure, forcing displacement of families in the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israel had also continued to carry out daily military raids throughout Palestinian villages, towns and cities. He reiterated his grave concerns about the deplorable treatment to which Palestinian civilians were imprisoned or detained, including hundreds of children, calling on the international community to compel Israel to cease such illegal practices and to release all illegally held Palestinian civilians.

Israeli missile air strikes and artillery bombardment of civilian areas in the besieged Gaza Strip gravely violated international law, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Armed Conflict, he said. Israel had continued to deliberately target and kill Palestinian civilians, persisting with its deliberate policy of extrajudicial executions. In addition to living in constant fear of such attacks, the Gaza population also continued to suffer grave hardships as a result of the inhumane blockade imposed since 2007. The international community must not relent in demanding that Israel act in accordance with its international law obligations and end that blockade, cease all human rights violations and bring an end to “this travesty against our people”.

It was unquestionably clear that continuation of illegal Israeli settlement activities and the vast network of related infrastructure, including more than 500 internal checkpoints, roadblocks and other physical obstacles, was the “largest” obstacle to peace. Since the Council’s last debate in April, Israeli announcements of settlement building had continued unabated, “inflaming tensions and mistrust, further poisoning the environment and undermining any prospects for revival of a negotiated peace process”. Yet, regrettably, the Council had failed to find the political will to act. He cited specific announcement of settlement plans and construction activities under way, noting that, at the same time, Israeli occupying forces had raided the Al-Makhrouf area of Beit Jala, a predominately Christian community west of Bethlehem, and carried out the bulldozer demolition of two Palestinian homes and a water well, and, among others, a road and 53 utility poles, thereby cutting off electricity to at least 12 Palestinian families.

He stressed that all settlements and settlement-related activity, including the wall, were illegal, and their cessation and reversal had been repeatedly reaffirmed by the Security Council, General Assembly, Human Rights Council the Economic and Social Council, as well as by the International Court of Justice. He continued to call on the international community to reject all of Israel’s settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and asked: How could Israel speak of a two-State solution, or peace for that matter, when it continued with its illegal policies and practices, “stealing” more Palestinian land, scarce water resources, and agricultural land, as well as destroying homes, civilian infrastructure, and historic and religious landmarks.

As Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas had recently stated: “Our region needs bridges of cooperation, peace and dialogue rather than walls and settlement expansion”, he recalled, cautioning that time was running out for that historic peaceful compromise and reiterating that settlements ran counter to the “land for peace” formula on which the entire Middle East Peace Process was built. The international community must live up to its obligations and muster the political will to compel Israel to abandon its expansionism, colonization and aggression against the Palestinian people and their land. “Our people have waited long enough for their inalienable rights to be realized,” he said, adding that “the time is now, and the international community should spare no effort to realize the vision of two-States [...], making it a historic achievement for our peoples, our region and the global community, and not just a tragic missed historic opportunity with far-reaching ever-more tragic consequences”, he concluded.

HAIM WAXMAN ([Israel](#)) recalled that 18 years ago, a bomb had ripped through the Argentinian Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, killing 85 people and injuring hundreds more. Iran had been responsible for that act, along with its proxy, Hizbullah. Last week, a suicide bomber had exploded on a bus carrying Israeli tourists in Burgas, Bulgaria, killing six people, including a pregnant woman, and injuring 30 more. The victims were mostly young people on vacation. Again, Iran and Hizbullah had been responsible. In recent months, Israelis had been targets in terrorist attacks and attempted attacks in India, Azerbaijan, Thailand, Kenya, Turkey and, most recently, in Cyprus. Iran and Hizbullah had been responsible for each, in what was just one part of a bigger picture; their most recent terrorist plots spanned five continents and at least 24 countries.

He said it should be clear to all that those horrific events were not isolated; a clear line of terror ran from the bombing in Argentina to the attack in Bulgaria, and it ended in Iran. The Iranian campaign of terrorism was “a plague that threatens, not only Israelis and Jews, but innocent people all over the globe”. The time had come for the world to put an end to this campaign, once and for all. One could not underestimate the present moment, as the Middle East was “perhaps at the most important crossroads” since the end of the First World War. There were two main roads that could be taken by the region. One was the road to fundamentalism, and today, the Iranian regime was trying to move the region down that path. Its ideology did not empower people to build a brighter future. Rather, it enslaved them in a “medieval past”.

Last month, he said, Iran’s Vice-President had spoken in the presence of United Nations officials in Tehran, saying that the teachings of the Talmud were responsible for “inciting global drug trade and addiction in a bid to annihilate non-Jewish communities”. He had added that “gynaecologists around the world kill black babies on the order of the Zionists”. That was another example of the “vile anti-Semitism that was part of Iran’s core ideology. Hizbullah and Iran were also an integral part of Syrian President Assad’s “killing machine”, providing him with weapons, ammunition, training, intelligence, logistical equipment. Mr. Assad’s allies in that “trio of brutality” would cross any line to keep that regime in power and to ensure that the Syrian people’s quest for freedom was suppressed.

As the world watched those events unfold, Iran continued to advance its military nuclear programme, he said. The international community should ask itself: If that was the way Iran behaved without nuclear weapons, how would it behave when it possessed them? Israel was horrified by the events taking place in Syria and greatly concerned about the

wider regional implications. Syrian officials had acknowledged their chemical weapons stockpiles and stated clearly their readiness to use them. That vast stockpile was a “potential disaster”, and the international community could not stand idle. Mr. Assad must know that he would be held accountable for using those weapons, and that transferring them to Hizbullah or other terrorist organizations was a “red line that he cannot cross”.

Iran represents “one road — a road of hate”, he said, adding, however, that the Middle East could take a road of peace, progress, and prosperity. Moving down that road would require the region to push back against the fundamentalists. Yet, in that debate and, indeed, across the United Nations, one heard very little about those fundamental issues. He was sure that today he would hear the same old criticisms of Israeli policies, but very little about the core challenges to the region. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had sponsored five “Arab Human Development Reports” since 2002, revealing the crippling deficits of freedom, educational opportunities, and women’s empowerment, which had long afflicted the Arab world. He asked if Israel was responsible for “hunting down the gays”, which were hung in Iran, or the jailing of bloggers by the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, or the censoring by the Lebanese Government of artists, or the arrests and torture in Gaza of women daring to leave the house without a headscarf. Was Israel responsible for the Christians and other minorities fleeing the Middle East in droves because Islamic extremists attacked their communities? Was it responsible for the fact that 25 per cent of Arab youth were unemployed? Maybe it was time to stop using Israel in this debate to “sweep these important issues under the carpet”.

As for the Gaza blockade, he said, there was a crisis in the enclave — for both Israelis and Palestinians — and it was called “Hamas”. The crisis in Gaza was the attacks by Hamas on the crossings used to transfer humanitarian aid; it was about global terrorists having found fertile ground from which they could operate and destabilize other parts of the region, including the Sinai Peninsula, and it was about Hamas’s use of Palestinian schools and hospitals as a “launching pad” to fire rockets at Israeli schools and hospitals. More than 200 rockets had been fired into southern Israel in the past two months alone, yet even as rockets flew out of Gaza, Israel continued to work with the international community to ensure that humanitarian aid, medicine, and goods reached Gaza’s inhabitants. How many other Governments provided essential assistance to those areas from which their citizens were being attacked? he asked.

