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Eighty-first year

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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Osman	(Somalia)
<i>Members:</i>	Bahrain	Mr. Alrowaieci
	China	Mr. Fu Cong
	Colombia	Mrs. Zalabata Torres
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Mr. Mukongo
	Denmark	Ms. Lassen
	France	Mr. Bonnafont
	Greece.....	Mr. Gerapetritis
	Latvia.....	Mr. Ilgis
	Liberia	Ms. Nyanti
	Pakistan.....	Mr. Ahmad
	Panama	Mr. Alfaro de Alba
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	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: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Armenia, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Cuba, Egypt, Germany, Iceland, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, 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 Permanent Observer 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.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

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 also invite the following to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Jaime Hermida Castillo, Vice-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 Permanent Observer Mission of the League of Arab States to the United Nations.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Alakbarov.

Mr. Alakbarov: I brief the Security Council today at a moment of both profound opportunity and considerable risk. In front of us, we see a potential turning point for Gaza — a genuine chance for a better future. But many uncertainties remain. In parallel, we also see a continued unravelling in the occupied West Bank and a region mired in tension.

The announced start of the second phase of President Trump's 20-point Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict is a critical step in consolidating the ceasefire in Gaza, alongside the establishment of the subsidiary bodies of the Board of Peace, including the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza and the Office of the High Representative for Gaza. I have just returned from Cairo, where I met with the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza to discuss how the United Nations can best support the Committee's efforts to provide critical public services, facilitate humanitarian aid and lay the groundwork for reconstruction in Gaza, in line with resolution 2803 (2025). The task at hand is monumental. It requires full coordination among all stakeholders, taking into account existing systems and capacities. The United Nations stands ready to support the Committee and Palestinians in Gaza as they start the arduous work of rebuilding.

I welcome the recovery of the last hostage in Gaza, and I am relieved that they have been returned to Israel for burial. I extend my condolences to the family of Ran Gvili. With all hostages returned, I hope that a process of healing for the families and all those affected may begin.

The implementation of the next phase of the Comprehensive Plan must advance in good faith. I am encouraged by Israel's announcement on 25 January that the Rafah crossing will open to pedestrian movements in both directions. The demilitarization of the Gaza Strip is an essential enabling condition, and security arrangements are urgently required to facilitate the work of the National Committee across the entire Strip.

My last visit to Gaza affirmed one truth: the people in Gaza are ready and eager to lead the way to a better, more stable future. Less than two weeks ago, amid enormous misery and pain, I witnessed inspiring resilience and hope: youths taking their exams and excelling in the most difficult circumstances; farmers unable to import seeds but still finding ways to plant in greenhouses repaired with makeshift materials; and small business owners devising ingenious solutions in the face of scarce materials and a devastated market. Such efforts are being replicated across Gaza, and they deserve our support.

Nevertheless, nearly the entire population in Gaza remains in need of humanitarian assistance. Heavy rainfall and cold temperatures have exacerbated the suffering of more than 1.5 million displaced Palestinians in Gaza, who have had little or no means to seek safe shelter. I heard firsthand how families sat vigil through the night just trying to hold down the four corners of their tents. I saw a little girl carrying heavy stones just to prevent her shelter from blowing away in the wind. I do not know her age, but she looked to be just 4 years old. The shelter response has suffered from restrictions on the entry of vital materials and technical expertise. As a result, shelter sites in Gaza do not meet the scale of needs or international standards. Transitional shelter sites must provide access to much-needed essential services. Above all, they must be voluntary, dignified and in line with humanitarian principles. The support of all stakeholders is needed.

Across all sectors, humanitarian actors are still unable to operate at scale in Gaza. Their work is being hindered by insecurity, customs clearance challenges, the limited number of partners authorized by Israeli authorities to bring cargo into Gaza, delays and denials of cargo at crossings and limited routes available for transporting supplies within Gaza. While the Jordan corridor remains a humanitarian lifeline, current volumes entering Gaza through back-to-back arrangements represent only a fraction of what was previously achieved when the direct route was operational. Since 10 October 2025, only 9 per cent of the aid processed through the mechanism established pursuant to resolution 2720 (2023) has entered Gaza via Jordan. Fully utilizing existing, proven regional corridors remains essential to saving lives in Gaza. The entry of mobile homes, rescue equipment, fuel and medical supplies continues to be severely restricted, endangering the lives of tens of thousands of internally displaced persons and patients. To address this, materials must enter at scale.

Access to public infrastructure and agricultural land remains restricted. Meanwhile, regular demolitions of residential buildings are continuing, and repeated population displacements have occurred. On 30 December, Israel announced that it plans to suspend the operations of some international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Government also notified 37 international NGOs that their registrations would expire at the end of 2025 owing to what Israel says is their failure to comply with the new regulations, triggering a 60-day review period. Banning those international NGOs will have a significant impact on the humanitarian response

across the Occupied Palestinian Territory. I urge Israel to reverse this decision immediately.

Despite the ceasefire, the Israeli military continues to conduct military operations, with airstrikes, shelling and gunfire occurring across the Strip. Armed exchanges with Palestinian militants have also persisted. Attacks in the vicinity of or beyond the so-called “yellow line” are happening daily, and hundreds of Palestinians have been killed since the ceasefire began, including many women and children. Civilians must be protected at all times.

Amid the obstacles, we have also seen some welcome actions. The continued arrival of aid via Egypt, Jordan, Israel, the occupied West Bank and Cyprus has been critical. This has helped increase the volume of supplies brought into Gaza and led to improvements in the nutrition status of the population. However, more must be done.

I would like to devote the remainder of my briefing to addressing the spiralling dynamics in the occupied West Bank. Every month, the United Nations and many others in the Council emphasize the gravity of the unfolding situation, but that has yet to translate into meaningful action on the ground. Negative trends are being entrenched daily. The reporting period was marked by continued violence, with extensive Israeli military operations, settlement expansion, settler violence, demolitions and large-scale detentions. In late December 2025 and early January, Israeli forces conducted intensified raids across Jenin, Nablus, Hebron and Ramallah, frequently involving live fire and raising serious concerns about the use of lethal force. A 16-year-old boy was shot and killed during a raid in Qabatiyah on 20 December, after reportedly throwing a brick towards Israel Defense Forces soldiers, and multiple Palestinians were killed or fatally wounded during operations south of Nablus. There have been large-scale arrest campaigns of Palestinians, including children, by Israeli security forces, amid reports of ill-treatment, torture and continued deaths in custody. Palestinian attacks against Israelis have also persisted. On 26 December, a Palestinian man killed two Israelis, including a woman, in two ramming and stabbing attacks in northern Israel.

At the same time, settler violence has intensified. In December 2025, repeated settler attacks led to the displacement of the entire community of Khirbet Yanun in the Nablus governorate, and in January we saw the forcible displacement of some 80 households from Ras Ein Al-Auja in the Jericho governorate. Demolitions and large-scale land seizures continued across the northern West Bank. Evictions in East Jerusalem’s Silwan neighbourhood on 4 January and extensive demolitions in Tulkarm’s Nur Shams refugee camp at the end of December 2025 underscore how violence, displacement and territorial fragmentation are converging on the ground.

Meanwhile, settlement expansion has been rapid and relentless. The combination of settlement advancement, “State land” declarations and the persistent establishment of outposts is carving up and making vast swaths of land inaccessible for Palestinian use in the occupied West Bank. During the reporting period, approximately 1,860 housing units were advanced in Area C. This includes 120 housing units in Sanur, a settlement that was evacuated in 2005. Additionally, 2,850 housing units were advanced in East Jerusalem. These include two large-scale plans: a plan for 1,500 housing units in residential towers in a government complex between Sheikh Jarrah and Mount Scopus, and a plan in East Talpiyot for 950 housing units in several residential towers. The Israeli Government has also published tenders for more than 4,770 housing units in Area C, including 3,401 housing units in E1, which, if built, would effectively sever the connection between the northern and southern West Bank.

