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10023rd meeting

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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Nebenzia/Mr. Polyanskiy	(Russian Federation)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria.	Mr. Bendjama
	China.	Mr. Fu Cong
	Denmark	Ms. Lassen
	France	Mr. Bonnafont
	Greece	Mrs. Balta
	Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Pakistan.	Mr. Jadoon
	Panama	Mr. Moscoso
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Cha
	Sierra Leone	Mr. Kanu
	Slovenia.	Mr. Žbogar
	Somalia	Mr. Mohamed Yusuf
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America.	Mr. Waltz

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, Germany, Iceland, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Türkiye, Uganda, the United Arab Emirates, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Viet Nam to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite the representative of the Observer State of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ramiz Alakbarov, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Coly Seck, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; His Excellency Mr. Stavros Lambrinidis, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations; and His Excellency Mr. Maged Abdelaziz, Permanent Observer of the League of the Arab States to the United Nations.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Alakbarov.

Mr. Alakbarov: After two years of devastating war and unimaginable human suffering, we now have an opportunity to conclude that chapter in the history of the Israeli-Palestine conflict and set a course towards a more just and peaceful future. The 9 October agreement, based on United States President Donald Trump's 20-point plan, secured a ceasefire and a hostage release in Gaza. It was the culmination of a remarkable diplomatic effort by the United States, Qatar, Egypt and Türkiye. I commend all the mediators for achieving this critical breakthrough.

Tragically, it has taken us too long to reach this moment. The unbearable trauma inflicted on Palestinians and Israelis will last for generations. The situation throughout the occupied Palestinian territory remains dire, and the destruction in Gaza is beyond description, while Palestinian civilians — children, women and men — continue to suffer immeasurably from the effects of war and deprivation. As we speak, the remains of deceased hostages are still in Gaza, while their families wait in agony to give their loved ones a dignified burial. The agreement represents hope for a better future, but the dynamics are extremely fragile. A return to conflict must be avoided at all costs. The remaining deceased hostages must be released without any further delay. Humanitarian assistance must enter the Strip at scale to meet the enormous needs of the population, wherever they are. All parties must abide by their commitments under the deal, and agreements should be reached to implement the next phase.

Since the ceasefire took effect, the United Nations and its partners have rapidly scaled up humanitarian operations across Gaza. The magnitude of the destruction and the continued suffering of Palestinians that we have witnessed in Gaza are staggering. Many families remain displaced and without access to the most basic services. The urgent needs, in terms of health, shelter, water, sanitation, food and livelihoods, are immense. The United Nations and its humanitarian partners are now working to implement our 60-day response plan. The plan sets out concrete measures to streamline customs procedures, expand access routes, facilitate the entry of critical items, restore essential services and ensure the safe movement of humanitarian personnel. As part of the broader humanitarian reset, the plan is grounded in humanitarian principles, prioritizes those in greatest need, enhances accountability, drives greater efficiency and safeguards the space for principled, life-saving actions.

Already, as tracked by the United Nations mechanism for Gaza established pursuant to resolution 2720 (2023), with increased facilitation of the entry of humanitarian supplies by the Israeli authorities, humanitarian partners have scaled up aid delivery, with a 46 per cent increase in aid tracked by the United Nations entering the Strip in the first week of the ceasefire. Crucial assistance in the areas of food, hygiene, shelter and health is being delivered in greater quantities, bringing much-needed relief to Gaza's population.

But this is not enough. Much more still needs to be done. In order to fully meet our targets and ensure an effective response, more crossings and functional relief corridors are required, as are safe passage for aid workers and civilians, the unrestricted entry of goods, the sustained entry of fuel and operational space for the United Nations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including the renewal of registration for NGOs — all in accordance with humanitarian principles. The United Nations is closely engaging in all relevant coordination mechanisms, and I welcome the efforts of Member States to facilitate a scaling up of assistance, including through the new civil-military coordination centre.

While the ceasefire is in effect, the ongoing violence in Gaza — continued but sporadic attacks and strikes by the Israeli Defense Forces and Palestinian armed groups, as well as apparent killings of Palestinians by Hamas and other armed actors — also undermines humanitarian efforts and threatens stability in the Strip. Restoring order will be a critical step in facilitating relief efforts and supporting Gaza's recovery. We must act quickly to build on the current ceasefire towards a comprehensive agreement, or there will be a serious risk of insecurity and violence persisting and undermining recovery and reconstruction efforts.

To support the United Nations response in Gaza, a robust aid coordination mechanism and accelerated international support will be necessary. Reconstruction will require a collective effort and should be Palestinian-led. Working with the Palestinian Authority (PA), international partners, civil society and the private sector, the United Nations is prepared to mobilize and help coordinate these efforts, in line with the ceasefire commitments and the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution and building on the Arab-Islamic early recovery, reconstruction and development plan for Gaza.

The Secretary-General has welcomed the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on 22 October, which found, *inter alia*, that Israel is required to fulfil its obligations under international law with respect to facilitating relief for the population of Gaza and to cooperate in good faith with the United Nations and its entities.

While we are focused on supporting the ceasefire and scaling up our response in Gaza, we must not overlook the alarming situation in the West Bank. Tens of thousands of Palestinians remain displaced from their homes in the northern West Bank in the wake of large-scale operations conducted by Israeli security forces and continued closures, in particular in and around the refugee camps. Palestinians must be allowed to return to their homes, and local economies need to function. With the annual olive harvest under way, Palestinians are yet again subject to deplorable acts of settler violence while trying to access their lands. The violence must stop, and perpetrators must be held accountable.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian economy and the Palestinian Authority's fiscal situation continue to face severe challenges. According to the PA, Israel continues to withhold approximately \$3 billion of Palestinian tax clearance revenues, creating an unsustainable fiscal situation and affecting the PA's ability to meet financial obligations and pay public sector salaries in full.

We are at a momentous but precarious juncture. The United Nations is committed to seizing this opportunity, but the scope and scale of the challenges ahead will require the full support of the Council and of the international community. Political will, financial resources and a genuine commitment to creating a better future for all are needed. President Trump's 20-point plan and the declaration signed at the summit for peace and agreement to end the war in Gaza, held in Sharm el-Sheikh, have finally managed to secure a viable path towards ending the war. The forthcoming International Cairo Conference on Palestine for Gaza Reconstruction, to be co-hosted by Egypt, the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations, will be an important venue in which to advance recovery and reconstruction for Gaza. At the same time, we must not lose sight of the political horizon. We can build on the momentum created by President Trump's plan and consolidated through tireless mediation efforts. In recent weeks, the international community has affirmed its commitment to charting a course towards sustainably ending the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The meetings of the High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, on the margins of the General Assembly, provide a pathway.

The United Nations will continue to support all efforts to end the occupation and resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in line with international law and United Nations resolutions, realizing a two-State solution whereby Israel and Palestine — of which Gaza is an integral part — live side by side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders on the basis of the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Alakbarov for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Bamyá (Palestine): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Council and to thank you for convening this open debate. Allow me also to thank the Deputy Special Coordinator for his briefing and relentless efforts.

We knew that the ceasefire was the only way forward: the way to save lives, to stop the massacres and to ensure that families — Palestinian families and Israeli families — can be reunited; and a ceasefire to stop the bloodshed, to release hostages and prisoners, to end an organized famine, to bring the horrors to an end. And finally, a ceasefire is here. Some are saying that it is imperfect, that it is volatile, that it is transgressed, that it is fragile — but it is here.

There are reasons for scepticism. Some will say that it is a scepticism informed by history, by experience, by precedent, by past pain, ache and agony. But our role is

not to be bystanders while things fall apart, or to have doubts, criticism or objections and to wait for time to prove us right. Our role is to collectively work to ensure that the ceasefire holds, prevailing over those who are rooting for its collapse or working to make it fall apart. In that context, we appreciate the collective efforts to ensure that this aim is achieved and the constant engagement of the mediators, of Egypt, Qatar and Türkiye and, of course, of the United States at the highest level, to preserve this delicate ceasefire, to save lives, which are too sacred to lose. This is what the ceasefire is: an opportunity to save lives. What it will become relies on what all of us will do next.

We do not forget those who awaited this day but did not survive to witness it, nor do we forget the survivors who welcome it scarred and starved and in mourning. We do not forget the journalists who did not live long enough to announce the ceasefire. We do not forget the doctors and the humanitarians, killed for trying to save lives. We do not forget the 20,000 Palestinian children killed by Israel, or their parents, who have to walk the Earth under their crushing shadow. We do not forget the orphaned, the maimed, the amputated, the tortured and those still buried under the rubble. We do not forget Hind and Donia, Reem and Khaled, Anas and Youssef, Jubran, Eve, Salam, Siwar, Selena, Mahmoud, Adam and many, many others.

I have said it before, and I will say it again: the most unjust expectation, and one that falls only to Palestinians, is that they should move on, regardless of the lives lost, the limbs lost and the loved ones lost — to have entire families obliterated and move on, to lose everything, everything that one loves, everything that one has built, everything that one is and to be expected to just move on.

But vengeance and hatred lead nowhere. Violence is an impasse. More bloodshed cannot be the answer. Justice and peace are the only way forward. But will these millions of Palestinians have justice? Will they be able to finally live in peace in their ancestral land?

There is no Israeli security if it comes at the expense of Palestinian lives and Palestinian rights. There is no coexistence with occupation and subjugation. When there is freedom for Palestine's people there is shared peace, shared security and shared prosperity for Palestinians, Israelis and the people of the region and the world.

Here, let me quote a very important historical document: the United States Declaration of Independence. "We hold this truth to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". We could not formulate it any better. We are endowed by the same creator with these same inalienable rights. Peace cannot come from the denial of these rights; it comes from their fulfilment.

We are not less worthy of freedom, not less entitled to security, not less able to contribute to shared prosperity. Enough of dispossession, enough of displacement, enough of death and enough of despair in Gaza — but also in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, where tens of thousands have been displaced, many have been killed and where many communities are under constant attack.

What do we tell Afaf Abu Alia, a 55-year-old woman and a mother of five, who was knocked unconscious with a club by an Israeli settler as she was harvesting olives in Turmus'ayya, and beaten again while she lay unconscious on the ground?

Israeli settlers' attacks have intensified. Council members have all condemned them without exception, but this condemnation does not protect our people from these repeated attacks. These extremist settlers, together with occupation forces, spread fear and violence in the hope of intimidating and displacing and pushing annexation in all directions. Until when will they continue? People are killed and

maimed and arbitrarily detained, homes are demolished, settlements are built, land is expropriated, and communities are uprooted. Until when will it continue?

If after a century of conflict and dispossession and displacement, and wars and occupation and colonization and blockade and walls, if after 7 October 2023, if after genocide in Gaza, we are not yet convinced that it is time for peace, that we owe future generations peace, what will ever convince us?

Over the course of the past few weeks, the entire world rallied around clear objectives following unbelievable outrage across the globe, from the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, launched by Saudi Arabia, the European Union and Norway, to the Madrid Group and the Hague Group. From those who recognize the State of Palestine, and among those around this table — the last among them to have joined, France and the United Kingdom, which I want to acknowledge here — to Algeria and the members of the Council, all working for an end to the horrors and moving towards peace. And we had the High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, co-chaired by Saudi Arabia and France, which demonstrated true leadership at its helm, and which endorsed the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, a landmark document that charts a path forward to peace.

The world mobilized for an independent and sovereign Palestinian State for the two-State solution. It mobilized for peace. Palestine is committed to peace. It is committed to the full implementation of the New York Declaration, which charts a clear and irreversible path to freedom, peace and regional integration. It will do its part, and it continues to pledge to Council members here, once again, that we will uphold our obligations. We are implementing our commitments, and we expect others to do their part and to uphold their obligations.

We and many others around the world welcome the efforts of President Trump for peace, and we pledge to work with the United States Administration and with regional and international partners to move from a ceasefire to a just and lasting peace. As was stated by the United States, it is for Palestinians to govern themselves. There is no substitute for Palestinian self-determination. There is a critical role for regional and international actors and mechanisms in support of Palestinian governance and independent statehood, and not as a substitute for them. We need to work together to ensure success. The task is monumental, but it is worth it. It requires collective and coordinated efforts.

There were efforts and plans before, but maybe there was never before such momentum for peace, stemming from the horrors the region witnessed in the past two years. Only peace will change the face of the region and the fate of its peoples.

The independence of the State of Palestine and the implementation of the two-State solution will pave the way for regional integration, a prospect many thought and still think is impossible, but which is within our grasp if we collectively decide to rid the region of wars and occupation and finally choose shared peace, shared security and shared prosperity. It is time to end this conflict, once and for all, to ensure that people never experience such pain and loss again and that all peoples can live in peace and security.