The leaders in the region should “look in the mirror and finally take the road less travelled”, he urged. That road was one of tolerance, compromise, and moderation; a road that condemned terrorism and promoted understanding of the other — it was the road of peace. The Palestinians should do the same. It could start by dropping its preconditions and rejoining Israel in direct negotiations that dealt with all final status issues. It could end incitement in its schools, mosques and media facilities, and it could name its town squares after peacemakers and not suicide bombers. It could take that road by finally acknowledging that the Jewish people had a historic connection to the land of Israel. His Government was prepared to work hard to achieve lasting peace with the Palestinians through direct negotiations. The people of Israel were prepared to make painful compromises to reach that noble goal. Yet, as it waited for a return to the negotiating table, the Palestinians continued to take unilateral steps that “will not bring us one inch closer to peace”.

“The moment is critical. It is time for the leaders of the Middle East to make the right choices. The people of our region have already sacrificed so much. They deserve nothing less,” he said.

JEFFREY DELAURENTIS ([United States](#)), also condemning the terrorist attack in Bulgaria and extending condolences, recalled what he called the Council’s failure to deal with the Syrian crisis due to vetoes of permanent members. He said recent events show that the Assad regime would not remain in power and said that the United States would support the Syrian people and help prepare for a democratic transition. Pointing to the entry of Syrian forces into the area of separation of UNDOF, he strongly condemned all violations of the separation agreement. He called for further support to Syrian refugees in Lebanon, noting United States contributions. He reiterated warnings to Syria about the use of weapons of mass destruction and demanded that violations of Lebanese sovereignty cease, while welcoming national dialogue talks and efforts to maintain calm in the country.

Describing his country’s continued engagement with the parties in Palestinian/Israeli peace efforts, he said that his country continued to reject the use of international forums to forge decisions that must be negotiated by the parties themselves and said it was incumbent on the parties to eschew unilateral efforts. Reiterating criticism of settlement activity, he said that results must be achieved on the ground and the Palestinian Authority must be supported for that purpose, along with UNRWA. Violence and threats of violence must cease and the parties encouraged to resume negotiations.

GERT ROSENTHAL (Guatemala) stated that the Palestinian issue had been on the Council's agenda for a long time, but had been somewhat displaced by current events in other countries of the Middle East. Guatemala believed that the creation of a Palestinian state living in peace and security behind secure borders with its neighbour, Israel, was an objective of singular importance. The situation was extremely fragile, but that did not mean it was impossible to solve. He expressed concern over "acts that threatened the prospect of a peaceful solution", such as Israel's denial of access to United Nations officials appointed by the Human Rights Council to discuss the legal situation of the settlements in occupied territories. He also had serious doubts about Israel's characterization of one of the most important organs for the protection of human rights as "biased and inaccurate".

Guatemala was also concerned, he added, that about 80 per cent of families in Gaza relied on humanitarian aid. While recognizing Israel's security concerns, the blockade was a "collective punishment" on all the innocent families living in the area. All armed groups from Gaza should cease their military pretensions, he stressed, as their actions were prolonging the suffering of their families and jeopardizing the peace process. Respect for international law was key to the peace process in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

GÉRARD ARAUD (France) said the Syrian regime had systematically violated Security Council resolutions by intensifying its use of heavy weaponry against its people and its bombardments of urban centres and, today, from planes, for the first time. According to non-governmental organizations, some 19,000 Syrians had been killed by the regime's strikes and, along with other alarming statistics, another million faced food risks. The escalation of violence had led to the flow of thousands of refugees towards neighbouring countries, whose assistance France commended. The situation had led to a grave violation and penetration of the Golan and the 1994 separation zone agreement. France would not tolerate Syria's use of chemical or biological weapons against its people or neighbours. It, meanwhile, commended Lebanon for not allowing the country to be "dragged into a conflict that is not theirs".

He said the Security Council's impotence, owing to the position of China and the Russian Federation, had not left France without recourse. His country would support the Syrian people and their democratic transition. New European Union sanctions had been adopted, and France would support the opposition on the ground and help it coalesce around a new Government. It would also build a case against the Syrian regime to establish its responsibility for its crimes against humanity. At the same time, its threats were not without consequences on the peace process in the Middle East. Nor was the Israeli policy of settlements. The violent expulsions of Palestinians too often went unpunished. He called on Israel not to approve the recent report of the Levy Commission and to put an immediate end to gross violations of international law. He deplored that the Council and Quartet could not express a unified position on the settlements, which was the main threat to the two-State solution. Additionally, the financial crisis plaguing the Palestinian Authority was without precedence, and he called on donors to re-mobilize support for the construction of a Palestinian State.

TOFIG F. MUSAYEV (Azerbaijan) said that many issues in the Middle East were pending, and while the prospects were promising, the challenges of transition were, to some extent, intimidating. The international community should direct its collective efforts to help the countries of the region make their transition successful and durable. Political consistency was a major prerequisite for achieving the desired outcome. He was profoundly concerned at the standstill in the peace process. Particularly alarming were the construction and expansion of settlements, confiscation of Palestinian land, displacement of the civilian population and attempts to legitimize illegal activities. Such measures represented a blatant disregard and contempt for human rights and placed a tremendous burden on civilians, thereby obstructing the peace process and, more dangerously, threatening the two-State solution. He also remained deeply concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian and security situation in Gaza.

He stressed that there was no alternative to a negotiated peace. However, the lack of agreement on political issues in situations of armed conflict and military occupation could not be used as a pretext for showing disrespect for international humanitarian and human rights law. He reaffirmed respect for the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the continued applicability of international legal norms. It was crucial to initiate urgent measures to discourage the destructive practices. In performing its primary responsibility, the Security Council must react adequately, in order to ensure that human rights and fundamental freedoms were respected. Azerbaijan supported the ongoing efforts for Palestinian reconciliation under Egypt's sponsorship and hoped that Palestinian unity would soon be restored, in the interest of legitimate national aspirations. The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and statehood had been recognized, and his country supported Palestine's application for admission to the United Nations.

WANG MIN (China) said that dialogue and negotiations, on the basis of international agreements and towards a two-State solution, were the only way to resolve the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. An early resumption of talks was the priority. He hoped that the Quartet would play a greater role in that area, welcoming also a significant Security Council role. He called for an end to settlement activity on the part of Israel, as well as any other activities that increased tension. In Gaza, all resolutions must be implemented and the blockade lifted to alleviate the humanitarian situation. He supported the establishment of a Palestinian state, along with United Nations membership for Palestine and the attainment of a just and lasting peace for the Middle East.

He reiterated that last week's text on Syria failed because it violated basic principles of international relations. The crisis in Syria must be ended through the actions of the Syrians themselves, with international support for internal dialogue.

VITALY CHURKIN (Russian Federation) said his country supported non-violent change to realize the aspirations of the peoples of the Middle East. At the same time, the Arab Spring, as well as the stagnation in the process, should not be a reason to marginalize efforts for a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The release of more Palestinian detainees, supply of equipment to the Palestinian Authority and other measures, including an end to the settlement activities of Israel, should create a climate conducive for talks. He expressed concern over the humanitarian and political situation in Gaza, in addition, adding that Palestinian reconciliation was particularly important, supporting in that regard the efforts of the Egyptian President. Condemning everyday pressures that Palestinians were subjected to, he said that recognition of the Palestinian state would not impede the peace process.