In recent weeks, the pressure campaign against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has also sharply escalated in an effort to end its operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. On 29 December 2025, the Israeli Knesset passed legislation instructing Israeli authorities to seize UNRWA's compounds in Sheikh Jarrah and Kafr Aqab and requiring utilities and financial service providers to deny service to UNRWA or any of its facilities. On 12 January, Israeli forces raided an UNRWA health centre in occupied East Jerusalem and ordered it to close. A week later, Israeli forces forcibly entered the UNRWA Headquarters in occupied East Jerusalem with bulldozers, demolishing buildings. Officials have made abhorrent calls for the annihilation of UNRWA staff.

These acts are flagrant violations of international law and the privileges and immunities of the United Nations. I call on the Israeli Government to abide by the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of October 2025, which states that Israel is obliged, under international law, to facilitate UNRWA's operations, not hinder or prevent them. Despite significant increases in international support in 2025, the unilateral withholding by Israel of all Palestinian clearance revenues continues. The Palestinian Authority continues to face a growing fiscal crisis resulting in partial payment of civil servant salaries and a reduction in services. Nearly \$2.5 billion of clearance revenue remains withheld by Israel.

Israeli government policies have facilitated a number of destructive trends: rapid settlement expansion and its related infrastructure, the creation and legalization of outposts, widespread demolitions and displacements, State land declarations, the deepening of movement and access restrictions, and the expansion of municipal boundaries. The persistent and extreme settler violence, frequently accompanied or supported by Israeli security forces, continues to inflame tensions, forcibly displace Palestinians and exacerbate instability. The consequences have been severe, deepening the occupation, fragmenting Palestinian space and strengthening territorial continuity for settlements. Ultimately, these steps are further undermining the prospects for peace and the establishment of a two-State solution. Unless urgently addressed, they may jeopardize progress in implementing the second phase of the ceasefire agreement. The implementation of the second phase of the Gaza ceasefire plan is critical and will require our firm and collective commitment. There is a genuine opportunity to lay the foundations for a more stable and secure future for Palestinians and Israelis, advance the goal of a legitimate Palestinian Government that unifies Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and chart a course towards ending the occupation and advancing a political process that will ultimately end the conflict. The United Nations will continue to support Palestinians and Israelis to end the conflict and to realize a two-State solution, in line with previous United Nations resolutions and international law.

The President: I thank Mr. Alakbarov for his briefing.

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

Mr. Mansour (State of Palestine): At the outset, allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for presiding over this open debate at such a pivotal moment for peace, justice and human dignity. Allow me also to welcome the ministers who are with us, to thank Mr. Ramiz Alakbarov for his briefing and to welcome again our friends, the five new elected members of the Security Council: Bahrain, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Latvia and Liberia.

Eighty years after the end of the Second World War, the core principles upon which the United Nations was founded remain as critical as ever. They are: the right

of peoples to self-determination; the prohibition of the acquisition of territory by threat or use of force; the rule of international law as the guarantor of the rights of individuals, regardless of race, religion or nationality, and of nations, large and small. These principles are the expression of the wisdom finally acquired by humankind following a devastating war, in which peoples across the globe endured and witnessed aggression, genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes on a scale that altered the course of history and led to the founding of the United Nations, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to ensure international peace and security. It is these very principles that are at stake and under threat in Palestine. Asserting them there is upholding them everywhere. Abandoning them there is jeopardizing them everywhere.

We welcome the ceasefire agreement reached last year under President Donald J. Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict. We commend the personal engagement of President Trump and the United States Administration, as well as the tireless efforts of the mediators who have worked to implement it.

We have supported the ceasefire in good faith, even in the face of repeated breaches, during which at least 500 Palestinians have been killed and many more have been wounded since the ceasefire came into effect, with ongoing destruction by the occupying Power and life-saving assistance, including shelter, continuing to be obstructed in the depths of this harsh winter.

We support the Plan because it offers an immediate path towards ending the killing and suffering, the famine and the unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe inflicted on the Palestinian people in Gaza. While we recognize that thousands of lives have been saved by the ceasefire, these goals are yet to be fully achieved.

We welcome the completion of the release of all Israeli hostages and prisoners, alive and deceased, including the recovery of the remains of the last Israeli body two days ago. We have repeatedly said that only a ceasefire could allow this to happen.

Yet we must ask: what about the countless Palestinian families whose loved ones have been killed, with thousands of bodies still crushed and buried under the rubble, yet to be found, yet to be identified and given a dignified burial? What about the families waiting for the return of the thousands detained, tortured, humiliated, starved, raped or missing? What about the entire families obliterated from existence, or the survivors of genocide left with grave injuries and amputations, who will carry the devastation with them for the rest of their lives? What about the trauma and loss of an entire people? The suffering of the Palestinian people — civilian men, women and children — must be ended with equal urgency. Healing, recovery and justice are indispensable and are rights for all.

The full implementation of phase one obligations, including an immediate end to the killing and unrestricted humanitarian access across the Gaza Strip, is essential. These are not new demands. They are the repeated calls of the Council and constitute obligations under international law.

Moreover, Israel must end its ongoing war against humanitarian actors, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and vital non-governmental organizations (NGOs), whose safety and ability to operate have repeatedly been undermined. The destruction of UNRWA facilities, including the seizure and destruction of its headquarters in occupied East Jerusalem, which was also set ablaze; the targeting of humanitarian personnel; and now the attempt to ban and expel recognized and respected NGOs operating in the Palestinian territory, demonstrate a total contempt for the very mechanisms established to protect and assist civilians. It is an attack on the United Nations by one of its members in ways we have never witnessed before.

The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on Israel's humanitarian obligations (see A/80/502) must be fully respected. But instead of compliance, we have witnessed continued obstruction of aid delivery, continued violations of the Charter and the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and continued grave breaches of international humanitarian law by the occupying Power.

In this regard, we recall the letters of the Secretary-General to the Security Council and the General Assembly, including his indication that, in the light of the gravity of the Israeli Government's actions,

“a situation may exist in which a difference has arisen between the United Nations and the State of Israel regarding, among other things, the interpretation or application of the General Convention.” (*S/2026/25, p. 4*)

Furthermore, we are obliged to underscore yet again that Israel is not the sovereign in the Palestinian territory. This illegal occupation has no rights whatsoever in occupied Palestine, including in Jerusalem.

The ceasefire's permanence and success require that Israel cease trying to dictate the future of Gaza and that it fully withdraw from the territory. Gaza is an integral part of the Palestinian territory. I repeat: Gaza is an integral part of the Palestinian territory. It belongs to the Palestinian people and to nobody else. And any transitional arrangements must fully respect our people's rights and our sovereignty over the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Gaza Strip must be reunified with the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, without delay. And our people's right to self-determination and independent statehood, enshrined in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, with which I began, numerous resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, the International Court of Justice's rulings and the peremptory norms of international law, cannot be discarded. Israel must abandon its plans to forcibly displace and replace our people across occupied Palestine.

In the West Bank, Israeli military attacks and settler terrorism continue unabated, systematically driving Palestinians from their homes, and settlements continue to be advanced — all tools of a rampant annexation. In this regard, we warn of the dangerous Israeli escalation against Palestinian cities, villages and refugee camps in the West Bank, including the implementation of the so-called E1 settlement project. This must be stopped. The last families in Ra's Ayn al-Awja have been forced from their land, leaving no Palestinian presence in what was once a thriving community. This was the largest shepherding community in the southern Jordan Valley and the last to survive Israel's ethnic cleansing in the area. United Nations reporting has now documented a record level of West Bank displacement in the past two years: approximately 40,000 Palestinians have been violently and forcibly transferred from their homes — the highest figure ever since 1967. Despite the long-standing demands by the international community, including the Security Council, for decades for a halt to such illegal colonial practices, Israel persists with its impunity, entrenching its illegal occupation of our land and people every single day. This must be stopped.

