

Mr. Sareer (Maldives):

It is an honour to speak before the Security Council today on an issue that is of profound importance not only to the Maldives but also to efforts to achieve international peace and security.

I would like to thank the Chinese presidency of the Council for convening today's quarterly open debate on the situation in the Middle East. I would also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his dedicated efforts to find a solution to the discordant situation in the Middle East. With the increase in terror and conflict in the region, peace may seem to some a distant if not impossible prospect, but we should envision its achievement as a journey of a thousand miles that must be taken one step at a time.

Let us look at Palestine, a nation embroiled in conflict for decades. As of now, hope is dim for its people. We reiterate our call for a two-State solution, deemed to be the one and only viable way to achieve enduring peace in the region. The Maldives once again calls for full realization of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, their right to establish their own State on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

As the death toll from the conflict in Syria now approaches 500,000 lives, we have witnessed immense suffering among the people on both sides of the conflict. The sheer extent of the loss of human life — the lives of men, women and children — must compel us all to work relentlessly to explore every option for a sustainable solution to peace in Syria. We must seek a political solution for ending the bloodshed that is in line with the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. We would like to underscore the importance of achieving an inclusive political solution in Syria based on the Geneva talks. As such, we urge the United Nations membership to actively contribute to proposing solutions in the hope of finding an avenue to peace.

The situation in Yemen continues to be very worrying, since it also contributes to regional instability. As more ill-fated civilians are caught up in the conflict, we see displaced people fleeing the country for their lives. We must strive to work for peace in Yemen, and in the meantime we must ensure that humanitarian aid reaches all who so desperately need it. The Maldives condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and believes that it should not be associated with any specific religion, race, culture or society. Islam promotes peace and the protection and preservation of life and unity. It also condemns violence. The Maldives does not condone hiding behind religion as a pretext for inflicting terror; it is not a means to a political end. We see the Middle East as a breeding ground for oppression, hatred and violence, which is the underlying cause of the instability in the region. We need leadership. We need political will. But above all, we need courage — courage from the leaders of the region and leadership from the members of the Council, as well as the international community.

We need the tenacity to do what is right and to take the right steps towards creating lasting peace in the Middle East.

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