These past few days, we saw families reunite, finally, some with their loved ones still alive, able finally to embrace them, and some whose bodies were returned to be buried and to be mourned. There are still families waiting for their loved ones. We keep them in our minds.

As the world tracked the release of 20 Israeli hostages, as it should, thousands of Palestinian prisoners were being released, with undeniable evidence of the ill- and degrading treatment to which they were subjected. As the world follows the search for the bodies of 28 Israeli hostages, it must not forget that under the same rubble there are the bodies of thousands upon thousands of bodies of Palestinians.

This should be a moment to remind us all of our shared humanity and of the suffering that future generations can and must be spared. This should not happen any longer. Regardless of what camp you belong to, what cause you defend or what right you proclaim, no one should ever justify harming civilians, abducting them, torturing them, killing them. No one should ever justify holding remains, sometimes for years and decades, and depriving families of their ability to offer them dignified burial. Summary executions are never acceptable, regardless of who commits them. No one should explain that there is a title or a right that can justify atrocities — no one, ever, under any circumstances.

Gaza is an integral part of Palestine. Families in Gaza suffered more than enough. They have no homes to return to, no schools, no hospitals. Bombardments cannot continue taunting and haunting them. Aid cannot continue to be weaponized, as was said by the International Court of Justice yesterday. The ceasefire must be upheld. There is no other choice. Reconstruction must proceed, and we support all efforts in this regard and look forward to the conference in Cairo towards that aim.

Here, allow me to thank the mediators for the relentless efforts that led to the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement: Egypt, which endured smear campaigns and attacks; Qatar, whose territory was struck by Israel as it was mediating; Türkiye, which joined these mediation efforts; and the United States.

Let us speak plainly. The United States is a superpower and, as such, it always has a choice to fuel the fire or to help to cease the fire. In this case, President Trump used all his weight to achieve a ceasefire agreement to save lives and to release the hostages. We all listened to the chants on Hostages Square in Tel Aviv. Those who were there knew there would be no agreement without President Trump. The region and the world mobilized around his efforts as they understand that this is a chance for life, for freedom and for peace. They understand he alone can save Israel from itself and from the temptation of brutal and indiscriminate force and annexation that has isolated it around the world. The two votes in the Knesset yesterday demonstrate that Israel has yet to renounce this path, as do other policies, measures and statements. But we appreciate the clear message from the Trump Administration against any push for annexation. We will work with President Trump and regional and international partners to transform a fragile and volatile ceasefire into just and lasting peace, with Palestinian agency and Palestinian liberation as our goal, and with mutual recognition and peaceful coexistence as cornerstones. What we need is not a pause in the violence and injustice, but an end to them. Violence is an impasse. It must not be fuelled or tolerated; it must be stopped, and we will not relent in our rejection of violence against all civilians. Likewise, injustice must never be justified or shielded; it must be brought to an end.

Palestine is committed to peace. We are the ones who need it most. Peace needs to be a shared objective to become a shared reality. We must seize this opportunity to end the suffering and work for freedom and peace, regardless of how great the challenges are. Help us to demonstrate to our people that there is a peaceful path to freedom and a dignified life. The efforts to undermine the Palestinian Authority and its ability to perform its duties, despite its full-fledged commitment to peace, which has been put to the test over the course of the past two years in unbelievable manners, are aimed at preventing our independence and statehood. If there are requirements placed on the Palestinian Authority, it must be empowered to fulfil them, and Israel also has obligations that need to be monitored and implemented. We will not shy

away from our obligations or commitments. We owe it to our people to fulfil them, leading them to a path of liberation and peace.

A new generation can wake up to a very different region, where no one is killed, no one is abducted, no one is tortured, where cooperation and coexistence replace occupation and conflict, where shared security replaces perpetual war and where shared prosperity replaces pillage and devastation. Is that not worth striving for? We owe it to those who were killed. We owe it to those who survived. We owe it to future generations. It is time for peace.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Danon (Israel): First, I would like to thank the Deputy Special Coordinator for his briefing.

Today we gather at a historic moment for our region. Israel has achieved what many thought impossible. All of our living hostages are home. The remains of 15 fallen hostages have been recovered and given the dignity of a proper burial. Hamas has been forced to accept a deal that it had rejected from the very beginning to return the hostages and disarm. This achievement was not born of chance but of a combination of courage and conviction. History will remember that in the wake of the worst massacre of our people since the Holocaust, Israel kept our promise to defend our people, bring our hostages home and eliminate future threats to our security. Despite the pressure of many members of the Security Council and despite the political theatre, the condemnations and the hypocrisy, Israel stood firm. We did not waver; we prevailed. But our struggle is not over. There can be no peace, no future and no rebuilding of Gaza while terror still remains. Thirteen fallen hostages remain in Hamas' hands. We will bring them home and give them the dignity they deserve. The world must keep pressure where it belongs, on Hamas, for it to return the hostages, lay down its weapons and honour the peace plan it signed.

We have embraced the return of our hostages. Our nation has been swept by emotion, joy and relief but also deep pain and grief. We have seen, in the past few weeks, mothers embracing sons, fathers reunited with their children, young couples holding each other again. In every home, in every community, Israel has felt the weight of what was lost and the miracle of return. Families have been reunited, and lives once trapped in darkness have seen light again. But we cannot forget what they endured. They were starved, beaten, shackled, deprived of food, water and light, forced to dig their own graves, humiliated, and yet they survived. They held onto their humanity, even in the face of evil. As we welcome home the living, we also mourn the fallen, who have now returned to us for proper burial. They remind the world that Hamas' cruelty knows no borders, no faith, no mercy. To the families of the fallen hostages and to all who are still waiting for the return of their loved ones from Gaza, we say that Israel has not forgotten them. We will do whatever it takes to bring them home — all of them.

Make no mistake, Hamas has already violated the ceasefire. It promised to return the bodies of our fallen within 72 hours. Yet still today, more than 300 hours after the ceasefire began, 13 fallen hostages remain in captivity. Hamas lied at the negotiating table, and it is still lying to us, to the negotiators and to the entire world. It knows exactly — and we know that it knows — where our fallen are. It simply refuses to act. This is not a matter of logistics; it is calculated cruelty and psychological warfare designed to inflict pain and buy time. Let me be clear: our fallen hostages will be brought home, by diplomacy if possible, by other means if necessary. It should come as no surprise that the same hands refusing to return our dead are the ones still pulling the trigger. Just nine days into the ceasefire, Hamas terrorists opened fire in

an Israel Defense Forces-controlled area, killing two Israeli soldiers and seriously injuring many others. These are not allegations; they are facts.

Yet as Hamas violates the ceasefire, too many look away. There is no clearer example than the outrageous and false moral equivalence drawn in recent weeks, and I am sure that we will hear it today. We have heard commentators, diplomats, even world leaders equate the release of innocent hostages with the release of convicted terrorists. They speak as if these two acts were the same and as if those civilians who were kidnapped at gunpoint from their homes and held in tunnels could ever be compared with those who planted bombs on buses and slaughtered innocent people. To bring our people home, Israel made choices that no country should ever have to make. We released those jailed for murder, terror and kidnapping. Let me give a few examples from those who were released: Imad Qawasmeh, who planted a bomb on a Beersheba bus and killed 16 innocent people; Muhammad Aref Samhan, who helped to murder 23 civilians in Jerusalem; and many more. Yet some still try to blur the line between the victims and their attackers. Let me be clear: hostages are not criminals. There can be no moral equivalence — none. In Israel, families cried with joy as loved ones came home after years in darkness. In Gaza, crowds celebrated murderers returning from prison. That is the difference between a nation that values life and the terror movement that glorifies death.

Israel acted not from a place of weakness, but strength — to save lives and to advance peace. But peace demands more than promises; it demands disarmament.

Many here are already picturing Gaza's future. They have seen the plans and ideas: hotels rising on the coast, schools filled with children, parks and public squares. I could hand everyone here a pair of virtual reality goggles and show them the videos and ideas that are being circulated about the future of Gaza. But before we get lost in virtual reality, let us remove the goggles and look at what is really happening today — because before classrooms open or a single home is built, one truth must be faced: Hamas must go; Hamas must disarm. All the plans, pledges, visions and videos are but virtual reality until the terror ends.

Let me show Council members what reality looks like today in Gaza. This image was taken in the Sabra neighbourhood in Gaza City on 15 October, just after the ceasefire began. Hamas gunmen emerged from their tunnels — clean uniforms, full stomachs, armed and organized. Almost immediately, they turned their guns on their own people. They attacked men, women and children, hunted rivals and carried out public executions with no evidence or trial — just terror.

This was met with silence from the United Nations. No condemnation, no accountability, no emergency meeting. That silence is dangerous. It emboldens Hamas, which walks the same path as Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, with the same brutality and the same contempt for human life. How can there be a future for Gaza while its people still live under fear? That is why disarmament is not only a security demand — it is a moral duty.

Peace cannot coexist with terror. The peace plan before us is an opportunity. But opportunity alone is not enough. We must act now to ensure that Hamas is disarmed — not only with statements, but with action, pressure and resolve. Hamas still sits on a deadly stockpile: assault and sniper rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, rocket launchers and anti-tank missiles like the Kornet. Beneath Gaza, their factories hum, their tunnels run deep.

Disarmament means more than words. It means those weapons surrendered, the tunnels sealed, the factories shut down. It means dismantling Hamas' entire war machine — every command post, every weapons line and every tunnel. True disarmament strips Hamas of power itself — its ability to plan, arm and strike.

Blueprints and promises of reconstruction will not stop bullets. Only real disarmament will. Now is the moment to turn words into pressure — and hopefully, pressure into peace.

Last week, the Jewish people celebrated Simchat Torah, a holiday that marks the conclusion of the annual reading cycle of our Bible, the Torah, and the beginning of a new cycle. Every year we read the same chapters. As we open the first chapter of the first book, we return to the moment creation began: “And God saw the light, that it was good, and God divided the light from the darkness” (The Holy Bible, Genesis, 1:4).

Before creation came order. Before life began, chaos had to end. God separated light from darkness, bringing clarity, structure and peace. So must it be now. Before Gaza can be rebuilt, terror must be removed. Before peace can begin, Hamas must lay down its weapons. Israel is ready to do its part and move forward, but peace cannot live alongside terror.

Every day that Hamas refuses to disarm, it drags Gaza deeper into darkness. The time for excuses is over. Hamas must disarm now — fully and completely — so that light, not darkness, shapes our future.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

We would like to thank Mr. Ramiz Alakbarov, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his comprehensive report on the situation in the region.

For the signature event of our presidency, we have chosen an open debate on the situation in the Middle East. This debate takes place at a remarkable moment, when diplomacy has finally taken centre stage and both Palestinians and Israelis have a glimmer of hope for a lasting and sustainable ceasefire. This is precisely what Russia and other Council members have been calling for over the past two years amid the unfolding tragedy in Gaza.

Therefore, Russia welcomes the agreement between Israel and Hamas to cease hostilities in the Gaza Strip, even though many important issues for the Middle East peace process were left out and not reflected in the final document. The established ceasefire was largely made possible thanks to the tireless efforts of Egyptian, Qatari, Turkish and American mediators. We highly value these diplomatic efforts, which continued even when it seemed that there was no chance of reaching an agreement. We note the special role played United States President Donald Trump, whose personal involvement and determination to end the bloodshed in Gaza provided the necessary momentum to reach agreement.

All over the world, people who had been following the news from Gaza with heavy hearts were greatly relieved to hear about the release of the last hostages held in the sector and their return home in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners. Among the Israelis who returned was our compatriot, Donbas native Maxim Herkin, whose release, like that of other prisoners, was regularly raised by Russian diplomats during relevant contacts in the region.

Two years of hostilities have devastated and scarred the souls of both Palestinians and Israelis. The reprehensible and condemned terrorist attack by Hamas on 7 October 2023 and the subsequent immoral collective punishment of the Palestinian people will remain in history books as egregious examples of hatred and inhumanity and will serve as a warning for future generations. We have once again been reminded that violence and hatred always breed more violence and hatred and that the path to peace lies solely through dialogue and mutual concessions, including addressing the root causes of the conflict.

It is critical that the current and still fragile ceasefire does not suffer the same fate as the January agreements, which collapsed amid mutual accusations of violations by both sides. Unfortunately, a similar scenario is likely to repeat itself today as well. For example, the Palestinians accuse Israelis of regularly violating the ceasefire, while Israel, for its part, is dissatisfied with Hamas' delay in handing over the bodies of deceased hostages.