Reiterating his country's position on Syria, including its support for Kofi Annan's plan, he said that the situation had been exacerbated by activity outside the Security Council by the United States and other countries. He assumed that Syria would abide by its commitment to prohibit the use of chemical weapons.

JOSÉ FILIPE MORAES CABRAL (Portugal), aligning himself with the statement to be made by the European Union, condemned the terrorist attack in Bulgaria, as well as the rocket fire from Gaza, and said that the last resolution adopted by the Council presented a new opportunity for the Syrian Government to abide by its commitments. He called on all parties to engage constructively with the Joint Representative and cease violence, towards a peaceful solution of the conflict. Events in the Arab world made a resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict even more urgent.

Among the most important steps that must be taken in that regard, he said, was the end of Israeli settlement and land appropriation activity. The humanitarian situation of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza was also deplorable. He urged Israel to cooperate fully with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and its humanitarian parties, release more detainees and transfer funds to the Palestinian Authority. The resumption of direct negotiations was the overall priority, but the opportunity for such talks was rapidly closing, he stressed, agreeing that time was running out. Both parties must engage seriously and courageously.

VINAY KUMAR (India) said that the focus of the international community on the unfolding events in the Middle East appeared to have overshadowed the Middle East Peace Process. Under those circumstances, there was a growing risk of a sharp deterioration of the situation. "Clearly, a status quo over the Palestinian question is untenable and unsustainable, particularly when the leading members of the international community claim to be supporting the democratic aspirations of other people in the region", he said. In India's view, the first step to be taken for the resumption of direct talks between the parties was the freezing of illegal settlement activities by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Those activities were threatening the basic premise of the two-State solution, he stressed, calling on Israel to end those actions immediately. While Israeli security concerns were legitimate, there was a need to avoid all violence against civilians. In that regard, the blockade of Gaza was causing severe hardships, amounting to the "collective punishment" of the population.

Despite severe political and economic constraints, the progress made by the Palestinian Authority in institution-building was commendable. India expected the United Nations, therefore, to reaffirm that progress through a favourable decision on Palestine's application for membership. Meanwhile, the donor community should provide additional resources to address the severe financial difficulties that the Palestinian Authority was facing. The Palestinian tax revenue must be transferred to the Authority regularly and on time. India, for its part, would continue to provide material and technical assistance to the Palestinian people through budgetary support, various developmental projects undertaken through the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA), bilateral training programmes for

institutional capacity-building and human resource development, and regular financial assistance to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Finally, with respect to Syria, India saw no alternative to the full implementation of resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012). A right step in that direction would be for all sides to implement resolution 2059 (2012), adopted unanimously by the Council last week. All parties, both inside and outside of Syria, must fully cooperate with Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan.

MOHAMMED LOULICHKI (Morocco) said the Palestinian cause had been marked by a freeze on negotiations and a deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, as well as a stalemate in the vision of a two-State solution as a result of Israeli settlements. As a consequence, the future of the entire Middle East was in question. This year had witnessed the further, unprecedented expansion of settlements. Its occupying forces had mobilized their “legal arsenal”, and settlers and their armed elements had enshrined their occupation of Palestinian lands by expelling those people from their homes and digging up trees, which were the main sources of their income. The international community had repeatedly condemned that situation, but despite that, Israeli authorities had continued their settlement policy, including in East Jerusalem, and the Security Council had been unable to reaffirm its position against that.

However, he said, the Palestinian people had continued to demand their rights and shown themselves to be flexible and responsive to all requests for negotiations. The objective of the Israelis could be questioned, as their policies had “almost brought to naught” the vision of the two-State solution. The gradual isolation of Jerusalem was illustrative of a premeditated plan to ensure that the two-State solution remained elusive. The situation in East Jerusalem was indeed troubling, owing to the rate of settlement building and the desecration of holy sites. Morocco denounced and rejected that irresponsible position, and strongly believed that any changes to the Occupied Palestinian Territory ran counter to Security Council texts. His country understood the intentions of those policies and States, which were accompanied by steps to Judaize East Jerusalem and had changed the very nature of the city. He urged the international community, particularly the Security Council, to assume its responsibility.

PETER WITTIG (Germany) condemned in the strongest terms last week’s attacks against Israeli citizens in Bulgaria. Turning to Syria, he said the “double veto” last week of the resolution had marked a low point in the Council’s effort to end the bloodshed. He was deeply disappointed that the 15-member body had not been able to send a clear message to that regime that it must face consequences if it continued to trample international law and its own promises. That failure reduced “our leverage” on Syrian actors to end the violent spiral. Syria was indeed moving closer to outright civil war and a failed State, about which Germany was deeply worried. It would continue to support the Joint Envoy’s endeavours. The six-point plan remained key, and his country would help to bring more pressure to bear on the Syrian regime for its implementation. It would also assist the Syrian opposition in its efforts to unite, with the objective of a political dialogue. It remained urgent for the Council to pave the way for an end to the bloodshed.

Concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he said last month had seen another spike in rocket attacks from Gaza, while the situation in the Sinai had also worsened. He fully recognized Israel’s legitimate right to self-defence, and he called on all sides to use the utmost restraint and to consider the humanitarian consequences of all use of force. Lasting security could only be achieved by addressing the root causes of the conflict. The goals of security and realization of aspirations could only be achieved through a negotiated two-State solution, the basis of which must not be allowed to deteriorate further. Germany followed with concern the recent decisions on settlement expansion and government subsidies for their development, as well as the discussion regarding the status of certain outposts. “Let me be clear,” he said: “international humanitarian law applies to the entirety of the Occupied Territories”. The road map obliged Israel to dismantle all outposts built since March 2001. Those could not be legalized.

MARK LYALL GRANT (United Kingdom) expressed his deepest condolences to the victims of the attack in Bulgaria. Turning to the situation in Syria, he said it had now entered its eighteenth month. Despite the efforts of the Joint Envoy, the Syrian regime had refused to implement a single aspect of the six-point plan and had ignored Security Council texts. It had intensified its brutal repression, killing almost 20,000 Syrians and detaining, torturing, raping and abusing innocent men, women and children. It had also continued its indiscriminate and disproportionate use of heavy weapons. The reports now of the regime’s attacks by fighter jets marked yet a further dangerous escalation and underlined the boundaries it was willing to cross to hang on to power. Last week’s vetoes by Russia and China had been the third example of denying the Council its ability to influence that situation for the better. The deteriorating situation had now spilled over the border and was “sucking in” the region. The clear violation of Lebanon’s sovereignty and territorial integrity was but one example. The United Kingdom would continue to work towards a political transition, which was the only way forward for Syria.