These events are not isolated. They are part of a sustained pattern that threatens not only the Palestinian people but also the foundational principles of the Organization. This cannot be ignored. Yet, we still see a chance for peace. I repeat: we still see a chance for peace — a real historical opportunity to end the occupation, to realize Palestinian rights, to achieve just and lasting peace in accordance with international law and United Nations resolutions. The Palestinian Authority is working in impossible circumstances to uphold its responsibilities. It is working to

retrieve the bodies of Palestinians, to restore education, to revive the health sector, to provide shelter and assistance, to reopen the Rafah crossing in both directions, to prepare for recovery and reconstruction. It has persisted in its decision to embark on a peaceful path to freedom and has not deviated from it. It has conducted difficult reforms, while being undermined politically and financially. It has adopted the principle of one State, one Government, one law and one weapon. Palestine is a reliable partner for peace, if peace is the objective. Palestine is a reliable partner for peace, if peace is the objective. The whole world can testify to that. But the Israeli Government's objective is not peace, it is domination. Netanyahu, yet again, bragged that he will never allow a Palestinian State to emerge. He went further, reaffirming that Israel would retain control from the river to the sea, promising eternal occupation — a delusional idea that will continue depriving our region of the prospect and the promise of peace.

The Palestinian people have an inalienable right to self-determination, including the right to an independent State. Any implementation of peace plans must uphold this right fully and unequivocally and must preserve the unity and territorial integrity of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. There must be no administrative or legal — or rather, I should say, illegal — measures that entrench division and occupation instead of bringing them to an end.

The best way to consolidate the ceasefire is to move towards a just peace. This requires the mobilization of the international community as a whole in charting a clear path away from occupation and war towards shared peace, security and prosperity, as foreseen in the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution and supported overwhelmingly by the Member States of the United Nations. We must all work together to advance these noble objectives.

We welcome the launch of phase two of the ceasefire agreement and the establishment of transitional bodies to help to administer Gaza in the transitional period ahead of reunifying the West Bank and the Gaza Strip under the Palestinian Authority, as stated by the Council. Palestine must be central to, and fully represented in, any process that determines its future. We reiterate our readiness to work with the United States and regional and international partners to ensure respect for the ceasefire agreement, in line with international law. Our people are waiting for the recovery and rebuilding promised to them after so much pain and loss inflicted on them. We cannot let them down. Palestine needs a just peace more than any other country because it suffers most in the absence thereof. It is seeking a peaceful path to freedom. We are seeking a peaceful path to freedom. That should be encouraged and supported, not undermined. We want our rights — the rights accorded to all nations; nothing more but also nothing less and nothing else. I repeat: we want our rights — the rights accorded to all nations, nothing more but also nothing less and nothing else. Free Palestine. Peace in the Middle East.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Danon (Israel): First, I would like to thank the briefer and welcome the ministers who joined us today and the new members of the Security Council.

From the first day of the war in Gaza, Israel has been clear before the Council about its goals. We had two goals: to bring every hostage home and for Hamas to be disarmed. With the return of Ran Gvili, I can finally say that the first goal has been achieved: every hostage has been brought home. What many believed was impossible is now a fact. We said we would bring them home, all of them, no matter how long it took. Now, for the first time since 2014, there is not a single Israeli hostage held in Gaza.

This achievement was secured by the brave soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces, young men and women who stepped forward with incredible determination, resolve and courage. They defended our people. They brought our hostages home. They did so under fire, under pressure and under relentless scrutiny, including from within this very Chamber. Israel owes them a profound debt. The world owes them one as well. This effort was also driven and sustained by the leadership of the United States. The peace framework advanced by President Donald Trump and his administration created a path forward. Today, for the first time in 843 days, I sit in the Chamber without the yellow hostage pin on my lapel. Everyone in Israel wore it until yesterday. This is a moment of deep national significance for Israel.

This moment also carries a message far beyond Israel. Western liberal democracies do not cave in to terrorists. They do not reward mass murder. They do not trade their values for silence. The message is clear to every terrorist organization watching us. Kidnapping civilians does not bring legitimacy. Violence does not deliver political gains. Terror does not win.

Israel is now advancing its second goal with the same determination and clarity. Hamas must be disarmed. The next steps are grounded in phase two of the President Donald J. Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, supported by Israel, key international players and partners and the Security Council. Phase two is written. It is structured. It provides for the establishment of a responsible governing framework for Gaza. There are positive signs. However, one obstacle remains: the disarmament of Hamas.

The choice now rests with Hamas: acceptance of full disarmament enables progress; refusal places full responsibility on Hamas for the consequences. Clarity is essential as to what disarmament actually means. Disarmament does not mean staged handovers for cameras. It does not mean weapons hidden underground while promises are made above ground. There is no real disarmament until Hamas military infrastructure is dismantled. That includes weapons, command centres and terror tunnels. No economic rebuilding can take place while Hamas remains armed. No civilian future can exist while a terrorist army controls Gaza. A genocidal terrorist organization should not have any weapons. Hamas understands this reality. That is why it delays. That is why it deceives.

But do not just take Israel's word for it. Hamas itself put this in writing. In the final days of last year, Hamas released a manifesto — a very impressive one. This document, a copy of which was sent this morning to all missions present, removes all doubt about Hamas' real intentions. They wrote it. It was not us. In that document, it says very clearly that it rejects disarmament. It rejects giving up political power. It denies the atrocities of 7 October 2023. It justifies and glorifies its mass murder. Hamas even boasts about its strategy and diplomacy. In its own words, it calls one of the achievements of 7 October "the collapse of Israel's image as a western democracy". That tells the international community everything. This is not the language of peace, even when dressed up as diplomacy. It is a road map for future violence.

Do not fall for Hamas' playbook. Do not let its propaganda write the world's talking points. Hamas remains heavily armed. Let me present the numbers. It still holds thousands of rockets, anti-tank missiles and tens of thousands of Kalashnikov rifles. In total, Hamas still holds roughly 60,000 assault rifles. These weapons are used not only against us — against Israel — but against Gazans who oppose Hamas rule. This is not a movement preparing for peace. This is a terrorist army preparing for its next war.

Israel has fully implemented phase one of the agreement. Since the beginning of the October ceasefire, the volume of aid has increased sharply. Let us look at the numbers. More than 33,000 trucks have entered Gaza since 10 October 2025. They have delivered over 850,000 tons of food, 8,300 tons of medical supplies and more than 420,000 tents. Every week, more than 4,200 trucks enter Gaza. Twelve field hospitals are operating today. Israel does not limit United Nations assistance and has invited agencies to increase daily deliveries. Israel has opened all the major crossings into Gaza, and earlier this week, announced the reopening of the Rafah crossing. Aid is flowing. Coordination continues.

While attention remains fixed on Gaza, another crisis demands urgency: Iran. The Ayatollah regime is brutally repressing and murdering its own people. Amid 20 days of Internet and telephone shutdowns and blackouts, civilians demanding freedom are executed, arrested and silenced. Reports now indicate fatalities exceeding 30,000. That number should shock the Council.

Imagine for one minute a Middle East without this regime. Think about it for one minute. Billions of dollars would no longer be spent on funding terror. Lebanon could finally regain its sovereignty from the claws of Iranian-backed Hizbullah. Syria could stop serving as an Iranian weapons corridor and finally move towards stability. Palestinians in Gaza and Judea and Samaria could focus on improving their lives instead of being trapped by armed radicals.

The problem is not the people of the region. The problem is the regimes and militias that profit from chaos. Look at Yemen. Yemen offers another clear example of how the Iranian regime exports hate. The Houthis are not fighting over borders. They have no border with us. They have no border with the United States. They have no border with most countries here. They are not fighting over land. The flag tells the entire story. Look at the flag of the Houthis. That is what it says in English: God is great, death to America, death to Israel, curse on the Jews, victory to Islam. That is the official flag of the Houthis. That is radicalism. It is insanity. That hatred did not originate in Yemen. It was cultivated, funded and armed by Tehran. The Iranian regime diverts its own people's money to fund terror instead of providing basic needs. This is how the Iranian regime operates. It builds networks of violence and exports them across the Middle East and beyond. A regime that massacres its own people cannot be trusted to respect others. The world's most extreme regime must never obtain the world's most dangerous weapon.

Israel has no hostility towards the people of Iran. Their courage is undeniable. Their struggle for freedom deserves our support. Their future must be free of tyranny. Hope, however, is not a strategy. As Hamas is dismantled, the Iranian regime must be confronted with the same seriousness. The same clarity must apply; the same standards must hold.

Israel's position is unmistakable. Every hostage was brought home. Hamas must now be dismantled completely. Gaza must be demilitarized and deradicalized.