We urge all parties to strictly adhere to the agreement. The hostilities, which claimed the lives of tens of thousands of peaceful Palestinians must not resume under any circumstances. We are confident that the outcome of the 13 October peace summit in Sharm el-Sheikh will contribute to this. It is important to note that the declaration signed at the end of the summit emphasizes human rights protections, guarantees the safety and dignity of both Palestinians and Israelis and focuses on eradicating extremism and radicalism in all forms, including racism. No society can thrive without these elements. The international community should view the Kyiv regime's ongoing violation of the rights of the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine from that same perspective.

We note that the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip has paved the way to some progress in terms of humanitarian access. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), supplies of food and medicines are resuming, and United Nations humanitarian agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, have already begun to set up temporary educational spaces for displaced children. This positive momentum must be maintained and built upon in order to alleviate the plight of Gazans and allow basic services to resume. Nonetheless, we cannot fail to note that restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian aid remain in place and that humanitarian routes are not operating at full capacity. In this regard, it is crucial to remove the remaining barriers and to act in accordance with the 60-day humanitarian response plan set out by OCHA. We expect that the recent visit of Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher to Gaza and Ramallah will contribute to establishing effective operations not only in the Strip, but also in the West Bank, where the situation remains unstable, with continued attacks on Palestinians, which OCHA is documenting on a regular basis.

The truce and the ceasefire in Gaza are important and were long-awaited, but they are only the first step on the road to a long-term settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. A repeat of the tragedy will be averted only if the political process resumes on the internationally recognized legal basis of the two-State solution, which provides for the creation of an independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, coexisting with Israel in peace and security. This goal, consistently reaffirmed by the international community, must not be overshadowed by peacekeeping efforts, let alone be disregarded when action plans and road maps are being developed. We must not forget about the illegal construction of Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory. These plans must be reconsidered, and the settlements already built in violation of Council resolutions, including resolutions 446 (1979), 452 (1979), 465 (1980) and 2334 (2016), must be dismantled.

We hope that the positive momentum in the Middle East peace process will have a beneficial impact elsewhere in the region, including in Lebanon, Yemen and Syria, and will ultimately entail an overall normalization of Arab-Israeli relations. We are watching with cautious optimism the ongoing indirect negotiations between West Jerusalem and Damascus. The situation along the Blue Line, where a full-scale war was raging just a year ago, remains relatively stable. The example of Gaza, where the vast majority of hostages were released thanks to negotiations, should demonstrate to Israel that eschewing brute force and border buffer zones in favour of dialogue

and genuine consideration for its neighbours' interests yields tangible results and protects its own citizens better than any state-of-the-art weapons systems.

Russia, which consistently maintains constructive relations of trust with all countries in the region without exception, is committed to continuing to contribute to peace in the Middle East, both in its national capacity and as a permanent member of the Council. We stand ready to work with all parties that share the goal of achieving a just, long-term and sustainable peace throughout the Middle East on the basis of the implementation of the relevant Council resolutions on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

Ms. Lassen (Denmark): I thank Deputy Special Coordinator Alakbarov for his briefing. I would also like to pay tribute to all United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers on the ground working to deliver aid into Gaza, and to those civilians and hostages for whom the good news has tragically come too late.

Over the past few years, we have witnessed a rare moment in history. After more than two years of unimaginable tragedy and loss, we have a long-needed ceasefire in Gaza. The guns have fallen silent, and in that silence the first notes of hope can finally be heard. Denmark warmly welcomes the ceasefire and expresses profound gratitude to the United States, Egypt, Qatar and others who, in spite of numerous setbacks, have worked relentlessly to make this deal a reality.

This ceasefire offers respite and relief, whereby the hostages and their families, who have lived in terror and despair, can finally begin to heal and the skies above Gaza carry not the sound of warplanes but the laughter of children. This is the promise that peace could hold. And yet as this day finally dawns, we cannot forget the immense suffering that lies in its wake and the long road that lies ahead. Far too many will never wake up to see this peace: those buried under the rubble, those who fell prey to terrorists, those ensnared by starvation or those simply caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. This peace is also for them. It is in their memory that we must sustain it. And we must not ignore the fact that Hamas has taken the opportunity to reimpose its campaign of terror on Gaza's population. We continue to stress that Hamas must not be allowed to play a role in the future of Gaza.

This ceasefire is not an ending, it is a beginning — fragile but full of opportunity. Now, we must act with urgency. The road towards lasting peace will not be easy, but the Security Council must shoulder its responsibility. We must spare no effort, and we trust that the Council will urgently come together to establish a mandate for an international stabilization mission.

Denmark welcomes the United Nations plan to alleviate the suffering of civilians. We stress that the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations must be fully enabled to deliver the humanitarian aid that millions so desperately need, in line with the agreement on the first phase. Every corridor must be opened, every convoy protected. Aid shipments must be swiftly allowed in without undue impediments. Humanitarian and health workers must be protected.

We take note of the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion, delivered yesterday, which clearly establishes that Israel must not obstruct the work of the United Nations and is obliged to accept and facilitate humanitarian aid delivered by United Nations organizations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. International and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should be able to work without unnecessary restrictions. In this regard, we repeat our call on the Government of Israel to provide authorization for all international NGOs' aid shipments and to remove impediments to essential humanitarian actors operating.

Denmark stands ready, with \$15 million in support of humanitarian and early recovery efforts, which comes on top of the approximately \$153 million humanitarian aid already allocated to the Palestinian people since 2023. Our goal is clear: we must stop the insidious spread of famine. We must ensure that the sick receive the care that they so desperately need.

Denmark is also prepared to further support the early recovery and the reconstruction of Gaza. But reconstruction is not merely about concrete and steel. It is about dignity. It is about proving to a generation that peace is not a dream or a privilege, but a right — in deeds, not words.

This ceasefire must not be a pause before the next strategy but the first step towards a lasting peace. The full implementation of the peace agreement is vital. We are on the right track, but we are not there yet. We deplore the fact that Hamas has not been able to surrender all the bodies of the deceased hostages, as agreed under the framework, and we deplore the fact that Israel is leveraging humanitarian access and, as a result, has capped the flow of aid into Gaza. We must not let the opportunity that this peace presents slip between our fingers. We now hold in our hands a rare opportunity: that of turning this moment of respite into a foundation for a just and enduring peace based on the two-State solution, whereby Israel and Palestine live side by side in security, dignity and peace. This — a two-State solution — is not only a pressing issue but a prerequisite for long-term stability across the region.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I thank Deputy Special Coordinator Alakbarov for his briefing.

Our meeting today takes place at a time of great promise and opportunity for the people of Palestine. This moment, however, must be managed carefully, in a manner fully anchored in international law and with the protection and well-being of civilians as a central priority. That said, Guyana welcomes the peace plan achieved between Israel and Hamas for ending the hostilities in Gaza and for the release of hostages taken during the 7 October 2023 attack. We commend the tireless efforts of the mediators — the United States, together with Egypt, Qatar and Türkiye — and all who have contributed to making this a reality.

Two years of Israel's war in Gaza have wreaked havoc on the Palestinian population. Gaza itself has suffered massive destruction, with some experts estimating that the recovery could take decades and cost billions of dollars. Then, there are also costs to which figures can never be attached. These include the time that orphaned children have eternally lost with their parents, the months of agony that the relatives and friends of hostages have endured, hoping for their safe return, and the psychosocial impacts of the war, which will be felt for generations to come. But the peace plan has brought renewed hope, and we all must work to ensure its success. On this note, Guyana is very concerned about the violations of the ceasefire. We urge the parties to abide by the commitments made and to prioritize peace in Gaza.

The next phases of the peace plan are extremely critical. We must eschew all ideas that do not line up with international law, that undermine the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and that dilute the two-State solution. At the recently convened High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution and the general debate of the General Assembly at its eightieth session, there was a clear international consensus that the two-State solution remains the only just, comprehensive and viable path to the resolution of the Palestinian question. Guyana therefore urges that the next phases of the peace plan take this into account. We are baffled that less than two weeks after the Gaza peace plan was approved, Israel's Parliament voted to give preliminary approval to a bill which imposes Israel's

sovereignty over the occupied West Bank. We call on Israel to abandon this effort, which, if implemented, will be a violation of international law and will undermine the two-State solution. The West Bank is a critical part of the future independent State of Palestine.

The war in Gaza reached many lows in the conduct of international relations, and I specifically wish to highlight Israel's belligerent approach to international organizations operating in the occupied Palestinian territory to meet humanitarian needs. We welcome the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice yesterday, which clarifies the obligation of Israel as an occupying Power to work with United Nations agencies to facilitate humanitarian aid in Gaza. We particularly welcome the specific provisions of the opinion regarding the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. We call on Israel to respect the Court's advisory opinion and to choose the path of compliance with international law. This is especially critical now that a massive humanitarian effort is required to scale up humanitarian interventions in the immediate term and to advance reconstruction and recovery over the long term.

The central role of the Security Council as the United Nations organ with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security must be emphasized, particularly as we contemplate the next phases of the peace plan. This includes the establishment of the temporary international stabilization force.

I conclude by reaffirming Guyana's commitment to all genuine efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question.

Mr. Waltz (United States of America): I thank Deputy Special Coordinator Alakbarov for his briefing.

President Trump's 20-point plan for peace offers a historic opportunity. His diplomacy brought about the ceasefire in Gaza, with support from around the world. It brought home 20 living hostages who spent 738 days held captive in a living hell. It offers hope for the people of Gaza. It offers hope for the Middle East to turn the page on a millennium of violence and to usher in a new age of peace and prosperity.

Under President Trump's leadership, the United States has ended eight conflicts across the globe over the course of just eight months. And with the help of our friends in Qatar, Egypt, Türkiye and the region, this most recent success may prove to be the greatest opening of them all.

This historic success is cause for celebration. It is cause for determination. But it cannot be cause for complacency. As President Trump has said, the job is not done. And in that vein, Hamas must immediately return the bodies of the 13 remaining hostages, including the bodies of American citizens Itay Chen and Omer Neutra, as promised under the agreement. Their families deserve dignity. And Hamas must likewise follow through on its commitment to disarm. The President is not playing games here. And simply put, Hamas is finished in Gaza and does not have a future there. And if they do not follow through, they are in violation of the ceasefire and will face consequences — severe consequences. The future of Gaza can be one of peace and prosperity.

And we also note, as has been noted here today, the extremely disturbing and bloody executions by Hamas of the people in the streets of Gaza, in broad daylight, on camera, for the world to see. This is further evidence that Hamas is unfit to rule the Gaza Strip and cannot be trusted with the safety of the people in Gaza for a moment longer. And likewise, frankly, many nations have condemned Israel, and those nations should be embarrassed of their silence and of their hypocrisy as Hamas slays its own people. As for the global community that has been protesting and demanding peace for the Palestinian people and for the people of Gaza, where is

the outrage? Where is the outrage over these executions we have seen in recent days? Hamas is not just attacking Israelis, it is not just terrorizing hostages underground, and it is not just using bodies as psychological warfare on families. They are openly killing their own people for propaganda, in addition to the human shields that they have used over the past years. Candidly: shame on the world for its silence in the wake of these executions.

Well, President Trump has not been silent. He has clearly said that Hamas terrorists must immediately cease these killings or face their own elimination. Therefore, when Hamas complies with the deal, the rebuilding of Gaza will be a major regional and global event. The peace agreement has already resulted in a dramatic increase in the flow of humanitarian aid to the people there. And we will continue to work to deliver aid to scale and meet Gaza's humanitarian needs, rehabilitating its infrastructure, including its hospitals, its roads, its bakeries, its water, its electricity and its sewage systems. We will continue to work with our international partners, with the United Nations and with everyone around the world to scale up the response and deliver aid to the civilians in need.

But, unfortunately, in the midst of this important work, as President Trump, as Vice-President Vance, as Secretary Rubio and the team work tirelessly to bring peace to the region, the International Court of Justice just issued a nakedly political — but fortunately non-binding — advisory opinion, unfairly bashing Israel and giving the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East a free pass for its deep entanglement with Hamas' terrorism.

President Trump's peace agreement heralds more than the end of the war in Gaza. With God's help, it will mark the beginning of a strong, stable and prosperous region, united in rejecting the path of violence, hatred and terror.

