

Mr. Mansour (Palestine):

At the outset, I congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council, confident of the United States' skilled guidance of the Council's important work. I also express our appreciation to the United Kingdom for its leadership of the Council in the month of March. I thank the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, for his briefing to the Council. Before making my national statement, I wish to note that, while the State of Palestine is Chair of the Group of Arab States for April, the Council of Arab Ambassadors has decided that Jordan, in its capacity as host and president of the 2017 Arab Summit, shall deliver today's statement on behalf of the Arab Group.

We align ourselves with that statement, as well as with the statements to be delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. We meet at a time of simmering crises, rising tensions, and declining optimism about prospects for Middle East peace. At the heart of the instability in our region remains the Palestine question, a grave injustice that continues without remedy, causing misery to millions, and that continues to pose a threat to international peace and security. The persistence of that injustice also continues to fuel perceptions of bias and double-standards and to be exploited by extremist elements as justification for their vile actions and as a recruitment tool.

There can be no discussion of countering extremist terror and stabilizing the region without recognizing that fact, as well as the imperative of addressing the root causes of our region's conflicts, in order to fully resolve them and allow us to enter a new era in the Middle East. That said, it is beyond clear that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is about the denial of a people's inalienable rights and a prolonged foreign occupation; it is not a conflict arising from incitement or terror. A territorial solution and fulfilment of rights are what will resolve the conflict, ending the Israeli occupation of our land and realizing Palestinian national aspirations and rights, including to self-determination and freedom and a just solution for the Palestine refugees, in conformity with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Security Council has a role and responsibility to foster such a just and peaceful solution, consistent with its mandate under the Charter of the United Nations. Resolution 2334 (2016) is the most recent articulation of the Council's positions, decisions and determination in that regard and reflects the long-standing international consensus on the issue. We reiterate that resolution 2334 (2016) is not anti-Israel; it is anti-settlements, S/PV.7929 The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question 20/04/2017 6/65 17-10629 anti-violence and anti-violation of international law, and is therefore actually and clearly pro-peace and protwo-State solution — Palestine and Israel — and was globally welcomed as such.

The resolution provides the most viable path to preserving the two-State solution on the 1967 lines and creating the conditions necessary to end the occupation, justly resolve the conflict in all aspects and make Palestinian-Israeli peace and security a reality. Once again, we call for full respect of resolution 2334 (2016). In that connection, we welcome the Secretary-General's report pursuant to the resolution, as orally delivered on 24 March 2017. Yet, we reiterate the expectation for written reports to ensure proper documentation of the implementation of the resolution's provisions and of the developments promoting or obstructing its objectives. In addition, while the report rightly reiterated the call for the

complete cessation of illegal Israeli settlement activities, it echoed the call for a cessation of violence and incitement, reaffirmed the global consensus on the two-State solution, noted ongoing international efforts to promote it, and reflected on the worrying reality on the ground.

We believe that further analysis, based on international law and the context of the occupation, and recommendations to rectify the negative trends are required in future reports to assist the Council in upholding its duties. We await the next report in June, which will coincide with the marking of 50 years of the occupation. We condemn Israel's disrespect of Security Council decisions, as evidenced in its flagrant violations of resolution 2334 (2016). Thousands of violations have been deliberately carried out, including the advancement of at least 6,000 more settlement units in the months since the resolution's adoption — even the establishment of a new settlement — along with other violations in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

Settlement activities are eroding the two-State solution, based on the 1967 lines, and must stop immediately in all manifestations, as demanded by the Council. The colonization, fragmentation, and annexation of our land will never bring peace. Here, we also recall the clear affirmations by the Council that “it will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations” (resolution 2334 (2016), para. 3); and reiterate as well the call upon all States “to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967” (*ibid.*, para. 5). Actions consistent with these provisions are more urgent than ever. Each day, as more violations entrench the occupation, hope and potential for a solution are considerably diminished. At the same time, Israel's contempt diminishes the Council's own stature and credibility, seriously compromising its ability — that is, of the Council — to act with authority in other crises around the world.

How can this situation be acceptable to anyone, least of all Council members? Security Council resolutions must be implemented without exception. As in any other case, Israel must comply with Council demands and its legal obligations, or be held accountable. It cannot continue to be absolved of responsibility for its crimes and violations, its perpetuation of the conflict, and its obstruction of peace. I must turn now to the human dimension of this conflict and the endless suffering being caused to the Palestinian people, young and old, by this illegal and brutal occupation at the hands of the Israeli occupying forces and extremist Israeli settlers.