The President: I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Sara Beysolow Nyanti, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia.

Ms. Nyanti (Liberia): I thank the Somali presidency, for convening this high-level debate, and the briefers, for their insightful interventions.

The Middle East is not a distant theatre of conflict. It is a central test of whether the Council can still shape outcomes rather than merely cataloguing suffering.

In the Middle East, we do not confront one crisis. We face a chain reaction of wars, reprisals and unresolved grievances, each feeding the next. Liberia's own experience reminds us that silencing guns matters, but peace does not come from silence of the guns alone. It comes from choices; choices made early, deliberately and sustained over time.

For millions in the Middle East, war is not an interruption of life; it is life itself. There are people who were born under bombardment, who learned adulthood under occupation or siege and who will grow old without ever knowing what it means to live without fear. Entire lives — full lives — have been lived inside conflict, from the first breath to the last.

And nowhere is this tragedy more unforgivable than in the lives of children. Some babies die while trying to nurse from mothers whose bodies have nothing left to give. They die not from rare diseases or unavoidable fate, but from hunger, blockade, displacement and decisions made far from their cries. This is not abstract. This is happening in real time. Children are growing up inside the wreckage of our choices. They inherit wars they did not declare, hatreds they did not choose, and borders drawn more fiercely than compassion. They carry the cost of adult power struggles because the international community has too often accepted delay, denial and turning a blind eye as its policy. While children elsewhere worry about exams, football matches, music, friendships and what they might become in the future, children in the Middle East learn how to stay safe during explosions and the best route to take to find food. They live in fear, not knowing what it means to be free. This is not only a moral failure, it is a strategic catastrophe that recycles violence, enmity and hate.

The reality of the Middle East is unfortunately grim, but the horizon beckons hope. Liberia notes recent diplomatic efforts aimed at reducing violence and reopening political space in Gaza and across the region. We applaud initiatives led by Qatar, Egypt and the United States, other regional leaders and other stakeholders, which have helped to create momentum towards de-escalation, improved humanitarian access and dialogue. Progress is, however, fragile, but progress matters.

Let us be clear. This momentum must be sustained. Therefore, Liberia encourages continued engagement with the Council and with all stakeholders to deepen the progress, seize every opportunity and consolidate the gains already made. History shows that diplomatic openings will close inevitably, not because they are imperfect, but because they are abandoned.

No conflict has more broadly defined the region than the one between Israel and Palestine. Liberia is concerned by this protracted conflict. We reiterate the urgent need for immediate and sustained de-escalation and for expanding humanitarian access that is predictable and safe.

Liberia continues to support a negotiated two-State solution, consistent with relevant Security Council resolutions. Security that lacks political legitimacy cannot endure. Crisis management, however necessary, cannot substitute for a genuine peace process.

Force can dominate a moment, but only justice can shape a future. If force worked, we would not be here having this debate. What is not resolved through dialogue will resurface louder, angrier and more dangerous. Therefore, any solution must be shaped with the involvement of all stakeholders concerned.

Beyond Gaza, we are alarmed by rising tensions along the Blue Line between Israel and Lebanon. We recall resolution 1701 (2006) and support the stabilizing role of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

In Syria, humanitarian suffering continues amid political paralysis. Resolution 2254 (2015) remains the agreed framework for sustainable peace. Regional engagement must translate into a political movement that is inclusive, but not an acceptance of permanent stagnation.

In Yemen, fragile steps towards de-escalation offer a chance that must not be squandered. Dialogue remains the only path that does not end in more deaths and destruction.

Peace in the Middle East cannot be defined simply by what ends; it must be defined by what begins: dignity, justice and the freedom for people to build ordinary lives. It must offer a future in which Jews and Palestinians, Christians and Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs can live not only side by side, but together, working in the same hospitals, trading in the same markets, studying in the same universities, protecting shared water sources, building businesses and competing in ideas, rather than arms.

Finally, Liberia will close with the following.

We call for expanded, regular humanitarian corridors into Gaza and all conflict zones in the region.

We urgently call for support for confidence-building measures, facilitated by United Nations peacebuilding measures, peacekeeping and the support of regional partners. We encourage regional actors and international partners to sustain diplomatic momentum and avoid the collapse of current openings. We call on all stakeholders to support efforts that restore political legitimacy, governance capacity and economic stability for both Israelis and Palestinians. And we stress the need to promote regional commitments to stop the use of children in conflicts and to shield schools and hospitals from attacks or misuse.

Liberia stands ready to work with all Council members for sustainable peace in the Middle East.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Georgios Gerapetritis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece.

Mr. Gerapetritis (Greece): I would like to thank the Deputy Special Coordinator for his briefing and welcome the newly elected members of the Council. We are looking forward to working with all of them.

As Greece continues its tenure on the Council, we do so with clarity of purpose and a strong sense of responsibility. At a time at which the international system is facing profound challenges, the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, continues to provide the central and indispensable framework for dialogue, cooperation and collective action in support of international peace and security.

Greece's foreign policy is firmly grounded in respect for the Charter of the United Nations and the principles enshrined therein: respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, the inviolability of borders and the prohibition of the threat or use of force. These principles are not abstract ideals. They constitute the foundation of a stable international order and guide our collective work within the Council.

Peace in the Middle East is an urgent moral, political and humanitarian imperative. Greece consistently supports all initiatives that can have a tangible positive impact on the ground and bring the region closer to lasting peace and stability. In this spirit, we have strongly supported the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict and voted in favour of resolution 2803 (2025). We acknowledge the progress achieved towards a sustained ceasefire and the implementation of the 20-point Gaza peace plan, endorsed by the Council.

We have been very relieved that the body of the last hostage has been returned to his family. This development concludes a deeply painful chapter for the families. It also opens the path for the full implementation of phase two, which is a truly decisive moment. This next step must include full disarmament of Hamas and other armed groups. Addressing Israel's legitimate long-term security concerns is a key precondition for sustainable peace.

The nomination of a Palestinian National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, with the support of the presidency of the Palestinian Authority, is a welcome development. It represents an important step towards legitimate and accountable governance, which is indispensable for stability, reconstruction and long-term peace. The future reconstruction of Gaza must be credible, coordinated and firmly anchored in legitimate governance structures and embedded in a broader and credible political horizon.

Gaza and the West Bank is a single, indivisible territorial unit for a future Palestinian State. The path forward is clear — a credible political process leading to a two-State solution allowing Palestinians and Israelis to live side by side in peace and security.

Greece stands ready to contribute actively and responsibly to the peace process, including through the scaling up of humanitarian assistance and development aid in the West Bank. It continues to provide treatment to children from Gaza in Greek hospitals. We are also actively contributing to efforts aimed at stabilizing security conditions in Gaza, including through our participation in the Civil/Military Coordination Centre. Overall, our objective is clear: to help prepare the ground for the day after in Gaza, in close cooperation with the Palestinian National Committee and the Palestinian Authority, as well as with key regional partners, such as Egypt.

Peace requires the protection of civilians. Today, despite significant progress on the delivery of food and other goods, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains difficult. Harsh weather conditions, devastated infrastructure and shortages of food, water and medical supplies continue to exacerbate suffering. Humanitarian access, including via the Cyprus maritime corridor, must therefore be unimpeded.

We are also concerned about recent developments affecting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, notably the demolition of its facilities in East Jerusalem.

Beyond Gaza, the situation in the West Bank is steadily deteriorating. Rising settler violence, including against Christian communities, erodes trust and fuels instability on the ground. We also call for a halt to settlement activities, including in the E1 area.

As the Greek Prime Minister stated during his recent visit to Ramallah and Jerusalem, Greece's support for the Palestinian Authority is unwavering. It remains the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and, as such, must be empowered politically and financially. The Palestinian Authority has been very serious in promoting reforms. Furthermore, withheld tax revenues must be released immediately.

Equally, the preservation of the status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem is of paramount importance. Jerusalem is not only a city of profound religious significance but a litmus test for coexistence and mutual respect.

Turning to Lebanon, the Council's visit to Beirut last December was more than symbolic. It sent a clear message: Lebanon is not alone. We welcome the progress achieved in Phase one of the national disarmament plan, which brings Lebanon closer

to restoring full control over its territory, in line with relevant Security Council resolutions.