However, in support of that vision, more broadly, the international community must urge the Iranian regime to give up on its false hope of revolution, and forgo its ambitions on its neighbours, to stop meddling in the politics of other countries in the region and to, instead, engage in direct and good-faith dialogue with the United States for the benefit of the Iranian people and the security of the region. Because of tough action on Iranian proxies, we are seeing historic opportunity in Lebanon, in Syria, in Iraq and across the region. In this spirit, the United States has supported the re-imposition of United Nations snapback sanctions on the Iranian regime. The regime will continue to face consequences until it leaves behind its path of destruction. We must continue to press Iran to do what is right for its people and what is best for international peace and regional security.

With President Trump's plan, we are closer than ever to realizing the Middle East that generations dreamed of: a region of peace, prosperity, harmony, opportunity, innovation and achievement. The more we are talking about infrastructure, about rail, about data centres, about artificial intelligence, the less we will be talking about these historic animosities. Along those lines, we look forward to more countries in the region joining the Abraham Accords. We look forward to a future that can realize this dream.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Deputy Special Coordinator Alakbarov for his briefing today.

For two years, the world has witnessed the terrible human cost of the Hamas terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023 and the disastrous conflict in Gaza that has claimed so many lives. We are now at an important moment of hope thanks to President Trump's ceasefire deal. We have witnessed, with immense relief, released hostages being reunited with their families after an unimaginable ordeal. More humanitarian aid is now entering Gaza, and the ceasefire provides an opportunity for the Palestinian people to begin to build a better future, free from conflict. We

commend President Trump and his team for their efforts in reaching this historic moment. We are grateful to Qatar, Türkiye and Egypt for the specific roles they have played. We also recognize the contributions of many other countries from the region and beyond, including France and Saudi Arabia, in leading work on the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, which have been instrumental in getting us to this point.

There is much more work to be done. We call on both parties to uphold their commitments under the deal and to avoid escalations that risk undermining it. We call on Hamas to cease violence. They must locate and hand over the final 13 hostages, fully sharing the information they have with the mediators and the International Committee of the Red Cross to help to locate their remains.

We also call on Israel to ensure restrictions on aid are permanently lifted to allow the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance at scale. This includes supporting the United Nations humanitarian effort, opening all crossings to both humanitarian and commercial goods and ensuring that international non-governmental organizations can operate without obstruction.

As we have consistently stated, all parties must comply with their obligations under international law. The International Court of Justice delivered an important advisory opinion yesterday on Israel's obligations in this regard. We welcome its clear findings that Israel has an obligation under international humanitarian law to ensure the provision of aid in Gaza and that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East has a critical role in delivering the humanitarian response. We will continue to consider the full details of the opinion carefully.

We must now build on the momentum of the ceasefire. We need urgent work to develop transitional security arrangements, including an international stabilization force. And we need to support the reform programme for the Palestinian Authority as it builds the Palestinian State. This should comprise Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, based on 1967 lines, with land swaps agreed as part of a negotiated, peaceful settlement.

The United Kingdom is playing its part, for example, through humanitarian assistance, a deployment of staff to the United States-led Civil Military Coordination Centre and by working with Egypt and others to mobilize private sector investment for Gaza's reconstruction.

Finally, while the eyes of the world are focused on Gaza, we must not forget what is happening in the West Bank. Once again, we condemn attacks by extremist violent settlers on Palestinian farmers in the West Bank during the olive harvest. We call on Israel to take action to stop this violence, end settlement expansion and lift its financial restrictions, which risk economic collapse in the West Bank.

We are at a historic crossroads. The way forward will not be easy. It will require courageous leadership on all sides and steadfast support from those of us in this Chamber. But if we seize the moment, we have a chance to end the cycle of violence and achieve lasting peace for Israelis, Palestinians and the region.

Mr. Jadoon (Pakistan): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important and timely debate. We also thank Deputy Special Coordinator Ramiz Alakbarov for his comprehensive briefing.

After the catastrophic consequences of the recent two-year war and the unimaginable humanitarian crisis in Gaza, marked by the killing of more than 68,000 innocent Palestinians, most of them women and children, along with widespread

starvation, devastation and displacement, hope has emerged with the signing of the peace agreement at the Sharm el-Sheikh peace summit.

Pakistan welcomes the peace efforts led by President Trump and commends the crucial role played by the mediators — Egypt, Qatar, Türkiye and the United States — in facilitating the negotiations. We sincerely hope that these efforts will yield sustainable results, including a permanent cessation of hostilities and a just, comprehensive and lasting peace.

The ceasefire, the release of hostages and Palestinian prisoners and the restoration of humanitarian flows are welcome steps. Nevertheless, the situation remains fragile. We condemn Israel's continuing attacks in Gaza, resulting in the loss of numerous civilian lives. Such actions are contrary to the letter and spirit of the agreement signed in Sharm-el Sheikh. The peace efforts must not be derailed. Lasting stability cannot be achieved through continued occupation and oppression.

Pakistan also condemns the Israeli Knesset's preliminary approval of two draft laws aimed at imposing Israeli sovereignty over the occupied West Bank and an illegal settlement, in blatant violation of the historical rights of the Palestinian people, international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

Pakistan was a participant in the diplomatic efforts that began on the sidelines of the General Assembly's eightieth session in New York last month with a meeting of President Donald Trump with eight Arab-Islamic leaders. In a joint statement, Pakistan and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of those Arab and Islamic countries — Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia and Türkiye — welcomed the announcement by President Trump regarding his peace proposal. We reaffirmed our joint commitment to work with the United States to end the war in Gaza through a comprehensive deal that ensures the unrestricted delivery of sufficient humanitarian aid, prevents the displacement of Palestinians, ensures the release of hostages, a security mechanism that guarantees the security of all sides, full Israeli withdrawal and the reconstruction of Gaza and builds a path for a just peace on the basis of the two-State solution, under which Gaza is fully integrated with the West Bank in a unified Palestinian State in accordance with international law, as the key to achieving regional stability and security.

The High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, co-chaired by Saudi Arabia and France, was an important endeavour to advance the long-overdue realization of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and statehood. The Conference and the peace efforts led by President Trump complement each other and should serve as a foundation for implementing the various commitments and the realization of a sovereign Palestinian State.

The following steps are essential.

First, the ceasefire must be implemented fully, ensuring a permanent cessation of hostilities, Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, unrestricted humanitarian access and a comprehensive reconstruction plan.

Secondly, there must be accountability for the grave atrocity crimes committed in Gaza.

Thirdly, an end must be brought to Israel's illegal actions in the West Bank, including forced displacements, illegal settlements and annexations, and the legal and historical status of Haram Al-Sharif/Al-Aqsa Mosque must be upheld.

Fourthly, the unhindered functioning of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the role of which is indispensable in providing life-saving assistance, must be ensured. As reaffirmed

by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion yesterday, Israel is under obligation to facilitate relief provided by the United Nations and its entities, particularly UNRWA.

Lastly, a credible, time-bound political process consistent with international legitimacy and the relevant United Nations resolutions must be launched to establish an independent, sovereign and contiguous State of Palestine, based on the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Looking ahead, the roles of the United Nations, the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people will be vital to ensuring legitimate governance, reconstruction and institution-building in Gaza. The role of the Security Council will also be critical and indispensable to the next phases of the peace plan, including designing and mandating the deployment of an international stabilization force to fulfil the tasks envisaged for it in the peace plan. Pakistan will continue to work with all partners to advance these shared objectives and help to restore peace, justice and dignity to the Palestinian people.

Mr. Moscoso (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Panama thanks the Russian Federation for convening and presiding over this quarterly open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. We also acknowledge the detailed briefing by Mr. Ramiz Alakbarov, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator.

In total, 748 days have passed since that cruel 7 October 2023. The attacks perpetrated by Hamas that day and their trail of violence so far have left more than 1,900 people dead in Israel. In the weeks and months that followed, the military response in Gaza took a devastating toll: more than 68,000 Palestinians have been killed and approximately 170,000 have been injured since then.

Panama pays tribute to all those who have lost their lives in this war and to the survivors, who now have the difficult task of healing. Out of respect for their memory and sacrifice, the least we should do is support and maintain the ceasefire reached under the leadership of United States President Donald Trump and that of Qatar, Egypt and Türkiye. We welcome this fragile progress. It is not an end in itself; it is the starting point for alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian population in Gaza, freeing the living hostages and initiating the dignified return of the deceased and opening up space for politics of peace and human dignity. Panama urges Israel and Hamas to stand by and comply fully with what was agreed at the negotiating table. Peace does not happen on its own; it is built with political will, often with difficult decisions and concessions and with mechanisms and actions that build trust. No political calculation justifies prolonging suffering, and life must be chosen over any other priority or particular interest.

The extremism that we have seen in this war has no place in the future of Israelis or Palestinians. No national project or legitimate cause is sustained by terror, hatred or the dehumanization of others. The silencing of arms must become a commitment of humankind to keep the corridors of vital humanitarian aid open, protect those who distribute that aid and save lives, allow families to reunite in peace and security and turn schools and hospitals back into schools and hospitals and not war zones. On this path, the support and assistance of the United Nations system is essential to the long-awaited reconstruction of Gaza. We reaffirm our full support for the work being carried out, despite the constraints, by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme and other agencies, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross and its partners, to ensure the effective flow of vital humanitarian assistance. Their work is neutral, impartial and independent and cannot be replaced.

Panama reiterates its concern about the continued worsening of the situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Since October 2023, almost 1,000 Palestinians have been killed, more than 3,000 structures have been destroyed, and more than 3,000 people have been displaced. New, prolonged restrictions on access and movement are isolating entire communities, while violence and vandalism, including the sabotage of water networks, are seeking to make the daily lives of thousands of people impossible. This situation does not build security; on the contrary, it undermines any possibility of peace. The West Bank cannot be allowed to become another hotbed of war, as happened in Gaza. We therefore call for an end to the violence and actions on the ground that openly contradict international law and Security Council resolutions and that only hinder the possibility of a sustainable political solution.

Panama reiterates that there is no military solution to this conflict. Decades of war and death have not delivered security, let alone peace, and nor will they. Insisting on the military path means insisting on failure. The only way forward is a serious, comprehensive and sustained political process based on international law and the resolutions of the Council with verifiable guarantees for both sides, and which, as a result of diplomatic negotiations, ensures that Israelis and Palestinians live in security and dignity in two States with mutually recognized and internationally agreed borders.

A just, dignified and sustainable peace between Israelis and Palestinians can have an immediate stabilizing effect on the regional environment. In Lebanon, it would reduce the risk of spillover along the Blue Line, and it would facilitate full compliance with resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006), strengthening the authority of the Lebanese State and the work of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the work of which we support. In Syria, it could ease cross-border tensions, and it would improve conditions in the Syrian political process. We also recognize the effort and dedication of Special Envoy Geir Pedersen following the seven years he devoted to helping to build an inclusive political process in Syria. And in the Red Sea, it would contribute to alleviating the volatility that is affecting freedom of navigation and supply chains, to the benefit of the entire region, including Yemen. To avert a major escalation, international law must be observed, the sovereignty, political independence and the territorial integrity of all States must be respected, non-State actors must be contained and verification and coordination mechanisms on the ground must be sustained. That is the regional dividend that we must pursue as a matter of urgency. Panama will promote and support any initiative that consolidates a fair, decent and sustainable peace in conformity with international law and the Council's resolutions.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I thank Deputy Special Coordinator Alakbarov for his briefing.

Slovenia welcomes the implementation of the first phase of the comprehensive plan to end the Gaza conflict. We appreciate the efforts of Egypt, Qatar, Türkiye and the United States. Slovenia champions a strong role for the Council in supporting the implementation process. We would also like to commend the pivotal role of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

We are deeply concerned about the attempts to violate the ceasefire in Gaza, including violence and extrajudicial executions by Hamas, arms smuggling, delays in the opening of crossings and an escalation after the attacks near Rafah. We call on the parties to fully respect the ceasefire. While the yellow line, which divides Gaza internally, should remain as short-lived as possible, arrangements for the disarmament of Hamas and the setting-up of international stabilization forces should proceed swiftly. Slovenia also remains profoundly concerned about the situation in the West Bank, including the discussions regarding its annexation and the continuation of

Operation Iron Wall. We call for de-escalation. We are appalled by the violence and the high level of killings, injuries, damage to infrastructure, displacement and attacks by settlers in the context of the olive harvest season.

The ultimate goal of our efforts in the Middle East must be the two-State solution. In that sense, we strongly believe that the visions provided by President Trump's plan, the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution (General Assembly decision 80/506) and the Arab plan for the reconstruction of Gaza should be complementary. We must ensure that the efforts of the international community are equally complementary. It is therefore important to strengthen the Palestinian Authority with a view to reforming it and ensuring its governance in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Each country sitting at this table today has its own set of experience and knowledge. While Slovenia has been consistent in its support for the Palestinian people, the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, we are also willing to step forward with lessons learned from the recent history of our region. The United Nations has vast experience in establishing international interim administrations in territories recovering from conflict. Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina can serve as an inspiration for plans to put a civilian administration in place in Gaza, even if they are not directly coordinated by the United Nations.