As grave as that situation was, he said, the world community must not lose sight of the ongoing injustice of the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He shared the goal of a two-State solution based on the 1967 lines, a fair solution for the refugees, respect for Palestinian sovereignty and protection of Israeli security, with Jerusalem as the joint capital. Both sides must work towards resumption of direct negotiations, although progress in that regard “looks increasingly unlikely in the near future”. In the immediate term, it was crucial to guard against threats to the two-State solution and to prevent further deterioration on the ground. Settlements were the biggest threat and undermined the very viability of the two-State solution. He was dismayed by announcements last month concerning tenders for 171 homes for settlements in East Jerusalem, among others. Any step that entrenched settlements in the West Bank risked sending the message that Israel was not serious about its support of the two-State solution. He called on it to halt demolition of Palestinian houses and infrastructure in Area C of the West Bank and to address the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people.

BASO SANGQU (South Africa) said that, with the blockage of Gaza now entering its sixth year, there did not appear to be even a “glimmer of hope” that the Israeli government would lift it. “It is ironic that, should there have been a blockade of this nature in almost any other part of the world ... this Council would have had no hesitation to respond immediately,” he added, stressing that the international community’s demands that Israel end the blockade must be adhered to. It was the obligation of the international community, especially the Council, to use the variety of measures at its disposal to ensure that the occupation and the blockade in Gaza were immediately ended. South Africa condemned the continued settlement construction in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem in particular, as well as the demolition of Palestinian property by settlers. Additionally, on the issue of the Palestinian political prisoners, the delegation welcomed Israel’s decision to allow family members to visit prisoners, but urged Israel to fulfil its obligations under humanitarian law by ensuring the prisoners’ safety and welfare, including respecting their basic human rights.

South Africa condemned the assault, torture, killing and deportation of African migrants in Israel, which also constituted human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. With regard to the Quartet’s efforts, he said that there was a serious need to “take a step back and assess the utility of the Quartet in its current makeup ... correcting its mistakes and weaknesses, possibly reconfiguring or even disbanding if needs be.” He encouraged the Palestinian parties to forge ahead with their reconciliation efforts, as well as to proceed rapidly with preparations for the upcoming local elections. Additionally, South Africa remained extremely concerned that the violence in Syria continued unabated. The only way forward was the six-point plan as proposed by Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan, he said, calling again on the parties to stop the fighting and to immediately start negotiations.

RAZA BASHIR TARAR (Pakistan) said that there was an elaborate framework that had been created for Middle East peace, but the lack of political will on the part of one of the parties continued to stymie progress. He asked why those who had influence on that party did not use it and called for the Security Council to act with urgency. He added that reports showed that Palestinians were deprived of rights and that Council resolutions were flouted by Israel.

It was only logical, he said, that the Council consider steps to deal with such non-compliance. Israel must withdraw from all occupied lands. Maintaining that the solution in Syria lay in a Syrian-led political process and support for Mr. Annan’s six-point plan, he said that the so-called Arab Spring should serve as a prime mover for concerted action to realize the aspirations of the Palestinian people. His country remained ready to assist with all efforts for full recognition of the Palestinian state.

KODJO MENAN (Togo) reiterated his country’s condemnation of the terrorist attack in Bulgaria. In the Middle East, he said that unilateral actions and provocations on the part of both parties in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict continued. He called on Israel to end settlement expansion, welcoming steps to remove outposts, as well as calling for an end to the blockade of Gaza and approval of all United Nations projects in the area. Negotiations on the release of detainees should be expanded. Rocket-fire and other provocations directed against Israel should also end. Palestinian reconciliation was important, as was a renunciation of violence by Hamas. Dialogue between the parties was critical. He urged the Quartet to lead the parties in that direction, encouraging Jordan in its efforts to that end, as well.

On Syria, he regretted the inability of the Security Council to speak with one voice and counter “the strong urge of the parties to fight it out”. It was not too late for the Council to take up its responsibilities; the whole world should continue to seek a solution. Countries with influence should exert greater pressure to end hostilities and start dialogue. The creation of a government of national unity was needed. Noting the threat of regional destabilization posed by the Syrian crisis, he urged the parties to act with restraint.

NÉSTOR OSORIO (Colombia), speaking in his national capacity, reaffirmed his country's rejection of the heinous attack in Bulgaria last week. Further, Colombia had always articulated its vision of the two-State solution and, today, it reiterated that negotiation between the two parties was the only viable path. He supported the work of the Quartet, as well as relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, and the Road Map, and he regretted that, notwithstanding individual and collective efforts of the Quartet and regional parties, the sides had been unable to resume direct talks. He recalled the Secretary-General's statement to the Asia-Pacific Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, held in Bangkok this month, in which he said that the actions on the ground by the parties did not contribute to the creation of an environment propitious for dialogue, and that Israeli settlements were a breach of international law and its Road Map commitments.

He said his country also believed that a unified Palestinian Government was key to the two-State solution. While efforts continued to renew talks between the two sides, international support was needed to help the Palestinians consolidate their institutions and improve their fiscal situation. Sustained economic growth was required, as was job creation in the West Bank. Gaza could be aided by increased investor confidence. He was concerned about the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as well as by the launch of rockets from Gaza. There was no justification for indiscriminate attacks against civilians on either side, as that flagrantly violated peace in an already fragile region.

That, he added, was especially true for Palestinian refugees in Syria. Given the devastating tragedy in Syria, humanitarian access was vital for the 500,000 Palestinian refugees living there. He was also extremely worried that there was no effective way to guarantee the security and facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. He asked all parties to take the necessary measures to preserve life, prevent forced displacement, and protect the trapped Palestinian refugees. He was alarmed at the fighting near the Syrian-Lebanese border, while also stressing the need to support the Syrians who sought refuge in Lebanon.

NAWAF SALAM (Lebanon) insisted on full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and paid tribute to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Lebanon would defend Syria's unity and the right of its people to live in freedom.

On the Arab-Israeli conflict and its repercussions, he expressed serious concern at the announcement by the Israeli Defense Minister to demolish eight villages in the occupied West Bank, in which Palestinian Arabs had lived for more than 200 years. That decision expelled more than 1,500 people under the pretext that the Israeli Army needed the land for military exercises, whereas that step really aimed at appropriating more Palestinian territory and establishing another buffer zone south of the West Bank along the Green Line. The Security Council must undertake its role, and Lebanon wanted to know what steps it was planning to put an end to such practices. Or, he asked, would the Council remain paralyzed in the face of Israeli international law violations in total disregard for Security Council and General Assembly resolutions?

He noted that the Levy Commission established by the Israeli Prime Minister had recently concluded that Israeli outposts were legal and that all settlement acts were legitimate, and that the settlers should be given property rights. The Commission called for a revocation of Jordanian land law, which was also valid in the West Bank, and for implementation of the Israeli Supreme Court decision of 1979, with a view to building settlements and protecting settler rights. The legal adviser of an Israeli human rights organization had said those findings legalized a crime, that the report was written in Alice's wonderland and governed by the rules of absurdity, as the report implied that there was no occupation, no illegal outposts, and, apparently, no Palestinian people. In the words of Alice, said the adviser, "this is the silliest party I have ever attended."

MOOTAZ AHMADEIN KHALIL (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said Palestinian independence was long overdue and serious international action was needed towards that end. The window of opportunity for implementing a two-State solution based on 1967 borders was rapidly closing. Palestine's 23 September 2011 application for full United Nations membership was consistent with the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence. He looked forward to the Council upholding its responsibility and taking action that recognized the Palestinian's legitimate and historic rights and contributed to peace efforts. He regretted that Israel's deliberate refusal to respect the well-known parameters of the peace process, as well as its insistence on continuing to change facts on the ground, had thwarted all efforts to date by regional and global partners to achieve peace.