Nevertheless, disarmament must be coupled with sustained capacity-building, as well as a clear plan for reconstruction. Greece considers Lebanon a key partner for peace. It will support Lebanon in its efforts for security and prosperity. It recently delivered military equipment to the Lebanese Armed Forces and stands ready to do more. In the same vein, we welcome the organization of an international conference in Paris on 5 March aimed at garnering international support for the Lebanese Armed Forces, and we look forward to participating.

For Syria, 2025 has been a landmark year. The fall of the Al-Assad regime provides a historic opportunity to a country of great importance for the Arab world and the eastern Mediterranean. Greece stands by Syria and is offering support bilaterally and in its capacity as a member of the European Union and of the Security Council.

We must acknowledge the progress achieved so far but we should also not disregard the persisting challenges. We welcome the assurances by the Syrian Government regarding adherence to international law and good neighbourly relations. We expect them to be honoured, especially in terms of maritime delimitations with neighbouring States. Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity must be fully respected. We also support the country's engagement with the United Nations and warmly encourage its further enhancement, and we look forward to the prompt establishment of the Office of the Special Envoy in Damascus.

At the same time, we should not forget that 2025 was marked by violence against Alawites, Druze, Christians and, lately, the Kurds. We need more information, clarity and, indeed, accountability. We reiterate the need for an inclusive transition and protection of all Syrians, including women, without any discrimination whatsoever based on religious or ethnic background, as a prerequisite for stability and recovery. Syria's wealth lies in its diverse and pluralistic society. Civilians must be protected under all circumstances.

The latest developments in the north-east prove how fragile the transition remains and cause concern. The ceasefire agreement reached between the Syrian Government and the Syrian Democratic Forces should be fully implemented by all sides. We call on all actors, including external actors, to act with restraint and avoid escalation that could destabilize the country and exacerbate ethnic tensions. The protection of Kurds must be fully ensured and their political and cultural rights safeguarded in a united Syria.

We would also like to underline the need to tackle terrorism and extremism and address reform of the military and security sectors. In particular, the fight against Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) should continue and detention camps must be fully safeguarded.

Finally, on Yemen, we reaffirm our full respect for its sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, and we call upon all parties to engage constructively and in good faith in an inclusive Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned political process under the auspices of the United Nations. Despite de-escalation in the south, we remain vigilant.

While the situation in the Red Sea is becoming more complicated, we reiterate the importance of maritime security and freedom of navigation. The Red Sea constitutes a vital waterway for the region and the world, and the Houthis continue to pose a serious threat in this regard. Greece, honouring its long maritime tradition, will continue to support regional and international initiatives and provide its leadership to

European Union Naval Force Operation Aspides, in line with Council resolutions and in full respect of international law.

In conclusion, Greece remains firmly committed to working with all members of the Council, with the United Nations and with regional partners to turn commitments into action so that hope prevails over suffering, dignity over despair and peace becomes a reality delivered.

As a country of the eastern Mediterranean, Greece is deeply conscious of the direct impact that instability in the region has on international peace and security. This awareness, together with our long-standing commitment to multilateralism and international law, underpins our readiness to act as a constructive and reliable partner in efforts to promote dialogue, de-escalation and lasting peace.

Mr. Waltz (United States of America): I thank Deputy Special Coordinator Alakbarov for his briefing. It was good to spend time with him late last year. I welcome our colleagues, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Greece and Liberia.

First and foremost, we should truly take heart that Ran Gvili's remains have finally returned to his family, who have suffered through unthinkable hardship for far too long. His funeral was today, and we hope his return brings a measure of solace and closure for the family whom I also had the honour to spend some time with. I think we all hope the remains of all the deceased, those who were killed in this horrible war started by Hamas, are returned to their loved ones, so that those families can have some type of closure and peace.

For the first time since 2014 — more than a decade — Hamas and its terrorist affiliates no longer hold any hostages in Gaza. That is extraordinary, and we should take note of it. And I hope all those who claimed that Hamas did not know the location of every hostage understand, frankly, their error. It is only owing to the relentless efforts of the Israeli people and Government, the tireless work of President Trump and his Special Envoys Witkoff and Kushner and the strong pressure put on Hamas brought to bear by not only the United States but our partners in the region that all the hostages have at last returned home, and we can take those yellow ribbons off our lapels.

On 16 January, President Trump celebrated the formation of the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza. For the first time since 2007, the people of Gaza, who desperately want peace — and they want peace and not Hamas, its supporters or its enablers — have an opportunity to chart a peaceful future for the Gaza Strip. We are deeply grateful for Dr. Ali Sha'ath's leadership of the National Committee and for our partnership with those serving alongside him to restore public services, rebuild civil institutions and stabilize daily life in Gaza.

Last week in Davos, President Trump announced the Board of Peace, and with it the transition to phase two of the 20-point Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, both of which were established and endorsed by the Council in resolution 2803 (2025). The results of phase one speak for themselves: a ceasefire that the entire world were begging for and demanding, humanitarian aid that was so desperately needed and the release and return of all hostages to their families. Phase two will advance the full demilitarization and reconstruction of Gaza, in line with the President's Plan and with resolution 2803 (2025). On behalf of the United States, I would like to thank all those who have committed to joining the Board of Peace, especially fellow Council members Bahrain and Pakistan. Under President Trump's chairmanship, the Board of Peace is acting and not just talking. With the President's vision and tenacity, the Board will help realize a new Gaza and a break from this decades-old cycle of violence.

We realize it is unconventional. Change makes some uncomfortable. But with this innovative approach, we are leaving behind decades of wasted time, wasted money and wasted chances for peace, and we are already seeing results. With the cooperation and assistance of Israel and our Board of Peace partners, more than 55,000 trucks have entered Gaza, bringing food, shelter and medicine since the ceasefire began. More than 1.3 million people received food assistance in December. We welcomed the reopening of Allenby Gate and King Hussein Bridge, the crossing between Israel and Jordan, and we welcomed the full reopening of the Rafah border crossing, which will expedite the flow of medical evacuations. But we must take care: assistance cannot devolve into dependence. And with support from the High Representative for Gaza, Nikolay Mladenov, the National Committee will restore essential services throughout Gaza and foster an economy in which opportunity replaces unemployment and dependence.

But before we can reach this goal, Hamas and other militant groups must lay down their arms. Point one of the President's 20-point plan is that Gaza will be a deradicalized, terror-free zone that does not pose a threat to its neighbours. They must live up to their end of the bargain. Point two is that Gaza will be redeveloped for the benefit of the people of Gaza, who have suffered for far too long and for more than enough. Only deradicalization, only disarmament, only demilitarization will bring Gaza prosperity and stability, and we, along with our partners on the Board of Peace and in consultation with the National Committee, will apply pressure to Hamas to honour its commitment and to disarm. Hamas must not have any role in the governance of Gaza, directly or indirectly, in any form, period.

All military, terror and offensive infrastructure, including tunnels and weapon production facilities, will be destroyed and not rebuilt. International independent monitors will supervise a process of demilitarization of Gaza to include placing weapons permanently beyond use through an agreed process of decommissioning and supported by an internationally funded buy-back and reintegration programme. New Gaza will be fully committed to building a prosperous economy and a peaceful coexistence with its neighbours.

We salute and thank our friends who have agreed to contribute to the international stabilization force. Under the leadership of Major General Jasper Jeffers of the United States Army, the force will begin to establish control and stability, so that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) can withdraw from Gaza based on standards, milestones and time frames linked to demilitarization. These will be agreed upon between the IDF, the international stabilization force, the guarantors and the United States, with an objective of a secure Gaza that no longer poses a threat to its neighbours or its citizens.

The United States remains fully committed to working in close partnership with Israel, with key Arab and Muslim-majority nations and with the international community to bring the peace, prosperity, security and dignity to the region that its people deserve.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Deputy Special Coordinator Alakbarov for his briefing, and I also join others in welcoming the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Liberia and Greece to the Security Council today.