We welcome the 60-day humanitarian plan presented by the United Nations. Humanitarian needs in Gaza continue to be tremendously high, and we continue to call for sustained and unimpeded deliveries of aid and fuel at scale across the Strip. Safe operating spaces for humanitarian actors, including international non-governmental organizations, must include the protection of aid workers operating on the ground and a registration process based on humanitarian principles. We further call for the restoration of infrastructure and the opening of crossings to eliminate the persistent threat of famine and to allow for medical evacuations and returns. Medical needs in Gaza are enormous. Doctors and medical workers should be allowed to work unimpeded and without fear. We appeal to Israel to release the remaining medical staff from Gaza from arbitrary detention, including Dr. Abu Safia, of Kamal Adwan Hospital. Gaza must also be a free and safe space in which journalists can work.

The road to healing is long and will likely be paved with a fragile peace. It is our collective responsibility to nurture this fragile peace so that it becomes just and lasting. It must be firmly anchored in international law, which includes ensuring the accountability of all parties for their actions. In this regard, Slovenia welcomes the work of the International Court of Justice in issuing the latest advisory opinion, just yesterday. We underline that the advisory opinion, as an authoritative judicial decision with great legal weight and moral authority, must be studied carefully in order for full effect to be given to the Court's interpretation of international law.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Deputy Special Coordinator Alakbarov for the briefing.

The conflict in Gaza dragged on for two years and caused unprecedented civilian casualties and humanitarian catastrophe. Recently, the first phase of the ceasefire agreement was finally reached, bringing the fighting in Gaza to an end. The hostages and detainees were released and returned home, and humanitarian supplies entered Gaza. China welcomes this. The progress made thus far represents only the first step to restoring lasting peace. The international community should step up its efforts, build greater consensus and take more proactive action.

First, a lasting ceasefire must be achieved in Gaza, and, once this happens, hostilities must not resume. The current truce should serve as the basis for a

comprehensive and lasting ceasefire, Disturbingly, however, the agreement continues to be violated, causing further casualties among innocent civilians. The bloody conflict in Gaza has time and again warned us that dialogue and negotiation are the only way to resolve problems, and retaliatory violence leads only to a vicious cycle. China calls upon all the parties concerned to fully abide by the requirements of the ceasefire agreement, work to achieve a truly comprehensive and lasting ceasefire and ensure that security and stability return to Gaza.

Secondly, the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza must be alleviated without delay. Under two years of siege and blockade, the people of Gaza endured unspeakable suffering. Although some humanitarian assistance has resumed, many obstacles remain, with urgent humanitarian needs far from alleviated. Yesterday, the International Court of Justice issued its advisory opinion, making clear that Israel has an obligation to cooperate with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and other agencies in delivering humanitarian assistance to Gaza. Israel, as the occupying Power, must fulfil its obligations under international humanitarian law, open all border crossings, guarantee the entry of humanitarian supplies into Gaza at scale and their safe and orderly distribution, and lift restrictions on aid operations by UNRWA and other humanitarian agencies.

Thirdly, post-conflict arrangements for Gaza must be duly advanced. Gaza is the homeland of the Palestinian people, not a bargaining chip in international politics. Any arrangements for the future of Gaza must adhere to the established international consensus on Palestinians governing Palestine and respect the will of the Palestinian people. After two years of indiscriminate bombing, Gaza is devastated and inhospitable. It is imperative to start reconstruction and restore livelihoods without delay. We welcome the efforts by Egypt and other countries of the region to promote Gaza's reconstruction. The international community should proactively support and help with Gaza's reconstruction.

Fourthly, the political prospects of the two-State solution must be revived. Implementing the two-State solution is the only way out for the Palestinian question. There is no alternative, and this solution must not be denied. Only when an independent State of Palestine is established and when the legitimate national rights are realized will historical injustices and the root causes of violence be eliminated and lasting, peaceful coexistence between Palestine and Israel be achieved. Israel must stop its settlement activities in the West Bank and stop undermining the foundation for governance by the Palestinian Authority. The international community should make united efforts, jointly reject unilateral actions that jeopardize the basis of the two-State solution and support Palestine's independent statehood and full membership in the United Nations at an early date.

The Security Council bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and it should play a positive role in upholding peace and stability in Gaza. China stands ready to work with the international community in the tireless efforts to promote a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire, alleviate the humanitarian catastrophe, implement the two-State solution and ultimately achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

Mr. Mohamed Yusuf (Somalia): I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Alakbarov, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, for his comprehensive and sobering briefing. We are deeply indebted to all United Nations and humanitarian personnel working under the most challenging circumstances in Gaza and the West Bank for their leadership and tireless efforts. Their unwavering courage, professionalism and commitment have been a beacon of hope in the face of adversity.

The agreed ceasefire brings much-needed relief from active hostilities and silences the guns, but the profound suffering endured by the affected communities continues. The devastation of the conflict is staggering. More than 65,000 lives have been lost, primarily women and children, while millions have been displaced. Basic infrastructure lies in ruins, and entire communities are traumatized by the violence and loss that they have endured. More than 90 per cent of homes in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed. The extent of the destruction of property and infrastructure is almost unimaginable, leaving most families without basic services or even a place to return to. It will take decades, if not longer, to fully repair and inhabit again.

The situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is equally alarming. This year has witnessed a significant increase in Israeli military operations, resulting in the loss of life or the injury of numerous Palestinians. Thousands of structures and essential infrastructure have been demolished, their demolition often justified as security operations. Tens of thousands have been displaced from their homes, with refugee camps like Janin, Nur Shams and Tulkarm bearing the brunt of the devastating destruction. Simultaneously, there has been a notable rise in settler violence, accompanied by further settlement expansion. These developments not only violate international law, but also diminish the prospect of the two-State solution.

The road ahead is arduous, and the international community must rise to this challenge with urgency, unity and a clear vision. In that context, I would like to propose the following.

First, consolidating and safeguarding the ceasefire must remain a priority. Somalia commends the mediation efforts by the United States, Egypt, Türkiye and Qatar, which have been instrumental in achieving the current cessation of hostilities. This not only should be a matter of restraint but also requires robust international monitoring and accountability mechanisms under United Nations auspices in order to support trust and adherence to the ceasefire.

Secondly, humanitarian access must be ensured and expanded without delay. We welcome the recent International Court of Justice advisory opinion that Israel, as the occupying Power, has an obligation to uphold international humanitarian law. United Nations agencies, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the World Food Programme and UNICEF, continue to face significant challenges, including delays at crossings, underfunding and threats to their personnel. The unimpeded delivery of essential supplies, such as food, medicine and fuel, to those in need should be treated as a legal and moral obligation, not as a concession.

Thirdly, a comprehensive reconstruction plan must be launched urgently. The unprecedented scale of destruction necessitates a coordinated and well-resourced approach led by the United Nations and supported by regional and international partners. Essential services, including water, electricity, healthcare and education, must be restored promptly. Homes and livelihoods must be rebuilt. The voices and needs of those most affected, in particular women and children, must guide our efforts, ensuring that dignity and hope are restored alongside physical infrastructure.

Fourthly and lastly, there is a clear need to revitalize a credible political process. Somalia has taken note of the recent United States peace plan and encourages all parties to engage in a constructive, inclusive dialogue that respects international law and United Nations resolutions. Addressing fundamental issues, such as the long-standing occupation, ongoing settlement activities and collective punishment, remains essential for achieving a just and lasting peace.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people in their pursuit of freedom, dignity and justice. This truce must not be a mere pause in violence but the beginning of a sustained effort to heal, rebuild and chart a course

towards lasting security and hope for all. Somalia reiterates its steadfast support for the realization of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Our delegation stands ready to work with the international community to ensure that this opportunity is not lost and that peace in the occupied Palestinian territory and the wider region becomes not just a possibility, but a reality.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I thank the presidency of the Russian Federation for elevating this meeting to a signature event. I thank the Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Ramiz Alakbarov, for his important briefing. I welcome the participation of the representatives of the State of Palestine and the State of Israel and of other delegations in this meeting.

At the outset, we note that while aspects of the regional situation in the Middle East show signs of improvement, conditions remain highly volatile. In Yemen, Houthi attacks on shipping and Israeli targets have prompted retaliatory strikes, heightening fears of a broader Red Sea and Gulf escalation. In Lebanon, a fragile truce faces pressure amid air strikes and displacement, against a background of political and economic fragility. Nonetheless, recent steps to reinvigorate intra-Lebanese dialogue and sustain core governance functions warrant recognition and support.

In Syria, continuing hostilities in the north, coupled with protracted economic distress and grave human rights concerns, continue to impede prospects for durable stabilization. Nevertheless, the vision outlined by President Ahmed Al-Sharaa in his address to the General Assembly in September of a new Syria anchored in peace, prosperity and development, and underpinned by commitments to reform, national dialogue and justice, together with ongoing political engagement and localized understandings, merits support. The present circumstances offer openings for confidence-building and progress towards peace that should be carefully nurtured.

Against this backdrop, as we reflect on the developments in the past weeks regarding the conflict in the Gaza Strip, especially the signing of the ceasefire agreement, we remain optimistic that, despite the uncertainties, sustainable peace is possible. The bold leadership and political commitment demonstrated by the international community are undoubtedly contributing to the transformation of the region, thus providing relief and hope to Israeli and Palestinian civilians.

For two years, following the heinous attack of 7 October 2023, which killed approximately 1,200 people in Israel, violence and devastation engulfed the region. In Gaza, the cumulative toll has been catastrophic, with more than 67,000 Palestinians reportedly killed as of early October 2025, amid widespread destruction and acute humanitarian need. These figures underline the human cost of this conflict and the urgency of consolidating the fragile cessation of hostilities now in place.

In recent days, we have seen resilience and a measure of hope. Starved and traumatized civilians have begun to move back towards areas they once called home, now mountains of rubble and despair, seeking to re-establish a semblance of life and dignity. United Nations updates report significant internal movements within Gaza since the truce took effect, underscoring the imperative to provide safe access, essential services and protection for returning civilians. In the light of the foregoing, at this critical juncture, with the promising prospect of achieving a lasting ceasefire and peace, Sierra Leone would like to make the following four points.

First, we welcome the agreement between Israel and Hamas, following indirect talks mediated by Egypt, Qatar, Türkiye and the United States, and note with relief the release of all 20 remaining living Israeli hostages, alongside the release of more than 1,800 Palestinian detainees, in line with the initial terms of the truce. We commend the tireless efforts of the mediators and humanitarian actors, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, in facilitating these outcomes.

The current truce, though fragile, must be leveraged to faithfully implement the first phase of the agreement: upholding the cessation of hostilities; ensuring the full, safe and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance; and enabling freedom of movement for civilians and humanitarian workers. We accordingly denounce the incidents reported on 19 October 2025, which violated the ceasefire and resulted in additional civilian casualties. All parties must refrain from any provocation or violation that could derail progress or imperil civilians.

Negotiations for the second phase should commence in good faith and without delay, with clear timelines and monitoring to build confidence. Outstanding concerns must be addressed, in order to consolidate calm across Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Secondly, humanitarian access and recovery must also be scaled up decisively. Unrestricted entry of aid through all viable crossings, restoration of essential services, protection of medical evacuations, including to the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and support for education, shelter and livelihoods are urgent priorities.

In this regard, we welcome the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion issued on 22 October 2025, stating that Israel has a legal obligation to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza, specifically by facilitating the work of United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). United Nations entities and partners, notably UNRWA, require unimpeded operational space and adequate, predictable resources. The ban on UNRWA must be lifted and educational materials permitted, so that UNRWA and the Palestinian Authority can reopen schools and temporary learning spaces for all school-aged children.

A priority should be the reopening of the medical corridor to the West Bank and East Jerusalem, with guarantees of return for treated patients and caregivers. The ceasefire must evolve into a pathway that guarantees healing, reconciliation, trust, justice and reconstruction. In this regard, we call upon relevant actors, including United Nations Member States, regional organizations and international financial institutions to mobilize momentum and resources for the reconstruction of Gaza.

Thirdly, Sierra Leone reiterates that a just and lasting peace is only achievable through a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. The International Court of Justice's advisory opinions, including that of 19 July 2024 (see A/78/968), provide important legal contours relevant to ending the conflict and ensuring respect for international law. The New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, overwhelmingly endorsed by the General Assembly on 12 September 2025, offers a political framework to advance that vision.