He strongly condemned Israel's illegal activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly settlement building, creation of the separation wall, confiscation of Palestinian land, displacement of Palestinian civilians, and attempts to legalize illegal settlements, including its recent Levy Commission Report, which suggested that the West Bank was not occupied territory and, therefore, the settlements were legal. Such actions undermined the resumption of credible negotiations and achievement of a just, lasting solution to the conflict, and they must stop. The recommendations of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to the Council in January on the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory must be implemented. The Council must demand that Israel end all violations of international law and fully abide by its legal obligations. He called for the full, immediate lifting of Israel's illegal blockade of Gaza. He also expressed support for Palestinian reconciliation efforts.

Speaking in his national capacity, he lauded the international community's attention to developments in the region, including the move to resolve the Syrian crisis based on the six-point plan. But, that should not divert attention from the Palestinian question, which remained the main source of instability in the region.

DEEPAK OBHRAI ([Canada](#)) said that the Assad regime had lost legitimacy by waging a campaign of terror on the Syrian people. There was no future for President Assad in Syria. His regime was creating sectarian strife and regional instability. The Action Group in Geneva had conceived a pragmatic transition plan building on Special Envoy Annan's six-point plan, but that would not work unless those who continued to support the Assad regime with arms and resources stopped immediately. It was past time for the Security Council to stand up for peace with universal and binding sanctions, to pressure President Assad to honour commitments he had already made. The failure to do so during the recent debate on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic (UNSMIS) demonstrated the tragic unwillingness of some Council members to live up to their international responsibilities.

The International Atomic Energy Agency's reports of Iranian non-compliance with its obligations and of that country's nuclear weapons development effort reinforced Canada's deep concern about its ambitions and the resulting consequences for regional and global security, he said. Iran needed to understand that the international community was serious and expected it to take real and concrete steps to halt its nuclear weapons development programme before any sanctions were eased. Amidst the strife and instability in the Middle East, the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians was languishing, he said. Canada wholly supported the efforts of the Quartet, based on its September 2010 statement, as well as those by Jordan to bring the parties together. The parties needed to resume direct peace negotiations without delay or preconditions. Unilateral actions by either side were not helpful to a resumption of negotiations, as they prejudged the outcome. Canada could not accept any renewed effort by the Palestinian Authority to change its status in the United Nations. The stakes were too high for the peace process itself, and for the Organization.

TSUNEO NISHIDA ([Japan](#)), condemning the Syrian authorities for their failure to keep their own commitments, called upon them to swiftly implement Kofi Annan's six-point plan. It was extremely regrettable that last week the Security Council had failed, due to the exercise of veto, to unite and speak in one voice. Expressing concern that UNSMIS had to suspend its operational activities due to the escalation of violence, he stated the Government of Japan had decided to extend an additional grant of \$5 million in cooperation with UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP), and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Turning to the Palestinian question, he added that Japan firmly supported a two-State solution and said it was regrettable that direct negotiations between the parties had been suspended for two years. He called upon Israel not to be satisfied with the status quo on the ground and to be positively engaged with the Palestinians. The two-State solution could only be achieved through sincere direct negotiations.

MARIA LUIZA RIBEIRO VIOTTI ([Brazil](#)) said that her country followed with distress the escalation of the crisis in Syria. It was deeply worried at the difficulties the Council had encountered in sending a unified message in response to the latest developments. An urgent ceasefire was imperative and that required determined support for Joint Special Envoy Kofi Anan, for his six-point plan and for the Final Communiqué of the Geneva Action Group. The Security Council needed to work harder to discharge its responsibilities in that regard. Brazil supported the approach taken by the Action Group and strongly encouraged the Council to endorse the Group's Communiqué. Mr. Annan's efforts towards a negotiated solution and a Syrian-led political transition continued to be supported by the international community and were the best, if not the only chance, to avoid a further descent into a spiral of destruction that could

bring greater suffering to the Syrian population, generate increasing flows of refugees and risk affecting the whole region.

Meaningful development had yet to be seen in the long-stalled peace process between Israel and Palestine, she went on. Brazil regretted that recent attempts to revamp direct negotiations did not bear fruit. The paralysis of that peace process brought even more to the fore the question of Israeli settlements. Settlements were illegal under international law and were contrary to peace, detrimental to Israel's own security concerns and a threat to the two-State solution. Brazil was troubled by attempts to affirm the legality of settlements and outposts. Those attempts supported a logic that ran counter to the two-state solution and to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. In the face of those movements, the recognition of the Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders and that State's admission as a member of the United Nations were fully warranted, as was recalled by Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff before the General Assembly in September. She called for support for an enhanced role for the Security Council in the Middle East Peace Process.

ERTUĞRUL APAKAN ([Turkey](#)) said the Israeli-Palestinian dispute continued to imperil prospects for peace and stability in the region. Israel's practices undermined the two-State solution and the established parameters for peace. The settlement activities continued unabated, with unprecedented indifference. Not only did Israel persist in its illegal practices, but it also attempted to legitimize them. Turkey supported the rightful aspirations of the Palestinian people for internationally recognized statehood and, thus, welcomed the Palestinian appeal for membership to the United Nations. It also praised Palestinian reconciliation efforts. At the same time, his country condemned the suicide bombing in Bulgaria. Drawing attention to the Gaza blockade, he said that was "an embarrassment for the international community", and he called for its immediate end.

Regarding the situation in Syria, he said the number of Syrians seeking shelter in Turkey now exceeded 40,000, and his country would continue to support them. He called once more for an end to the violence and the implementation of the six-point plan. As the shooting down of the Turkish military aircraft in international airspace had demonstrated, the Syrian crisis increasingly posed a threat to regional peace and security. Finally, he said the socio-political transformation under way in the Middle East, triggered by the rightful aspirations of its people for a better life, exposed a volatile situation whereby a strong commitment to the principles of democracy, respect for human rights and rule of law was essential. Those principles also applied to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and he called on the international community to give decisive support to a just and lasting solution based on global recognition of a Palestine with 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living beside Israel in peace.

GARY QUINLAN ([Australia](#)) said the current peace process "standstill" risked undermining the secure and peaceful future for Palestinians and Israelis. The world community had called repeatedly for a two-State solution, but mere repetition of the essential two-State goal would not achieve results on the ground. This year had seen modest progress towards negotiations, but none had yet resumed. Both sides must refrain from actions that damaged the peace process, including Israeli settlement expansions and Gaza rocket attacks targeting civilians. The world must continue to support Palestinian efforts to build their institutions and enhance their Government's capacity. For its part, Australia had signed partnerships with the Palestinian Authority and UNRWA.

Turning to Syria, he said his country was disappointed by the Council's failure to adopt a Chapter VII resolution. President Assad must live up to his obligations under Mr. Annan's peace plan and end the violence immediately. The humanitarian and regional implications of this conflict were serious. To help alleviate the burden on neighbouring countries, Australia had provided \$16 million in assistance to agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Collective efforts on Syria must be directed towards an immediate end to the violence and the realization of a political solution that met the legitimate aspirations of all Syria's citizens.