This week brought the long-awaited return of the final remaining hostage in Gaza, Ran Gvili; killed while defending families at Kibbutz Alumim during the brutal Hamas attack on 7 October 2023. As my Foreign Secretary said, our thoughts are with Ran's family, as they now finally lay him to rest. The suffering of 7 October and the devastating conflict that followed serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of our collective efforts to secure lasting peace in the Middle East.

I will make three points.

First, we welcome the announcement of the Palestinian National Committee for the Administration of Gaza — an important step in implementing the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict and putting Palestinians at the heart of efforts to recover and rebuild. We call for the swift implementation of phase two of the peace plan as set out in resolution 2803 (2025), including the withdrawal of Israeli forces, the decommissioning of Hamas' weapons, the deployment of the international stabilization force and a clear timeline for the transition of governance from the Board of Peace to a reformed Palestinian Authority. Hamas can have no role in the future governance of Gaza.

Secondly, for the peace plan to succeed, we must also see urgent action to address the still catastrophic humanitarian situation. The United Nations reports that at least nine infants have died of hypothermia this winter, including a three-month-old baby last week. This is completely unconscionable, especially when life-saving shelter and medical supplies remain at the border, blocked by the Israeli authorities. We welcome Israel's commitment to partially open the Rafah crossing, but this is not enough. Rafah and all crossings must be fully opened to allow life-saving humanitarian supplies to enter at scale.

The United Kingdom condemns Israel's egregious attacks against the East Jerusalem compound of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and its restrictions on the work of international non-governmental organizations, which are the backbone of the humanitarian response, providing \$1 billion of funding annually. Without them, Palestinians will face yet more suffering. We call on Israel to fulfil its humanitarian commitments under President Trump's 20-point plan and its obligations under international law.

Finally, we cannot allow the deeply concerning trajectory of Israeli actions in the West Bank to undermine our efforts to secure peace. We condemn ongoing settler violence and outpost construction in Area B and call upon the Israeli Government to tackle this with effective law enforcement and accountability measures, as needed. Israeli movement restrictions and incursions into Area A must cease. And we oppose ongoing illegal settlement expansion, including recent developments around E1.

We cannot afford to lose momentum towards peace. The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting the swift implementation of resolution 2803 (2025) and to forging a new future, built upon a two-State solution, with Israelis and Palestinians living in peace, security and dignity.

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

The Middle East, a cradle of human civilization, has long suffered the scourge of war and displacement, making it the region with the highest concentration of global hotspots. Today, the Middle East once again stands at a historical crossroads. The security situation is sensitive and fragile, with overlapping conflicts. The question of Palestine remains at the heart of the Middle East issue. The international community should further build consensus and work for a prompt, comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question.

First, we must prioritize the maintenance of peace and stability and the immediate cessation of all violent conflicts. We welcome the return of all hostages or their remains to Israel. More than three months have passed since the first phase of the Gaza ceasefire agreement was reached, yet military strikes are ongoing and civilian casualties continue to rise. The situation in the West Bank remains tense, with the occupying Power continuing settlement expansion and condoning settler violence.

China calls on all parties, Israel in particular, to fully comply with the ceasefire agreement and to work toward achieving a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire in Gaza. Israel should immediately halt settlement activities and rein in settler violence.

Secondly, it is critical to alleviate civilian suffering and ensure unimpeded humanitarian access to the occupied territory. The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains dire, and access to humanitarian supplies continues to be restricted. We urge Israel to fulfil its obligations under international humanitarian law, open all border crossings, lift restrictions on humanitarian access and stop suppressing humanitarian agencies. China expresses its grave concern over the recent forceful demolition and arson attack against the facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in East Jerusalem. Israel has an obligation to ensure UNRWA's privileges, immunities and normal operations.

Thirdly, in line with the two-State solution, post-conflict arrangements for Gaza should be advanced in a prudent and orderly manner. Gaza is the homeland of the Palestinian people, and post-conflict arrangements for Gaza are critical to the political settlement of the Palestinian question. Any arrangement concerning the future of Gaza should adhere to the principle of "Palestinians governing Palestine", respect the will of the Palestinian people, take into account the legitimate concerns of countries in the Middle East and be aligned with the two-State solution. China will continue to support the central role of Palestine in post-conflict governance in Gaza. The Security Council bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It should continue to closely follow developments and post-conflict arrangements in Gaza and play its due role in that regard.

The situation concerning Iran has attracted widespread attention as the spectre of war looms large and tensions are steadily rising in the Middle East. Iran is an independent and sovereign State, and its affairs should be decided by the Iranian people themselves. China supports and hopes to see the preservation of national stability in Iran and supports efforts to safeguard Iran's sovereignty, security and territorial integrity. The use of force cannot solve problems. Any military adventurism will only push the region into an unpredictable abyss. We call on all parties to abide by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, oppose interference in the internal affairs of other countries and reject the use or threat of force in international relations. China hopes that the United States and other relevant parties will heed the calls of the international community and countries in the region, do more to promote peace and stability in the Middle East and avoid exacerbating tensions or adding fuel to the fire.

The Middle East belongs to the people of the region. It is not an arena for major Power rivalry, nor should it become a victim of geopolitical competition for countries outside the region. China stands ready to work with the international community to respect the independent choices of the peoples of the Middle East, give due consideration to the legitimate concerns of regional countries and jointly play a constructive role in promoting peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mr. Bonnafont: (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Ramiz Alakbarov, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing. I also welcome the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Liberia and Greece, my colleagues, the Permanent Representatives of Palestine and Israel, as well as the participation of numerous States in this open debate.

One hundred days after the beginning of the ceasefire in Gaza — thanks to the commendable efforts of the United States, Egypt, Türkiye and Qatar — the humanitarian emergency there remains. The response to the immense needs of the population remains inadequate.

It is urgent that Israel remove all obstacles to humanitarian access. For the United Nations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to be able to operate independently and impartially throughout Gaza, in accordance with international humanitarian law, four obstacles must be removed. First, we note the deregistration of dozens of international NGOs, including many French ones, must be delisted. Secondly, the increasing pressure on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East must be alleviated. Among other things, this has resulted in the demolition of its headquarters in Jerusalem, in violation of United Nations privileges and immunities. Thirdly, excessive restrictions on goods, including those known as dual-use goods, must be removed. Finally, the continued closure of certain crossing points must be addressed. In this regard, the Rafah crossing must be fully opened in both directions, in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict.

France pays tribute to Ran Gvili, the last Israeli hostage held by Hamas, whose remains have been repatriated to Israel, and extends its condolences to his family and loved ones. The repatriation is the final chapter of the nightmare initiated by the 7 October 2023 terrorist attacks of Hamas and the inhumane capture of 251 people subjected to this unbearable nightmare. The repatriation paves the way for the second phase of President Trump's 20-point peace plan for Gaza to be fully set in motion — a Plan that must culminate in a lasting peace. France pays tribute to the mediators' efforts to that end and calls on all parties to abide by their commitments. The establishment of a National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, which is an integral part of Palestine, is a crucial ingredient in Palestinian ownership of this new phase. That National Committee must deploy on the ground and meet the urgent needs of the population, with the support of the Palestinian Authority and the international community. France intends to play its full part in those efforts.

This stage must usher in the disarmament of Hamas, which must no longer have any role in the governance of Gaza, and a return to a reformed Palestinian Authority in Gaza in order to restore a credible political horizon for the two-State solution in accordance with the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution. When it comes to the establishment of the Board of Peace, its founding document raises political and legal questions, in particular about its scope and governance. France is of the view that the Board's activities are circumscribed by resolution 2803 (2025) and compliance with the Charter of the United Nations. In that respect, it is important for the Security Council to be kept regularly informed of the status of the implementation of resolution 2803 (2025).

The situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem continues to deteriorate. Settler violence, the acceleration of settlement activity, including the advancement of the E1 project, the upsurge in military operations and the undermining of the status quo of the holy sites are eroding the prospects for peace, including the implementation of the peace plan. France condemns all violence. It condemns the attack by a Palestinian in northern Israel on 26 December, which claimed two lives. It condemns the attack by settlers east of Ramallah on 17 January, during which local residents and foreign nationals, including one French woman, were assaulted. We ask the Israeli authorities to get to the bottom of the attack and prosecute the perpetrators. That aside, we underscore that the peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians encompass, as the General Assembly recalled in no uncertain terms in September, every aspect of the solution entailing two States — Israel and Palestine.