We further take note of recent political initiatives, including President Trump's comprehensive peace plan and the Sharm el-Sheikh peace summit, and other proposals, as inputs for future dialogue, while underscoring that the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and statehood must remain central to all engagements.

Peace in Gaza must be matched by stability in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, where tensions have heightened since 21 January 2025, owing to Israel's Operation Iron Wall, with a focus on counter-terrorism measures. This operation, coupled with settler violence, demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned properties, together with severe movement and access restrictions, has harmed civilians and impeded humanitarian work. These dynamics must be addressed to prevent further deterioration and to maintain the viability of a negotiated two-State solution.

We are concerned by reports that a bill applying Israeli domestic law to the occupied West Bank, an act equal to formal annexation of Palestinian territory, has received preliminary approval in the Knesset. While this may be the first of four required readings before it becomes law, such a step undermines efforts to build confidence, sustain the ceasefire and preserve a credible path towards a just and lasting peace. For the avoidance of doubt, the occupation remains illegal under international law, and any measures that seek to alter the demographic, legal or territorial status of the occupied Palestinian territory are equally without legal validity and constitute a clear violation of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

Fourthly and lastly, decisions about Palestine must include Palestinians, their institutions, leadership and civil society, in ways that ensure ownership, legitimacy and consent. No durable settlement can be achieved without the full and meaningful participation of the Palestinian people in shaping their future.

In closing, the Council should continue to support the parties and the mediators to ensure the full implementation of all phases of the agreement, uphold international law and advance accountability for violations against civilians. A detailed briefing to the Council on the agreement's implementation would assist in sustaining focus and ensuring compliance. Sierra Leone will continue to support efforts in the Council to sustain the present calm, relieve humanitarian suffering and help to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

Mr. Cha (Republic of Korea): I would also like to thank Deputy Special Coordinator Alakbarov for his comprehensive briefing.

The Republic of Korea welcomes the release of hostages in Gaza, as well as the implementation of the ceasefire earlier this month, and commends the enormous efforts by the mediating countries: the United States, Qatar, Egypt and Türkiye. We also appreciate the efforts made by President Trump to promote peace in the Middle East, as shown in the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict and the Trump Declaration for Enduring Peace and Prosperity.

Ten days ago, the entire world witnessed what political will can bring about. All 20 living hostages, who had been brutally held by Hamas for two years, were finally reunited with their loved ones, including those who briefed the Security Council in this Chamber. The hard-won ceasefire could also bring a long-awaited respite to Palestinians in Gaza. Many of them could finally return to where their homes once stood, as elevated levels of humanitarian aid began to flow through the United Nations system.

The Republic of Korea strongly believes that this achievement must serve as the starting point for rebuilding peace and stability in the region. We urge the parties to this conflict in Gaza to strictly abide by the agreement and to faithfully engage in negotiations to achieve the second phase of the ceasefire. Reiterating our clear condemnation of the terrorist attacks by Hamas two years ago, we reaffirm our belief that, in accordance with the comprehensive plan to end the Gaza conflict and the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State solution, Hamas must not serve any role in the future governance of Gaza and must lay down its weapons. We also urge Hamas to exert all efforts to locate and return the bodies of the deceased hostages. Israel must also comply with its commitments, including the complete suspension of all military operations, the full entry of humanitarian aid through all available routes and withdrawal to the agreed lines. At the same time, the humanitarian work of United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, must be ensured, as detailed in the recent International Court of Justice advisory opinion.

In this regard, the Republic of Korea expresses its grave concern about the incident on Sunday relating to the deadly air strikes by the Israel Defense Forces in Rafah, responding to attacks against it, and about the public execution carried out by Hamas in Gaza. We again call on both parties to abide by the ceasefire agreement. To this end, as a member of the Security Council, the Republic of Korea would like to express its willingness to actively participate in any Council discussions to support the ceasefire and the relevant arrangements, including the deployment of the international stabilization force based on the comprehensive plan.

For the past two years, we have witnessed a dangerous cycle of escalation and violence sweeping across the region. Thus, we must seize this important moment to end the vicious circle of regional strife and open a path towards genuine peace and security. We believe that the two-State solution is the only possible way to ensure peace, stability and dignity for all in the Middle East. In this respect, we stress our firm position that the establishment of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law. We call on Israel to cease all settlement activities and demolitions of Palestinian homes and to take measures to stop and punish the unjustifiable violence by settlers, including those targeting Palestinians participating in the annual West Bank olive harvest. The Palestinian Authority (PA) should also do more to carry out its reform, and Israel must fulfil its obligations with regard to its relations with the PA, including the transfer of tax revenues.

The horrific terrorist attacks by Hamas in October 2023 ended up only deepening the unfathomable suffering of Palestinians and compounding the agony of both Israelis and Palestinians. The massive military response by Israel over the past two years, which, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, resulted in the killing of more than 68,000 people in Gaza, including more than 20,000 children and more than 10,000 women, also showed that military solutions can never achieve sustainable peace. We therefore hope that through this catastrophic experience, all actors in the region can finally realize the indispensable value of coexistence and peace.

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria): At the outset, I wish to thank Deputy Special Coordinator Alakbarov for his thoughtful and informative briefing.

After two years of enduring relentless bombardment, carnage, starvation and the threat of ethnic cleansing and genocide, the Palestinian people in Gaza are at last beginning to glimpse a moment of relief. It is a fragile moment, yet it carries within it a seed of hope — hope for a life lived in dignity, a future built on justice and the realization of their legitimate right to statehood. In this regard, we welcome the tireless efforts of the mediators — the United States, Egypt, Qatar and Türkiye — whose dedication helped to bring about the ceasefire, the release of the hostages and the exchange of Palestinians prisoners. We express our support for their continued efforts to preserve ceasefire and to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches every corner of Gaza without delay or obstruction.

We call on all parties to honour their commitments to maintain the ceasefire and guarantee unhindered humanitarian access, with the participation of credible humanitarian actors, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which is pivotal for United Nations action. In this regard, we also recall the obligations of Israel, the occupying Power, as reaffirmed in the advisory opinion issued yesterday by the International Court of Justice. Gazans need respite. They need time to heal. They need to rebuild their homes. They need to reopen their schools. They need to restore the rhythm of ordinary life. There, the scale of destruction is beyond imagination. The social and human toll is immense — hundreds of thousands displaced, families shattered, children without classrooms and unemployment at unprecedented levels. The reconstruction

of Gaza must therefore become a collective mission. It requires the full mobilization of the international community, guided by solidarity, compassion and a vision of justice. Algeria will take on its share in this endeavour. But rebuilding Gaza must not end with bricks and concrete. It must open a political horizon — a path leading towards a just and lasting peace, embodied in the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine. Palestinians cannot continue to be overlooked or simply ignored.

While attention is rightfully focused on Gaza, we cannot overlook the alarming developments in the West Bank. Yesterday's vote in the Israeli Knesset to advance a bill aimed at annexing the West Bank exposes once again the colonial nature of the occupation. It represents a blatant attempt to legitimize settlements in flagrant violation of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. We strongly condemn these actions and call upon the international community, in particular the Council, to uphold its responsibility to safeguard the prospects for a just and viable two-State solution. Continued settlement expansion, settler violence and annexation measures are gravely endangering peace efforts and undermining the very foundation of a future Palestinian State. These acts stand in defiance of international law and against the resolve of the global community, which has clearly reaffirmed its support for Palestinian statehood through an ever-growing wave of recognition.

What is now required is the launch of a serious, credible and time-bound peace process, one that leads without ambiguity or delay to the realization of the State of Palestine. A return to the status quo before 7 October 2023 is not acceptable. A return to the blockade is not acceptable. A return to the denial of Palestinian rights is not acceptable. Impunity and disregard for international law are not acceptable. Justice, freedom, peace and dignity for the Palestinian people are not only necessary. They are inevitable.

Mrs. Balta (Greece): I thank the Deputy Special Coordinator Alakbarov for his briefing.

At long last, a ceasefire is now in place in Gaza, and the hostages are now free, following efforts under President Trump's leadership and with tremendous international engagement. The participation of the Greek Prime Minister in the peace summit in Egypt demonstrates Greece's important commitment in the day-after developments. A positive momentum now exists in Gaza. The world's gaze is now focused upon the full implementation of the peace plan. We call on all parties to fulfil their commitments, allowing for the establishment of a lasting ceasefire and the return of the remains of the hostages. This should pave the way to a comprehensive political process. The international community should ensure the Palestinians have full ownership in all aspects of the agreement, be it in terms of recovery, reconstruction or governance.

Meanwhile, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners must continue to scale up their operations on the ground, as outlined in their 60-day plan. Additional food parcels are being distributed, and additional bakeries are now functional. However, far greater volumes are needed. We therefore call for the full, safe and unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid and supplies into Gaza as well as the restoration of full access to potable water and electricity for the civilian population. In this regard, we look forward to the reopening of the Rafah border crossing, which could greatly facilitate the inflow of humanitarian aid at scale across the Strip.

The role of the United Nations and its agencies remains crucial and irreplaceable, as reaffirmed by the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice issued yesterday. Notable in this respect is the role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), to which Greece has consistently contributed and has recently increased its contribution, as it advances

in the implementation of the Colonna recommendations. Similarly, we support initiatives such as the Cyprus-led Amalthea maritime humanitarian corridor. They can effectively contribute to the direct delivery of humanitarian aid, complementing land routes.

Greece stands ready to contribute to the reconstruction of Gaza and the flow of humanitarian aid, as was stated by our Foreign Minister during his meeting with his Palestinian counterpart in Athens.

At the same time, incidents over the past weekend have demonstrated that the ceasefire is fragile. Diplomacy has delivered. It is now up to the parties to uphold their obligations and demonstrate caution and restraint. The envisaged United States-led international stabilization force provides for a promising prospect in support of peace. As the custodian of international peace and security, the Council is the appropriate body to mandate this force. Greece will engage constructively in relevant consultations on the next steps.

The time has come to forge a path towards lasting peace and security based on the two-State solution. The international community reaffirmed its overwhelming support for the two-State solution at the high-level conference co-chaired by France and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia last month. Our sights are now fixed on the activation of the peace plan's second phase, one which can establish sustainable peace and prosperity in the region.

We rejoice at the sight of freed Israeli hostages embracing their loved ones. We now expect Hamas to comply fully with the terms of the agreement and proceed with the immediate return of all the deceased, adhering to the terms. Under the peace plan, Hamas is given a chance to decommission weapons and leave Gaza. The recent appalling footage of brutal public executions committed by Hamas and the skirmishes against rival factions in Gaza make the issue of Hamas' disarmament most imperative. It can have no role, direct or indirect, in the governance of Gaza. A viable alternative to its devastating rule in Gaza is sorely needed. A reformed and empowered Palestinian Authority, which Greece fully supports, is an indispensable and credible partner for peace.

Despite these developments, we cannot deviate our attention from the West Bank. According to the United Nations human rights office, there is a clear increase of severe attacks by armed extremist settlers in the West Bank two weeks into the 2025 harvest. Settlement expansion and settler violence, including against Christian communities, are causes for grave concern. We thus reiterate our call for the preservation of the status quo of the holy sites in the Old City of Jerusalem. We further stress that announcements on the construction of additional settlements, which undermine the two-State solution, must be reversed.

In conclusion, the Middle East, a region vibrant in its diversity and rich in its history, seems to be turning a new page. The Council needs to uphold its role and responsibility in ensuring that regional peace is established so that the peoples of the region may finally enjoy a future of stability, dignity and hope.

Mr. Bonnafont (France) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank the Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Ramiz Alakbarov, for his briefing. I also welcome the presence of the representatives of Israel, Palestine, Senegal and Kazakhstan.

The past month has been marked both by the painful memory of the second anniversary of the terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023, with their devastating consequences, and by the hope arising from the signing of a historic peace agreement in Sharm el-Sheikh. This agreement, made possible through the tireless efforts of the United States, Qatar, Egypt and Türkiye, represents a crucial step towards peace.

It opens a perspective for a permanent ceasefire, the release of all hostages and immediate, unimpeded humanitarian access. It creates the conditions for peace and for the implementation of the two-State solution.

Both parties must seize this historic opportunity. France calls on them to fully implement their commitments with two urgent priorities. Hamas must immediately return the remains of Israeli hostages held in Gaza and cease its armed actions, starting with the summary executions that France has strongly condemned. Israel must allow the massive entry of humanitarian aid through the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). France calls on Israel to comply with its obligations, as reiterated by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion of 22 October.