As we meet today, more than 1,000 Palestinians are on hunger strike in non-violent protest of their captivity, inhumane treatment and torture by Israel. This hunger strike, led by Marwan Barghouti, a Palestinian parliamentarian and political leader who has been jailed for 15 years now, aims to call attention to the plight of the over 6,500 Palestinians imprisoned or arbitrarily detained, including men, women, youth, children and elected officials, and to secure the legitimate rights being denied to them by Israel, in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention. We call for international solidarity with our prisoners — whom we salute from the Chamber — in this peaceful effort to compel Israeli compliance with the law and respect for their human rights and to avert the dangerous consequences of deterioration of this situation. We believe that the International Committee of the Red Cross can play a positive, facilitating role, 20/04/2017 The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question S/PV.7929 17-10629 7/65 and urge all necessary efforts in this regard. Moreover, we stress that the release of our prisoners and detainees is indispensable for

peace, one of the most important indicators of the readiness to end the oppression and occupation and to create peace and coexistence.

Today, we must also remind the Council of the appalling situation of captivity of 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, under Israel's illegal blockade, in an act of massive collective punishment and a crime against humanity. For nearly 10 years, an entire population has been imprisoned, denied freedom of movement, access to livelihoods, access to basic supplies, even vital medicines, deprived of clean water and energy, and forced to live in the ruins of war, as even reconstruction continues to be obstructed and at least 40,000 people remain displaced from the destruction caused by the 2014 Israeli aggression. We caution that hope is fading and despair rising in Gaza, and reiterate our call for an end to the blockade and for respect by Israel of its obligations as an occupying Power under international humanitarian law. Our calls for respect of international law go hand in hand with our readiness to engage in negotiations to achieve peace.

The Palestinian leadership has clearly committed itself to negotiations and has acted in good faith in over two decades of peace processes. We are insistent, however, on international law as the foundation and guarantor of peace. Resolution 2334 (2016) fully recognized this and the Palestinian leadership is committed to the respect of that resolution. We are engaging with all efforts to advance a just solution. This includes engagement with the new United States Administration of President Trump. Several Arab leaders have met with the President since the Arab Summit, reaffirming their commitment to peace, in line with the Arab Peace Initiative, which marked its fifteenth anniversary last month. That Initiative was remarkably renewed again, and still awaits reciprocation by Israel.

President Abbas will also soon travel to Washington, D.C.. My understanding is that he will be meeting with President Trump on 3 May. He is ready to engage in political dialogue with the United States and all other concerned partners, including the Quartet, to launch a credible political horizon, on a clear basis and in a set time frame, that will lead to a solution that ends the Israeli occupation and achieves the independence of the State of Palestine, with its capital in East Jerusalem, based on the two-State solution on the 1967 lines, whereby the Palestinian and Israeli peoples can live side by side in peace and security. At the same time, internally, we continue to pursue the development and strengthening of our national institutions and to also seek to heal the divisions in the Palestinian political system. We hope that ongoing reconciliation efforts will come to fruition, recognizing the imperative of unity for the achievement of our legitimate national aspirations.

Failure to justly resolve the Palestine question, the crux of the Arab-Israeli conflict, has brought us to several regrettable milestones in this year: the fiftieth year of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and other Arab territories since June 1967; 100 years since the Balfour Declaration; 70 years since the General Assembly's decision to mandate the partition of Palestine by its resolution 181 (II), which led to the Al-Nakba of the Palestinian people, which continues to this day; and 10 years of Israel's inhumane blockade of Gaza. The status quo is far beyond unsustainable. This is shown starkly by the prisoners' hunger strike; the immense despair in Gaza; the high tensions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as Israel's settlement and wall construction, demolition of Palestinian homes, violent military raids and arrest campaigns, and Israeli settler terror and provocations against our civilians continue unabated; and the painful tragedies being endured by our refugees throughout the region. It is an explosive

situation requiring immediate action to uphold the law, reverse the deterioration on the ground, and avert further crises.

We thus call again for responsible, collective efforts to advance a genuine peace process to achieve, without delay, the end of the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and the just, lasting and comprehensive peace we have long sought. We appeal to the international community, with the Security Council at the forefront, to heed our appeals and to act urgently on their obligations in order to restore hope in the possibility of peace and to actually make it a reality