France also wishes to take this opportunity to convey two messages to the Council and the region. The first one concerns the importance of abiding by the ceasefire in Syria and of integrating the Syrian Democratic Forces into the Syrian

army and the State institutions. The second is the need to support the progress of the Lebanese authorities towards the State's monopoly on weapons. In this connection, France, in conjunction with the United States and Saudi Arabia, is set to convene an international conference in support of those efforts on 5 March in Paris.

Ms. Lassen (Denmark): Let me thank Deputy Special Coordinator Alakbarov for his informative briefing.

We are relieved that the earthly remains of the last hostage held in Gaza since the terror attack on 7 October 2023 have finally been returned, and we hope that this can contribute to healing for the families affected. Denmark welcomes the announcement of phase two of President Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict. This moment carries a fragile but powerful promise: a hope that suffering may give way to stability. But hope on its own cannot rebuild lives. It needs to be supported by concrete actions. The Security Council has a key role in overseeing the implementation of resolution 2803 (2025), including the work of the Board of Peace. While some elements of the charter of the Board of Peace raise concerns, we wish the Board of Peace to be successful in implementing the peace plan for Gaza and effective as a transitional Administration in Gaza, in line with resolution 2803 (2025) and the Charter of the United Nations.

With the formation of the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, we count on Palestinians to be involved in matters related to Palestinian territory. As we are entering phase two, we call on Hamas and other armed groups to decommission their weapons because Hamas and other terrorist organizations must be disarmed and no longer play a role in Gaza. Furthermore, we call on Israel to facilitate a full reopening of the Rafah border crossing in both directions. These are central elements of the peace plan.

Despite some improvements, humanitarian needs in Gaza remain vast and urgent. Families continue to struggle for shelter, protection and medical care. The deregistration of at least 37 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in Gaza and the West Bank risks undermining the progress that has been made. International NGOs are responsible for nearly three quarters of all shelter-related activities and deliver more than 80 per cent of basic necessities. Their presence and unimpeded access are crucial to meeting urgent needs at the scale required. We call on Israel to reverse this decision. We also urge Israel to urgently allow for unrestricted access for aid, including dual-use items. As specified in resolution 2803 (2025), the Council has underscored the importance of the full resumption of humanitarian aid in a manner consistent with humanitarian principles. Humanitarian assistance must never be obstructed. It is not a bargaining chip; it is a lifeline for the civilian population. The health system must also be restored, and it must be possible to transfer patients in need of specialized care for treatment, especially to the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, through the medical corridor that was in place before 7 October 2023. The United Nations-led humanitarian system remains best placed to undertake the monumental task of getting aid to those in need. United Nations agencies, working hand in hand with international NGOs, form the backbone of life-saving assistance and recovery in Gaza.

In this regard, we echo the Secretary-General's deep concern over Israel's adoption of legislation in December for a cessation of the operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). These laws must be repealed without delay. Israel's demolition of an UNRWA compound in East Jerusalem last week is unacceptable and a violation of United Nations privileges and immunities under the United Nations Charter and international law. The inviolability of United Nations premises must be upheld, the privileges and immunities of UNRWA personnel respected and all seized assets returned.

As we look to the next stage of the peace plan for Gaza, we must not forget the West Bank, where unprecedented, devastating developments are currently unfolding. As we heard from the Deputy Special Coordinator, this includes record numbers of expansions of illegal Israeli settlements, settler violence, intimidation, the seizure of farmland and the destruction of crops, with widespread impunity. Families are being forced to flee their homes. A recent example of this was the displacement this week of all 120 families in the Ra's Ayn al-Awja Bedouin community in the Jordan Valley due to escalating violence by Israeli settlers. We urge Israel to immediately halt these measures.

Peace demands a clear path forward. A two-State solution remains the only viable option for long-term sustainable peace — one in which Gaza and the West Bank are reunified and where Palestinians and Israelis alike can live in security, freedom and dignity. We hope that the implementation of the second phase of the peace plan will help to turn the page and open a new chapter for Gaza.

Mr. Alfaro de Alba (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the informative briefing delivered by Mr. Ramiz Alakbarov, Deputy Special Coordinator and United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. We likewise extend a warm welcome to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Liberia and Greece and to all representatives of the delegations, who are honouring us today with their participation.

Recent events in the Middle East attest to the dynamic and complex nature of the region, which is fraught with multidimensional challenges demanding the sustained and coordinated attention of the international community. Despite the ceasefire in effect since 10 October, the situation on the ground in Gaza remains extremely fragile. While the cessation of hostilities has reduced the intensity of the conflict, it remains insufficient to ensure the effective and sustained protection of the civilian population. In this context, Panama recognizes the mediation efforts undertaken by the United States, Qatar, Egypt and Türkiye as a decisive contribution towards achieving a lasting and sustained ceasefire.

Similarly, we acknowledge the efforts of the United Nations system and its humanitarian partners, which have enabled concrete progress to be made in an extremely adverse environment. However, such progress remains fragile and depends on full, safe and sustained humanitarian access, without administrative or bureaucratic obstacles that impede its effectiveness.

A few days ago, the release of the remains of Ran Gvili, the last of the 251 hostages captured in the horrific terrorist attack by Hamas on 7 October 2023, was confirmed. We reiterate our condolences to all the families of the victims and express our hope that the people of Israel will be able to put an end to this tragic episode.

Panama voted in favour of resolution 2803 (2025) in the Council, convinced of the need to open up a political space that would allow for the consolidation of the cessation of hostilities, facilitate humanitarian assistance and lay the foundations for a phase of stabilization and transition in Gaza. That space offers an opportunity that must not be missed. We believe that the mechanisms provided for in that resolution for the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, including the Board of Peace, must be promoted in a coordinated manner and effectively supported by the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, as the primary source of their legitimacy.

We express our concern about recent events affecting the premises of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and

reaffirm the principle of the inviolability of United Nations premises and the privileges and immunities of its personnel, which States are obliged to respect.

We urge non-governmental organizations that have supported the enormous humanitarian effort, despite the extreme conditions on the ground, to be allowed to continue to do so without hindrance so that they can contribute to the successful conclusion of the peace plan.

We reaffirm that the only sustainable and humane solution is one that allows the peoples of Israel and Palestine to live side by side in peace, security and dignity, hopefully in the near future.

In addition, we note with concern the disproportionate measures taken by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in response to citizens' demonstrations aimed at expressing legitimate demands for freedom. Arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, restrictions on freedom of assembly and actions aimed at silencing the families of victims contravene international human rights obligations and reinforce the urgent need to give the Iranian people a voice and for an opening up to the international community.

With regard to Syria, Panama reaffirms its support for the political transition process led and undertaken by the Syrian people, and we emphasize that lasting peace will only be possible through the inclusive integration of all minorities, respecting the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. We appreciate the recent efforts of the interim authorities to prioritize restraint and dialogue in Aleppo and its surroundings, and we reaffirm the obligation of all parties to comply with the agreement of 19 January, respect international humanitarian law and protect the civilian population.

Panama also stresses that terrorism continues to pose a serious threat to peace and security in the region. We reiterate the need to prevent the reactivation of terrorist groups, to manage detention centres safely and to ensure the responsible repatriation of foreign fighters.

We also remain particularly concerned about the situation in southern Yemen, where tensions and clashes have escalated in recent weeks, seriously affecting the security, stability and humanitarian conditions of the civilian population. In this context, we reiterate the need to prioritize a genuinely national agenda, and we underline the central role that the Yemeni people themselves must play in decisions concerning their future and the governance of their country.

Similarly, the situation in Lebanon continues to be marked by high volatility. The visit by the Council in December revealed the fragility of the current ceasefire, the persistent tensions along the southern border and the challenges associated with the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). Panama reaffirms the importance of preserving stability along the Blue Line, fully respecting the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and strengthening support for the Lebanese army as an essential pillar of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We also recognize the women throughout the Middle East who, from civil society and the political spaces they have succeeded in occupying, are paving the way towards equality and justice, reminding us that there can be no peace or development without their full, safe and meaningful participation.