To turn the ceasefire into lasting peace, the Security Council must assume its responsibilities. Our efforts must focus on implementing the second phase of the American plan and the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, overwhelmingly endorsed by the General Assembly.

Five priorities will guide our action.

The first is the establishment of security and public order, through the deployment in Gaza of an international stabilization force mandated by the Security Council, at the invitation of the Palestinian Authority and with strong regional and international support. Regular Palestinian security and police forces will be trained and supported, and Hamas will be disarmed.

The second is humanitarian assistance and reconstruction. Humanitarian access must be ensured through all crossing points under the coordination of the United Nations, its agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and NGOs and in full compliance with international humanitarian law. France recalls the indispensable role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. It supports Egypt's mobilization efforts for reconstruction.

The third is renewed governance for Gaza. Our guiding principle is the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and to a State of Palestine that encompasses Gaza and the West Bank. A reformed Palestinian Authority will assume that responsibility, and Hamas can play no role in it.

The fourth is the connection between the West Bank and Gaza. France is concerned about the acceleration of settlement activities, settler violence and threats of the partial or total annexation of the West Bank, including the preliminary approval of bills to that effect in the Knesset. France rejects any annexation plan as a flagrant violation of international law and a grave threat to the two-State solution.

The fifth is the intensification of our efforts to stabilize the region as a whole. In Lebanon, the authorities have taken historic and courageous decisions to ensure the State's monopoly on weapons. They must implement those decisions with the support of the international community, and we expect Israel to withdraw from the positions it occupies and cease its strikes on Lebanese territory. The reintegration of Syria into its regional environment will contribute to the stability of the Middle East. France welcomes the rapprochement with Lebanon — a new chapter based on mutual respect. We call once again on Israel to cease its incursions into Syrian territory and to withdraw from the occupied area.

The Security Council must seize this historic moment, as called for by the Charter of the United Nations, and make it the starting point of a different future for the peoples of the region — a future of peace, security and human progress for all.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than three minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor to Mr. Seck.

Mr. Seck (*spoke in French*): I congratulate you, Mr. President, and I thank Mr. Alakbarov for his briefing.

We stand at a pivotal moment. After two years of immense human suffering characterized by bombardment and famine in Gaza, the world welcomed the Gaza peace summit held in Sharm el-Sheikh. That summit marked the beginning of a process of healing, recovery and reconstruction for the Palestinian people. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People commends the efforts of Egypt, Qatar, Türkiye and the United States of America in facilitating this agreement.

However, since the signing of the ceasefire agreement, 97 Palestinians have been killed and 230 wounded in Gaza. Although humanitarian convoys have entered, restrictions on assistance remain severe. The Committee reiterates its call for rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access, with a central role for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the restoration of essential services, such as health, water and sanitation and education. The Committee calls on Israel to fully respect its legal obligations under international humanitarian law and the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations. We underscore the importance of the advisory opinion delivered on 22 October by the International Court of Justice, which must be scrupulously respected.

The suffering of the Palestinian people must end immediately. Both peoples must be able to look to the future with hope and security. The ceasefire must be permanent and irreversible, and the blockade of Gaza must be lifted definitively. The Committee calls on Member States to support the full implementation of the ceasefire, to ensure accountability and to create the conditions required for recovery and reconstruction. The Security Council has a central role to play, notably in developing a peace mission mandated to protect civilians, guarantee the ceasefire, facilitate the withdrawal of the Israeli army and enable humanitarian access.

Meanwhile, violence is escalating in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and settlement activity continues. The occupation of the Palestinian territory must end now. The September deadline required by the International Court of Justice and established by General Assembly resolution ES-10/24 has now passed. We hope that the ceasefire will lead to lasting peace throughout occupied Palestine, including the West Bank.

The international community expressed itself clearly at the High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia. The New York Declaration resulting from that Conference constitutes a road map for preserving the two-State solution and ensuring the territorial continuity of the State of Palestine. Today, 159 countries recognize the State of Palestine, confirming a broad international consensus. The Committee will continue to stand with the Palestinian people in the realization of their inalienable right to self-determination and the establishment of a sovereign and independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The conditions must be created for Israelis and Palestinians to live side by side in peace, security and prosperity.

We must begin to rebuild what has been lost for future generations and for the entire Middle East. It is time to look ahead to a new future for the Palestinian people

while recognizing the moral responsibility that these past two years have left on our collective conscience to declare loudly and clearly: never again.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I wish to commend the Russian Federation for its leadership of the Security Council during this critical month. I also thank Mr. Ramiz Alakbarov for his valuable briefing.

For the first time in two years, we see genuine hope for peace in Gaza and the wider region. Kazakhstan joins the international community in welcoming this historic agreement, which has secured the release of all hostages and holds the promise of a lasting ceasefire based on the peace proposal of President Donald Trump. This breakthrough was made possible by the much-appreciated tireless mediation and coordinated diplomacy of the United States, Egypt, Qatar and Türkiye.

Kazakhstan welcomes the constructive outcome of last week's high-level summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, with its collective commitment to fully implementing the ceasefire agreement through comprehensive political negotiations, resulting in a sustainable solution in the Middle East. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of Kazakhstan has expressed his strong support for this plan towards a permanent ceasefire and a credible political process paving the way for lasting peace, stability and dignity for both Palestinians and Israelis. We also welcome the successful conclusion of the High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution and the adoption of the New York Declaration under the able leadership of France and Saudi Arabia. Kazakhstan supports diplomatic initiatives aimed at regional reconciliation in the Middle East, including the Arab Peace Initiative, the Abraham Accords Peace Agreement and others. We reaffirm the vision of two independent and sovereign States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine.

We acknowledge the vital contribution of the United Nations, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, in facilitating the implementation of the agreement and supporting the recovery and reconstruction of Gaza. We support the statement of the Secretary-General on the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains grave, and sustained efforts are needed to ensure unimpeded access to aid and other services. Kazakhstan underscores the indispensable role of the United Nations and its agencies, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in supporting the Palestinian people and rebuilding communities shattered by war. We also believe that peace in Gaza must become a catalyst for human security and broader regional stability in the context of other protracted crises in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen.

Finally, Kazakhstan reaffirms its readiness to contribute constructively to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, in full accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): First, we would like to thank the Russian Federation for its commendable efforts in presiding over the Security Council this month, and we appreciate the briefings that we heard today on the situation in the Middle East.

The negative consequences of the conflicts in the Middle East have long affected the security and stability of many peoples of the region, who legitimately question

the prospects for settling the region's chronic crises spanning decades and the fate and rights of current and future generations. In this context, we must all spare no effort to formulate irreversible solutions to these conflicts. At the heart of these efforts stands the Security Council — the sole body capable of enforcement and authorization — while the United Nations remains uniquely positioned to support such implementation. Egypt is diligently working to implement what it advocates, stemming from its belief that everyone shares a single root: belonging to humankind.

Egypt, with its long history, has been a pioneer in openness to different peoples and cultures, steadfast in its belief in peace as a strategic choice. It is a peace made by the sacrifices of its sons, imposed by its will and guarded by its strength, out of a belief that the force of logic is superior to the logic of force and that the world is wide enough for all. It is the peace of the strong, based on truth, justice, balance, parity and respect for the rights of others and their acceptance.

Egypt broke the formidable psychological barrier between the Arabs and Israel through a courageous initiative launched by the late President Anwar Sadat with his historic visit to Jerusalem in November 1977. It extended a hand of peace, overcoming barriers that had bound the region for decades, expressing the essence of the Egyptian creed that peace is the optimal choice to preserve dignity and achieve security for all and that true courage lies not in waging wars but in making and building peace on the foundations of justice and peaceful coexistence.

More recently, Egypt also hosted, at a pivotal moment in our region's history, the peace summit in Sharm el-Sheikh on 13 October to end the war in Gaza. This was a decisive, historic step towards turning the page on a painful war with no victor, to begin a new page embodying the collective will of the international community to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East. Egypt expresses its sincere thanks and appreciation for the efforts of the United States of America, led by President Trump, and his appreciated and wise plan to end the war in Gaza and open up prospects for achieving peace and stability. Egypt also thanks all those parties that participated in the Sharm el-Sheikh summit and commends the strenuous efforts of the brothers in the State of Qatar and the Republic of Türkiye, who contributed to reaching an agreement to end the war.

Egypt affirms its determination to continue its intensive efforts in supporting the implementation of the agreement to end the war and warns of the extremely serious consequences and the peril of non-compliance with the letter of what was reached at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit. It calls on all parties to fulfil their commitments regarding the ceasefire arrangements and the unimpeded access of humanitarian assistance in quantities that meet the needs of the Palestinian brothers and to intensify efforts towards starting early recovery efforts and the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip. Egypt will host the international conference on early recovery, reconstruction and development in Gaza in November in coordination with the United Nations and regional and international partners, aiming to mobilize the necessary support to finance the reconstruction process and provide the elements of a dignified life for the brotherly Palestinian people.

The past decades have proven that the continuation of the occupation and the absence of a political horizon will only bring more wars. Therefore, Egypt condemns in the strongest terms the Israeli Knesset's approval of two bills aimed at imposing the so-called "Israeli sovereignty" over the occupied West Bank and the illegal Israeli colonial settlements, considering this a flagrant violation of international law and the decisions of international legitimacy, which have condemned for decades all Israeli measures aimed at changing the demographic composition and legal status of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem. This was affirmed by the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice in July 2024 (see A/78/968), which confirmed the illegality of the Israeli occupation

of the Palestinian territories and the invalidity of all Israeli practices, including the construction of settlements and the annexation of land in the occupied West Bank, and called on Israel to end its unlawful presence in all Palestinian territories.

We also welcome the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice issued yesterday, 22 October, regarding Israel's obligations in the occupied Palestinian territory, which affirmed that international law prohibits the occupying Power from forcibly displacing the Palestinian people from their land, starving them or using food as a weapon of war and obliges it to provide assistance and humanitarian relief materials and all elements of life and not to obstruct but rather to facilitate and ease the work of all United Nations bodies in the occupied Palestinian territory — foremost among them the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East — in accordance with the permanent responsibility of the United Nations for the question of Palestine.

Egypt reaffirms the imperative of granting the brotherly Palestinian people all their inalienable rights, foremost among them the right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State on the 4 June 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the relevant international terms of reference. Egypt also commends the positive outcomes of the High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution under the appreciated chairmanship of Saudi Arabia and France and expresses its appreciation for the growing international momentum supporting the recognition of the State of Palestine, living in security and peace side by side with the State of Israel, in a manner that achieves the security of the two peoples and provides a new reality for the peoples of the region that can be accepted and lived with.

The achievement of peace throughout the region requires Israel's withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan, and the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Egypt condemns Israel's repeated incursions and attacks on Syrian territories, as well as its daily violations of the declaration of a cessation of hostilities in Lebanon, accompanied by recurrent aerial and ground breaches, the occupation of border positions and the establishment of buffer zones inside Lebanese territories — actions that constitute a clear violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and an infringement of Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Egypt reaffirms its solidarity with both Syria and Lebanon in their legitimate right to safeguard their sovereignty, security and independence.

In conclusion, I reaffirm Egypt's support and aspiration for the full implementation of the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement and quote the words of President Trump in the Knesset and at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit:

“This is not only the end of a war; this is the beginning of the age of faith and hope. Together, we have shown that peace is not just a hope that we can dream about; it is a reality we can build upon”, and “this is the day that people across the region and around the world have been working, striving, hoping and praying for.”

I would also like to quote from the statement delivered by His Excellency President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit:

“Peace is not forged by Governments alone but built by peoples, when they realize that yesterday's adversaries can become tomorrow's partners. We look forward to a bright future for our region, where cities are built on hope, rather than burying the memories of their inhabitants under the rubble. We have a unique historic opportunity — and perhaps the last — to achieve a Middle East free from all that threatens its stability and progress; a Middle East where all its peoples enjoy peace and a dignified life within secure borders and protected rights.”

Based on that wise vision of our leaders and with the support and contribution of the entire international community, peace will be achieved, and all peoples of the region will enjoy security and stability.

I apologize for speaking at length.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I would once again like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than three minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. I insist that they adhere to the three-minute rule. I do not want to have to use the prerogative of the President to interrupt them.

I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Ms. Kristanti (Indonesia): I would like to thank Russia for convening this meeting and the briefers for their valuable insights.