DESRA PERCAYA ([Indonesia](#)) expressed concern over the absence of progress in the peace process. The settlements were the most potent obstacle to peace in the Middle East, particularly the two-State solution. Other final status issues were also significant, but settlements were the key challenge. The settlement issue was continuously manipulated by Israel. Every time the prospect for peace emerged, a sudden twist — such as settler violence and extremism, the eviction of Palestinians and demolition of their homes, or accelerated settlement construction — emerged to thwart progress. Israel also continued to illegally build its separation wall in the West Bank and to maintain its blockade of Gaza, which made recovery of that enclave impossible. Unless Israel resolved its settlement policy, as well as halted evictions, demolitions and settlement expansion, it was impossible to conceive of any progress in the peace negotiations.

Israel must fully abide by Council resolutions concerning settlements, he said, calling on Israel to dismantle all settlements built in violation of those resolutions and completely freeze all settlement activity. The conflict must be resolved through a two-State solution. But that could not happen if Israel “sponsors a settlement menace which frustrates every effort and imperils every hope”. The two-State solution was only meaningful if it was comprehensive and embraced other relevant political tracks, such as Israel and Syria, as well as Israel and Lebanon. Israel must withdraw fully from land it still occupied in Lebanon and from the Syrian Golan, and it must fully comply with Council resolutions 242 and 338. He called on the international community to maintain its support for Palestinian statehood on the basis of 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

HUSSEIN HANIFF ([Malaysia](#)) said his country was appalled at the civilian deaths in Syria and called for all parties in the conflict to immediately cease the violence. The Syrian Government and the opposition should fully commit to the six-point plan, and the international community, Syrian Government and all other parties should work together to find an amicable solution for the Syrian people.

He said the question of Palestine could not be separate or overlooked. In order to achieve peace in the Middle East, the plight of the Palestinian people should be resolved with international determination. The solution had always been in sight, but it had been 20 years since the Oslo Accord. Nor had the Arab peace initiative ever materialized, and the longstanding vision of the two-State solution was far from being realized. The continued occupation was as unlawful today as it was in 1967. The Israeli regime had displaced thousands of Palestinian people and killed thousands of innocent civilians; it had failed in its obligation as an occupying Power, continuing down the degrading trajectory with impunity. Its persistent blockade of Gaza had brought yet more misery to more than 1.6 million Palestinian people.

Having just returned from Gaza on a United Nations mission of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli practices, he could say first-hand that the blockade was having a devastating impact on the people of Gaza. He detailed the suffering, adding that the Special Committee had reached “one overarching and deeply troubling conclusion: the mass imprisonment of Palestinians, the routine demolitions of homes and the displacement of Palestinians, the widespread violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians, and the blockade and resultant reliance on illegal smuggling to survive — these practices amount to a strategy to either force the Palestinian people off their land or so severely marginalize them as to establish and maintain a system of permanent oppression”. He called for the immediate halt to Israeli military activity and the withdrawal from all Occupied Territory.

THOMAS MAYR-HARTING ([European Union](#)) said that the Union remained deeply concerned by the deteriorating situation in Syria and strongly condemned the increasing use of force by the regime, including use of heavy artillery and shelling against populated areas. It was appalled by the horrific killings in the village of Tremseh on 12 July and called for an immediate international independent investigation of that incident. The Syrian regime should immediately end the killing of civilians, withdraw the army from besieged towns and cities and allow for peaceful transition for the sake of the country. The European Union was concerned about the recent intensification of violence, including in Damascus. That situation demonstrated the urgent need for a political transition that would meet the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people and bring back stability in the country.

On the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, he said that the Union was unequivocally committed to Israel’s security and believed the viability of a two-State solution must be maintained. The European Union was greatly concerned about developments on the ground which threatened to make the two-State solution impossible. Those included the marked acceleration of settlement construction, as those remained illegal under international law; ongoing evictions and house demolitions in East Jerusalem; the serious limitations on the Palestinian Authority to promote the development of Palestinian Communities in Area C; and the Palestinian Authority’s current financial difficulties. European Union foreign ministers had reiterated that a way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of the two States. The Union also called on Israel to take further meaningful and far-reaching steps allowing for the reconstruction and recovery of the Gaza Strip.

ISRAIL U. TILEGEN ([Kazakhstan](#)), speaking on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), said that a just peace in the Middle East required firm and prompt action by the Security Council to ensure Israel’s full compliance with its obligations and to end its military occupation. The international community had a special responsibility to help Palestinians realize their national rights, including their right of return and the establishment of an independent state. Citing settlement building, excavations under holy sites and confiscation of land, he said Israeli practices were flagrant violations of international law and posed a challenge to the international community. He

reaffirmed the centrality of the cause of Palestine for the entire Islamic World, stressing that East Jerusalem remained an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and that aggressions against holy sites could have serious repercussions on regional and international peace and security.

ABDALLAH YAHYA A. AL-MOUALLIMI (Saudi Arabia), associating himself with statements made on behalf of NAM and OIC, said redressing the Palestinian plight was an obligation of the entire world, adding that Israel's settlement activity and other practices were murdering the peace process. A strong international political mechanism was needed to stop those practices, as they continued despite universal condemnation. He also called for the end of changes to the character of Jerusalem through illegal displacement, excavation underneath and around the Al Aqsa Mosque and other measures. He finally drew attention to what he called the racist separation wall. He called on the Security Council to visit the Occupied Palestinian Territories in response to the invitation sent by the Palestinian Authority President.

On Syria, describing the extent of mass killing and displacement, he said the regime was encouraged by the inability of the Council to take firm action. The regime would not have killed and displaced thousands of people if it did not receive backing from influential members of the international community. Arab States were urging resolution of the crisis through political means and were turning to the General Assembly to uphold Charter responsibilities in that regard.

GRÉTA GUNNARSDÓTTIR (Iceland) also expressed extreme disappointment at last week's veto on the Syria text, urging the Council to continue its deliberations on how best to prevent further conflict in Syria and encourage a permanent peace, addressing the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people without regard to ethnicity, religion or gender. A ceasefire was a priority, along with ending all violence aimed at civilians on the part of any party.

At the same time, she said, the Palestinian situation could not be put on the back burner. Accelerated settlement activity remained the main obstacle to peace there. She called on Israel to end it and to cooperate with the fact-finding team of the Human Rights Council to investigate the implications of settlements on the rights of the Palestinian people. In the same vein, she encouraged the Council to accept the invitation to visit the territories. With all avenues seeming closed to the Palestinians there was a critical need for a breakthrough, which must come from the international community, which could demand the immediate halt to settlement activity and the lifting of the Gaza blockade. The Council should renew its commitment to solving the conflict.

MOHAMMAD KHAZAEI (Iran) said the situation in the Middle East was becoming ever more complex, with more threats from terrorism, extremism and foreign intervention. All were impediments to growth, development, and stability. On the issue of Palestine, the Security Council and world community must spare no efforts to prevent the escalation of tensions. Desecration of Muslim holy places and the expansion of illegal settlements continued on an unprecedented scale. The Israeli occupying forces were carrying out missile air strikes and artillery bombardment of civilian areas in Gaza, and deliberately targeted and killed Palestinian civilians in its ongoing policy of extrajudicial executions. No place in Gaza was safe from Israel's relentless aggression; even playgrounds were becoming targets for Israeli warplanes. Iran supported the action of the Non-Aligned Movement to ask Switzerland, as depositary, to reconvene a conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, to hold the parties to their obligations.

Regarding Syria, he said the crisis should be resolved peacefully and through national dialogue. Iran had expressed its readiness to host talks between the Syrian Government and opposition parties, but numerous efforts by certain States were further complicating the situation through the provision of financial aid and weapons support to armed groups. Sabotage and terror, as well as violence against innocent people, must be brought to an end. The regional countries should cooperate with each other to resolve the Syrian crisis, to ensure the final result benefited the Syrian people, the region, and the international community.

He said the representative of the "Zionist criminal regime" had levelled baseless allegations against his country with regard to the recent terrorist attack in Bulgaria and Iran's peaceful nuclear activities. That regime quickly announced that Iran had been behind it. Iran had never and would never be involved in such despicable acts. Moreover, such a terrorist operation could only be planned and carried out by the same regime whose short history was full of State terrorism operations and assassinations aimed at implicating others for narrow political gains. He could provide many examples showing that that regime had killed its own citizens and innocent Jewish people in the last couple of decades, in order to blame others. Iran had been a victim of such operations; the assassinations of its nuclear

scientists were “fresh cases”. On the nuclear issue, the Israeli regime’s clandestine development and unlawful possession of hundreds of nuclear warheads and its nuclear weapons arsenal was unique in the region and a threat to international peace and security. Unless the United Nations, including the Security Council, took meaningful steps to deal with such criminal policies and practices, hope for a peaceful and stable Middle East would remain elusive.

JORGE VALERO BRICEÑO (Venezuela) said that, despite the many resolutions of the Security Council on the Palestinian issue since 1947, Israel’s political and military elite had established a “new apartheid in Palestine”. That included roads for the exclusive use of the settlers; differentiated management in Palestinian settlements and villages; endorsement of the aggressions of the settlers against the Palestinian population; and segregationist controls and checkpoints. Continued illegal settlements were an “ominous” violation of international law and must cease immediately. All those inhuman practices were implemented by a State, which, paradoxically, called itself “democratic”. He was deeply concerned about the plight of thousands of Palestinian civilians, including children and adolescents, who had been arrested by the Israeli Government without charge or trial, and kept in inhumane conditions under the practice of “administrative detention”. He demanded their immediate release.

Unfortunately, he said, there were Powers that supported those abuses and which violated the Charter principles and international humanitarian law. Venezuela had repeatedly called on the Council to consider using its Charter-mandated authority in that situation; its failure to do so caused a “humanitarian drama of dire consequences”. Additionally, the frequent violation of Lebanon’s sovereignty and the occupation of the Golan were of great concern. He also demanded an end to the Gaza blockade, while urging the Council to recommend the admission of Palestine as a full Member State. In Syria, the conflict was regrettable and painful. The Council must contribute, unambiguously, to implementation of the six-point plan. Intentions to undermine it were of great concern. “Warmongers do not want peace in Syria, as they seek to bolster their geopolitical interests through a regime change that, if it materializes, would destabilize the Middle East,” he warned.

ABDULRAHMAN YAAQOB Y.A. AL-HAMADI (Qatar) said one of the worst policies of the occupying Power was its efforts to Judaize Jerusalem and obliterate the character of that sacred city. Those measures had no legal consequences whatsoever. Jerusalem would remain an Arab, Islamic and Christian city, and there would be no Palestinian State without it. The settlement activities were alarming, as were attempts to give them legitimacy. The recommendations of the Levy Commission ran counter to international law and international legitimacy. Two decades after Oslo, Israel continued to speak of its search for peace and to launch calls to Palestinian leaders to negotiate, but it also continued to launch policies that ran counter to those calls. In the absence of a strong basis for negotiations, how could they resume? How could they bear fruit as long as Israelis detained thousands of Palestinians and subjected them to unjust and cruel conditions, and its blockade of Gaza continued? He called on the Council and Quartet and those countries with influence to pressure Israel to cease its settlement policies and the blockade, and on all United Nations members to help the Palestinian State gain recognition.

He said the Syrian people continued to be subjected to systematic and cruel violations by their Government. Regrettably, instead of shouldering its responsibility to its people, the Government had adopted “a policy of fire and iron”, using heavy artillery, attack helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. That had led some Syrians to bear arms to defend themselves. The Government bore “full responsibility” for that situation. He regretted the Council’s inability to deal with the crisis effectively. Consequently, Member States had found themselves obliged to adopt different measures to actively face that crisis in accordance with international law. On that basis, the Arab Group in New York was going to the General Assembly “to deal with the serious threat represented by the Syrian crisis”. The Joint Special Envoy and his initiative could only be effective if Syria behaved in a responsible manner, which led to a transition to democracy and a pluralistic State. The cohesion of the Syrian people and the nation’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the Charter’s principles were paramount.

ABDOU SALAM DIALLO, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, also condemned, in the strongest possible terms, the “murderous” and “cowardly” attack on Israeli tourists in Bulgaria last week. With regard to the situation in the Middle East, he said that the current situation of “no war and no peace” was unsustainable, and that the international community’s focus should be on conflict resolution rather than conflict management. It was time to return to genuine negotiations. However, the ongoing settlement activities by Israel were a major obstacle to peace, and, moreover, the creation of an Israeli government-appointed panel to find arguments to legalize those settlements had not helped to build confidence among the parties concerned. Indeed, he said, “the deliberate policy of establishing illegal settlements is inevitably accompanied by the destruction of Palestinian homes”, and there was no way to measure the human suffering caused by that “double heartbreak”.

In that regard, he called on Israel to demonstrate its good faith by recognizing the 1967 borders and adopting minimal confidence-building measures, including to halt illegal settlement activities and to release Palestinian prisoners. The Quartet should stay focused on the timetable it had promulgated last year. Without Palestinian reconciliation around the leadership of President Abbas, there would be no two-State solution; he called, therefore, for all key international and regional actors to redouble their efforts in support of Palestinian unity. Additionally, it was also time to “take a fresh look” at the application of Palestine for admission to membership in the United Nations, he stressed, adding that “it deserves to be evaluated on its merits, expeditiously and with an open mind”.

The Committee, for its part, had held a number of recent meetings that contributed to the shared goal of a two-State solution. In April, it had sounded an early warning about the critical situation of Palestinian prisoners, and in Paris in late May and early June it had focused its attention on the role of women and youth in support of peace and on the use of social media. In its latest meeting in Bangkok earlier this month, the Committee had discussed the obstacles to achieving peace, in particular the Israeli settlements. The Human Rights Council’s fact-finding mission was welcomed as a first step towards accountability in that regard, he said.

OTHMAN JERANDI ([Tunisia](#)) said that it was unfortunate that repeated meetings on the Palestinian question had become routine, without tangible results on the ground in favour of relieving the plight of the Palestinian people and allowing them to claim their natural rights. New mechanisms should be considered to ensure that the meetings culminated in action. Conversely, attempts to make the Palestinian issue a secondary issue would have negative effects on the entire region. Israel was cementing the status quo along with the oppression of the Palestinians, through its continued practices. He resolutely condemned those practices, saying that the colonial era passed decades ago and the peoples in the region were demanding their rights. The two-State solution must be brought into reality and collective punishment must end, along with other clear violations of international law without accountability committed by Israel, and the way must be cleared for an independent Palestine.