Indonesia welcomes the recent ceasefire agreement in Gaza as a ray of hope after unimaginable loss. Yet this is only a first step on a long road ahead, and the compass is clear: the realization of the two-State solution and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians are streaming back into northern Gaza, but they are returning to an unrecognizable land. Ninety-two per cent of residential buildings in Gaza have been destroyed, 125 hospitals and clinics are now in ruin, and more than 86 per cent of cropland has been damaged. The task of the Security Council is therefore a profound one: ensuring that the ceasefire is fully observed — allowing the rebuilding of Gaza and restoring dignity for all civilians — and that all parties fully implement the peace agreement with the ultimate objective of lasting peace in Palestine based on the two-State solution.

Against this backdrop, allow me to highlight three points.

First, a permanent ceasefire must be maintained as a prerequisite for sustained recovery. It must be respected to ensure the unhindered and safe flow of humanitarian assistance at scale throughout Gaza. The United Nations-led humanitarian efforts must be protected without obstacles. The role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East remains indispensable. Its mandate and funding must be supported, as its work sustains millions of lives every day. In this vein, Indonesia welcomes the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice released just yesterday on Israel's obligations regarding the presence of the United Nations and other entities in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Secondly, genuine peace must be fostered. The Security Council, as the cornerstone of multilateralism for the maintenance of international peace and security, must contribute and play its role. The Council must also work to ensure that peace ends the occupation and fulfils the Palestinian right to self-determination. Indonesia stands ready to contribute 20,000 personnel on the ground to a credible peace monitoring missions, once it is decided by the Council. We believe that peace must be protected by presence, not just promises. This will be our contribution to providing the necessary security space for a comprehensive peace plan negotiation. We urge the Security Council to lead and work towards this endeavour.

Thirdly, and this is my last point, the future of Palestine belongs to the Palestinians. We must invest in Palestine's readiness to govern its future State and to lead its own destiny. For our part, Indonesia has continuously supported the Palestinian people. The Security Council must support this by ensuring that the question of Palestine remains high on its agenda, towards the realization of the two-State solution, based on United Nations resolutions and internationally agreed parameters.

As we celebrate the eightieth anniversary of the United Nations, the question of Palestine remains the definitive test of whether the Organization can fulfil its promise to the Palestinians. It is time for us to bring peace to the Palestinians.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. Novicio (Philippines): The Philippines welcomes the agreement to secure a ceasefire deal and hostage release in Gaza, based on the 20-point peace plan put forward by President Trump. We also commend the diplomatic efforts of the United States, Qatar, Egypt and Türkiye in brokering this landmark deal through intensive diplomacy. We hope that the agreement will be implemented completely and expeditiously to stop the fighting in Gaza, scale up the delivery of sustained humanitarian relief and advance recovery and reconstruction efforts in Gaza. This is long overdue. The people of Gaza desperately need free and unimpeded access to life-saving humanitarian aid — food, water and medicine. In this regard, we join the Secretary-General's call for all stakeholders to seize this momentous opportunity to establish a credible political path forward towards ending the occupation, recognizing the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, leading to a two-State solution to enable Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace and security. The adoption of the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution should complement international efforts towards achieving a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The Philippines joins Member States in thanking France and Saudi Arabia for their commendable leadership in organizing the international conference that produced the New York Declaration.

We recognize that the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is key to the region's peace and stability. In this regard, the Philippines reiterates its support for international and regional diplomatic efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The Philippines also reiterates its consistent support for the two-State solution as the most viable and long-term solution to the Palestine-Israel conflict. Lasting peace can only be achieved when Palestinians and Israelis can live side by side in their own sovereign, independent States, in dignity, harmony and prosperity, where their rights, aspirations and security are fully respected and upheld. Dialogue and negotiations based on trust and mutual understanding between Palestine and Israel are vital. We therefore support steps that would expand the space for meaningful dialogue and negotiations and resolve the conflict by peaceful means and in accordance with international law.

Beyond Gaza, the wider Middle East continues to grapple with overlapping crises that threaten regional stability, from tensions in the Gulf to the humanitarian situation in Yemen. The Philippines calls on all parties to exercise restraint and engage in constructive dialogue to prevent further escalation. We continue to support diplomatic efforts that promote de-escalation, regional cooperation and respect for international law. As a trusted partner, innovative pathfinder and committed peacemaker, the Philippines is ready to play an active role in supporting all efforts among the parties concerned and the United Nations to end conflicts and maintain international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Mr. Obeidat (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate the Russian Federation on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month.

This important meeting has been convened at a critical juncture in the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, following the conclusion of the agreement to end the brutal Israeli war on Gaza — a war that lasted for more than two years and during which Israel killed more than 68,000 Palestinians, destroyed all the basic elements of life, blocked the entry of humanitarian assistance and systematically targeted journalists, humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel.

First, Jordan welcomes the signing of the Gaza agreement document during the recent Sharm el-Sheikh summit and commends the decisive role played by His Excellency the President of the United States in helping to reach a ceasefire agreement. We value his commitment to ending the war, ensuring the unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid, preventing displacement, advancing reconstruction efforts, halting the annexation of the West Bank and reinvigorating efforts toward achieving peace in our region. We also express our deep appreciation to our brothers in Egypt, Qatar and Türkiye for their tireless and indispensable efforts in facilitating this agreement.

Secondly, Jordan underscores the central importance of full adherence to the ceasefire agreement in Gaza and the need for concerted efforts to implement the first phase of the accord, including the cessation of all military operations, the exchange of prisoners, the complete withdrawal of the Israeli occupation forces and the sustained delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people of the Strip. These steps are essential for advancing to the second phase of the agreement and for launching a genuine political horizon aimed at achieving a comprehensive and just peace based on the two-State solution, in accordance with international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Thirdly, Jordan stresses the need to address the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the Israeli aggression on Gaza. In this regard, we reaffirm Jordan's readiness to continue fulfilling its active humanitarian role in delivering assistance to our brothers and sisters in Gaza once the unlawful Israeli restrictions are lifted — restrictions that contravene international humanitarian law, the fundamental principles of humanity and the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice. We further reaffirm the central and indispensable role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in carrying out its vital mandate of providing essential services to some 5.5 million refugees across all its fields of operation, in accordance with its United Nations mandate, in particular in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories. We value and support yesterday's advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which reaffirmed that Israel is obliged to fully respect the inviolability of United Nations premises, including those of UNRWA, and the privileges and immunities of United Nations personnel. The Court also underscored UNRWA's indispensable and central role.

Fourthly, Jordan strongly condemns the Israeli Knesset's endorsement of two bills seeking to impose what is termed "Israeli sovereignty" over the occupied West Bank and the Israeli illegal colonial settlements — a blatant violation of international law and the Council's resolutions, notably resolution 2334 (2016). We also renew our firm condemnation of the continued illegal Israeli occupation, which the International Court of Justice has unequivocally ruled must be ended immediately, as well as Israel's ongoing unlawful practices in the occupied territories, particularly the continued settlement expansion, home demolitions, land confiscations and settler terrorism, alongside Israel's persistent violations of the legal and historical status quo in Al-Quds Al-Sharif. In this regard, Jordan, under the Hashemite custodianship, will continue to defend and protect the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

Fifthly and finally, we affirm the Kingdom's continued work, in coordination with brothers and regional and international partners and the Security Council, to launch a serious and effective path towards achieving a just and comprehensive peace based on the two-State solution, ensuring the full satisfaction of the rights of the Palestinian people and the establishment of their independent and sovereign State on the lines of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as the only way to achieve security and stability in the region, which is a right and not a gift. We therefore emphasize the importance of the Council's role in achieving this, in accordance with its responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security in line with the Charter of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Kössler (Austria): The latest developments in the Middle East give rise to a long-awaited sense of hope — hope that many had already lost; hope for the hostages and their families that some of their wounds will heal some day after being held under inhumane and intolerable conditions by Hamas; hope for the civilians in Gaza enduring unbearable suffering, many of them displaced multiple times and their livelihoods destroyed; and hope for all people in the Middle East that a different region and a different logic is possible — a region in which Israelis and Palestinians alike can live in two democratic States in peace, safety, prosperity and dignity and with the full enjoyment of their human rights.

Austria therefore commends the leadership of the United States and the contributions by Egypt, Qatar, Türkiye and others to end this horrible war and bring the hostages home. Austria stands ready to do its part for the implementation of the agreement and to forge a way forward towards peace.

Let me highlight three points for the way forward.

First, the deal must be implemented swiftly and fully. We express our sincere hope and expectation that all parties uphold their commitments in good faith and without delay. Life-saving humanitarian aid must reach every person in need in Gaza immediately and at scale. We welcome the efforts by the United Nations to deliver humanitarian aid as quickly as possible. The United Nations must be able to carry out its work without restrictions or impediments. Hamas must do everything to return the remains of all deceased hostages without any delay. Austria supports the envisioned stabilization mission for Gaza. The Security Council has an essential role to play and should provide the legal and political framework necessary to make this mission credible and effective.

Secondly, Gaza needs our support in the medium term. The reconstruction will require massive and concerted efforts from many partners. Austria stands ready to contribute to these efforts together with our European partners, partners from the region and beyond. But let me also be clear: Hamas has no place in Gaza's future governance. It must disarm and relinquish control once and for all. Austria also, via the European Union, will continue to support the Palestinian Authority (PA) to help to address its most pressing needs but also to build institutional capacities and implement its necessary reform agenda for the PA to take over the governance of Gaza in the medium term. A reformed and strong Palestinian Authority is also in the interest of Israel. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) will continue to be a stabilizing factor in the region, not least through the delivery of educational and health services, until a comprehensive political arrangement has been reached. Austria will continue to support UNRWA during this period and calls on the Agency, at the same time, to continue on its path for reforms in line with the recommendations of the Colonna report.

And finally, on the long-term perspective for a two-State solution, the only sustainable objective is a negotiated two-State solution, in which two independent States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace and security. The New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution drafted by France and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and endorsed by the General Assembly by more than 140 votes (decision 80/506), including Austria, provides an important framework for this long-term vision. Austria supports the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the establishment of a democratic, viable and contiguous Palestinian State, with Gaza as an integral part of this State. Unilateral actions that undermine this perspective, including the continued expansion of settlements in the West Bank, are violations of international law and must stop.

Austria's commitment to peace, international law and human dignity is unwavering. The international community has a duty to enable, support and hold all sides accountable. Austria can be counted on to continue standing on the side of peace, justice and humanity.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): Since this is the first time I take the floor this month, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the Russian Federation on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month and to commend you, Mr. President.

The Israeli occupying regime has become a manifest and serious threat to regional and international peace and security. For more than two years, the people in Gaza have endured an unprecedented and all-out war of extermination by the regime. During this time, Israel has engaged in the systematic indiscriminate and disproportionate bombardment of innocent people. More than 68,000 innocent Palestinians have been killed, thousands remain missing, and more than 20,000 children have lost their lives. The entire infrastructure has been obliterated — hospitals, schools and water systems have been reduced to rubble. In fact, Gaza has been transformed into a landscape of devastation — a living testament to unbridled impunity. With the end of the military operation in Gaza, the world is only beginning to grasp the full extent of the devastation left behind.

Israel's aggression and criminal acts are not confined to Gaza. The Islamic Republic of Iran has also been a direct target of Israeli aggression. Between 13 and 24 June, Israel launched unprovoked, large-scale attacks against residential areas, hospitals and peaceful nuclear facilities under the full safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency. As a result of these indiscriminate and unlawful attacks, 1,100 innocent civilians, including 132 women and 45 children, have lost their lives, and more than 5,700 others have been injured.

The Islamic Republic of Iran supports every credible initiative aimed at ending the genocide in Gaza, ensuring the complete withdrawal of the occupying forces, establishing a permanent ceasefire, facilitating the unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid and restoring the inalienable and fundamental right of the Palestinian people. Ending the war against the people in Gaza, however vital, does not absolve Member States or the competent international bodies of their shared legal, moral and humanitarian obligations to ensure justice and accountability. The perpetrators and masterminds of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity must be prosecuted, and the decades-long culture of impunity surrounding the Israeli regime must finally end.

In conclusion, I categorically reject the unfounded allegation made by the representative of the United States. Iran's foreign policy is firmly rooted in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, respecting sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference and good-neighbourliness. It is, in fact, the unlawful military presence and destabilizing actions of the United States that have fuelled the conflict and instability in our region. Iran has consistently shown its readiness for fair and genuine dialogue. Furthermore, the false narrative of Iranian proxies is a deliberate distraction from the true source of regional instability — the United States and its unconditional support for its proxy in the region, the Israeli regime, enabling its ongoing aggression, atrocities and occupation. By repeatedly obstructing the Security Council's mandate under the Charter, Washington has rendered itself complicit in these crimes and bears direct legal and moral responsibility for their continuation.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.05 p.m.