MORTEN WETLAND ([Norway](#)) said he was taking the floor to underline the serious dangers threatening the foundations for a viable Palestinian State. First, the Palestinian Authority was facing a grave financial crisis, which could push it into full-scale financial decline within the coming months. It had already accumulated significant debt, and faced difficulties in paying salaries. Since the Authority’s establishment, the Palestinians had achieved tremendous institutional progress towards building a viable State, but, today, those achievements were in jeopardy. The second danger was the impasse in the peace negotiations. Illegal settlement activities undermined efforts to resume the talks and threatened the two-State solution. The scope and scale of the settlements and the encirclement of East Jerusalem were the most severe impediments. Those unlawful and unilateral acts sought to change the situation on the ground and pre-empt the outcome of negotiations.

When the donor support group for the Palestinian Territory met in New York on 23 September, it would be against that backdrop. The main topic would be addressing the key challenges of the Palestinian economy and ways to avoid an aggravated financial crisis in the short-term. Beyond that, stimulating sustainable economic growth was key. The Palestinian private sector must be allowed to engage in trade internally throughout the Palestinian Territory and with its neighbours. Many restrictions on movements of goods in and out of the West Bank and Gaza were crippling economic activity and must be lifted. Opportunities for private-sector development in Area C must also be stimulated. Norway commended those donors that had contributed to covering the Authority’s recurring deficit. The European Union’s frontloading of its aid had been pivotal. Also, recent contributions from Saudi Arabia had enabled the Authority to pay full salaries prior to Ramadan. However, the outlook for the remainder of the budget year looked grim, unless further contributions were made.

BASHAR JA'AFARI ([Syria](#)) expressed grave alarm at the feverish attempts by certain delegations to deviate from today’s agenda, which only served to disguise the failure to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict, which everyone knew was due to Israeli intransigence. He, therefore, would confine his remarks to the item under discussion and desist from responding to the false claims and allegations made against his country. Those who had most harmed today’s discussion were certain Arab delegations, which had consistently “tried to kill the spirit of this item” in a way that benefited Israel and its continued occupation of Arab territories at the expense of the Arab peoples.

He said the Israeli challenge could be attributed to a culture of impunity, derived from the direct protection it was provided by certain influential States. Those countries that claimed to be concerned with international law and international human rights law and had guaranteed Israel impunity for all its crimes over decades of occupation and even

provided it with nuclear weapons and submarines capable of delivering them. Those same States had protected Israel in disregard of the resolution adopted at the 1995 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) calling for a Middle East region free of weapons of mass destruction. Indeed, the situation had deteriorated since the United Nations had become “an unable party to the Quartet” in the face of Israeli aggression and unprecedented settler activity. Israel also enjoyed the political, military, and unlimited financial support of certain States. The European Union, only yesterday, had established a new agreement with Israel, despite Israel’s human rights violations and policies of aggression and settlement expansion.

Israel also refused to return the occupied Syrian Golan to its “mother Syria” in a flagrant violation of the Security Council resolution, which maintained that annexation of the Syrian Golan was null and void, he continued. Syrian complaints to the Secretary-General, however, had fallen on deaf ears. Not only had the Secretariat not tackled Israel’s serious violations in its monthly briefings, but it also had failed to speak of the occupied Syrian Golan at all, in a clear violation of its duties. That approach had encouraged Israel to continue its policies of aggression. He also pointed to attempts to harm relations between Lebanon and Syria, noting 114 cases of arms smuggling from Lebanese territories into Syrian territories, and “not the opposite”. All those weapons smuggling operations had taken place during the last two months alone.

Certain political parties in Lebanon, he said, had financed, sheltered and supported those armed groups and helped them to smuggle weapons into Syria, in order to conduct terrorist operations to aggravate the conflict and increase the bloodshed among innocent Syrian civilians and military. Those armed groups had direct support in terms of intelligence and financing from Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and sophisticated military equipment from the United States. Syria had provided the Secretariat and Security Council with scores of documents concerning those armed operations. However, the Secretariat representative had ignored those facts in his briefing, and the representatives of Qatar and Saudi Arabia had shed crocodile tears over the suffering of the Syrian people. The blood of the Syrian people was being shed by that “Qatari-Saudi collusion” every hour, through direct interference that was both military and political in nature. Those two countries, to which Syria had never done any harm, would have been better served had they supported the Annan plan and Geneva document “instead of conspiring against both, with a view to heightening tensions against Syria and its interests in the General Assembly after they failed to do so in the Security Council”.

“The Syrian people will reach its own Spring, free from the Spring of the petrol dollar, free from western hegemonization,” he said, adding that Qatar and Saudi Arabia were no examples of democracy.

PALITHA T. B. KOHONA (Sri Lanka), associating himself with the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said it was important not to pay lip service to peace. The global community must ensure that the world did not forget the plight of Palestinians and urge both parties to commit to a peaceful settlement. “Hope remains if intentions and efforts are true,” he said. Essential steps needed to be taken to improve the situation on the ground — which he called unsustainable — and to build confidence between the parties. He urged Israel to lift restrictions on Gaza within the framework of Security Council resolutions and end illegal settlement activity, routine demolition of Palestinian houses and other practices that oppressed Palestinians. In addition, the political unity and economic advancement of the Palestinian people were important for the peace process. He urged the leaders of both parties, as well as regional leaders, “to infuse renewed vigour to the peace process”, hoping that the state of Palestine would soon be able to take its rightful place among States at the United Nations.

OSCAR LEÓN GONZÁLEZ (Cuba) said that despite years of meetings at the United Nations, Israel continued its occupation and Palestinians continued to suffer under it, through displacement, demolition of housing, imprisonment and other oppression. The Security Council must play its proper role and adopt concrete measures to put an end to such abuses, which deliberately contravened Council decisions and international law. The occupation must end immediately; settlement construction must cease, along with the illegal use of force, and an independent Palestine must be established with East Jerusalem as its capital. He reiterated support for Palestine’s full membership in the United Nations. On Syria, he rejected policies of intervention and destabilization for the purposes of regime change, and opposed support for armed groups or military intervention. He backed efforts to achieve a peaceful resolution of the crisis with full respect for Syria’s sovereignty. Syrians must be allowed to exercise their self-determination and find their own solutions.

AHMED SAREER (Maldives) said it was unfortunate that the international community had been unable to make any meaningful progress on peace in Syria, ending Israeli settlement activity or the building of an independent Palestinian state. In Syria, the atrocities were displacing thousands and there were threats of destabilization for the entire

region, which demanded an internationally-led remedy. Applauding the efforts of Kofi Annan, he expressed hope that the Council would come up with effective action and prayed, in the context of Ramadan, for a way forward that resulted in peace. On the Palestinian/Israeli front, he said that the single most important issue was the recognition of Palestine as an independent sovereign state. There could not be meaningful dialogue without that recognition, as it was undermined by an unequal power relationship. International recognition would allow Palestinians to negotiate their own interests and develop their own social and economic infrastructures, while being at peace with Israel. He urged support for recognition by the entire international community.