The future of the Middle East cannot be built behind the backs of its peoples. Neither models imposed from outside nor the intransigence of political actors without legitimacy or popular support offer solutions to the complex challenges facing the region.

The stability of the region and its contribution to international peace and security will be the result of the sum of actions that, although they may seem small, reflect the sacrifice of women and men who save lives, feed the most vulnerable, educate children and choose peace over violence every day, attesting to the fact that the best future is one built on respect for the other.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Ramiz Alakbarov, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing on the situation in the region.

The recent developments in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict zone give us grounds for cautious optimism and offer hope for a definitive transition away from the mindset of confrontation and violence towards one of diplomacy and economic revival.

We welcome the return to Israel of the body of the last hostage, Ran Gvili, which was made possible by the Palestinians disclosing the information on its whereabouts. The wounds inflicted on the Israeli nation on 7 October 2023 may still be fresh, but let us hope that this symbolic event, which marked the final reunification of all families with their loved ones, will pave the way for restoring relations between the two peoples. At the same time, we must not forget the Palestinians who lost their loved ones or were separated from their families. In addition to the more than 70,000 Palestinians who died from strikes, hunger and cold, since the ceasefire in October 2025, 710 bodies have been dug out from under the rubble in Gaza, and thousands more remain buried there. The discovery of each body is no less important for the Palestinian people and for the cause of reconciliation.

We note the long-awaited start of the second phase of President Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, which was announced by the United States on 14 January. The launch of the work of transitional bodies in the enclave — first and foremost that of the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, headed by experienced official of the Palestinian Administration Ali Shaath — lays the groundwork for rebuilding the Gaza Strip.

We stand convinced that the peace initiative will not succeed unless and until the interests and rights of the Palestinian people are fully respected and transitional structures coordinate closely with the Palestinian Administration. We emphasize that any plan for the forcible displacement of Gazans is inadmissible, no matter what plausible pretexts those plans may be furnished with. We expect that the administrative, political and economic unity of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, will be restored in the foreseeable future with the establishment of the Palestinian State within the 1967 borders.

We are waiting for the United States side to provide more specifics regarding the prospects for deploying the International Stabilization Force in Gaza, including information on the composition, size and mandate thereof. Based on our years-long experience in peacekeeping operations, we believe that the effectiveness of the Force will depend directly on the consent of the parties and the ability of the Force itself to impartially perform its mandated tasks. At the same time, the use of force must be strictly limited so as to avoid drawing peacekeepers into the conflict as one of its sides.

All in all, we believe that further implementation of Trump's Plan will require mediators to focus on finding a comprehensive negotiated solution to the problem of disarming Palestinian groups and withdrawing Israeli forces from Gaza. Attempts at a military solution are doomed to failure.

Now that the body of the last hostage has been returned, the Israeli side has no grounds left for delays in fulfilling its humanitarian obligations towards the Gazans. We would like to recall that Israel's humanitarian obligations are set out in points 7 and 8 of President Trump's peace plan, as well as in operative paragraph 3 of resolution 2803 (2025), which endorsed the Plan. The resolution explicitly states the importance of the full resumption of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip through cooperating organizations, including the United Nations, which implies, *inter alia*, the need to make the Rafah crossing fully operational, as was announced only on 26 January, that is, three and a half months after the ceasefire agreement was signed.

Unfortunately, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains catastrophic, as reflected by the total destruction on the ground and restrictions on the delivery of supplies. Persistent bans on carrying out humanitarian operations and importing essential goods and equipment for clearing rubble are seriously exacerbating the plight of Gazans. Palestinians continue to die under Israeli strikes. They suffer from hunger and a virtual lack of medical care and access to education, which are now compounded by the winter cold. Since 10 October 2025, some 500 people have been killed, at least nine of whom have died from hypothermia.

Information provided by humanitarian organizations clearly shows the mismatch between the scale of humanitarian needs and the response to them. Moreover, we are seriously concerned about the trend towards further restrictions on humanitarian activities, including through the introduction by Israel of additional requirements for the registration of humanitarian non-governmental organizations, which account for a significant share of vital work.

It is precisely based on the acute needs and pressing demands of the Palestinians that we announced our readiness to provide \$1 billion from Russian assets frozen by previous United States Administrations for projects to rebuild and reconstruct the Gaza Strip.

We call on Israel to refrain from actions that undermine the humanitarian response and to ensure safe and unhindered access for humanitarian agencies to address one of the most acute crises of our time.

The situation surrounding the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) requires special attention. For decades, the Agency has been playing a key and irreplaceable role in providing assistance to the Palestinian population both in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in neighbouring Arab countries. The Agency's mandate was extended for another three-year period, until 30 June 2029, by General Assembly resolution 80/78, which was supported by an overwhelming majority of Member States. UNRWA also bears historic responsibility to ensure the implementation of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) on the right of Palestinian refugees to compensation and return.

At the same time, the Agency is facing unprecedented pressure and systemic obstacles to its activities. Unfortunately, UNRWA is forced to direct considerable effort not only to supporting those in need, but also to protecting its own staff from threats, pressure and persecution.

The Israeli side has prohibited the supply of electricity and water to UNRWA facilities, cancelled tax benefits and immunity from prosecution, as well as the right to use banking and means of payment. A forced disconnection from electricity and water supply systems of the Agency's schools, medical and municipal facilities will begin by the end of January, which will affect the provision of socially important services to tens of thousands of Arab residents of East Jerusalem. Since the beginning of the escalation of hostilities in Gaza, 309 UNRWA staff members have been killed.

We express our sincere condolences to their families and loved ones and call for an impartial investigation in bringing those responsible to justice.

We note the recent statements by the Secretary-General containing strong condemnation of Israel's anti-UNRWA policy, including the demolition of the Agency's headquarters on 20 January. We express our concern over such unprecedented moves. We call on the Israeli leadership to reverse this policy and refrain from further unilateral action against the United Nations humanitarian entity, and to comply with its obligations as a Member State. We recall the option contained in the Secretary-General's letter dated 8 January (S/2026/25), regarding the referral of the matter to the International Court of Justice in case it is impossible to resolve the differences bilaterally as it pertains to the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations.

As regards Jerusalem, we note our commitment to resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980) on its occupied status and our non-recognition of Israel's actions to extend its sovereignty over the city.

Our country's position on the Palestinian-Israeli settlement is principled and not subject to circumstantial changes. We reaffirm our support for the two-State formula and a just solution to the Palestinian issue on the basis of a universally recognized legal framework, without which it is impossible to achieve genuine peace and lasting security in the Middle East.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): We also join our colleagues in thanking the Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Ramiz Alakbarov, for his comprehensive briefing.

We welcome the Organization's continued commitment to remain engaged on the Palestinian question in all its aspects. Pakistan welcomes the convening of this open debate at a time when cautious diplomatic progress coexists with a serious humanitarian situation and continued violations on the ground in Gaza and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The unresolved Palestinian question is at the core of the instability in the Middle East. The Palestinian people have endured decades of illegal occupation marked by dispossession, brutal repression and the denial of their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination. Over the past two years, in Gaza, this suffering reached an unprecedented scale, resulting in widespread civilian casualties, mass displacement, the near-total destruction of infrastructure and severe humanitarian deprivation.

Against this backdrop, the international community sought to re-anchor efforts towards diplomacy and a credible political pathway towards peace. Initiatives such as the High-Level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, held in July, as well as President Trump's 20-point Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, subsequently endorsed by resolution 2803 (2025), reflect this renewed engagement.

In line with resolution 2803 (2025), the commencement of the second phase of the peace plan, including the establishment of the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza and the establishment of the Board of Peace and executive committees, are important steps. As intended in the Plan, these measures should now help consolidate the ceasefire, secure a permanent cessation of hostilities, facilitate transitional arrangements, enable recovery and reconstruction, ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance at scale and prepare the ground for a sustainable and credible political process towards Palestinian self-determination and statehood.

However, we are deeply concerned that the fragile situation in Gaza remains under constant strain. Ceasefire violations continue unabated, and civilian lives remain at risk. Increased pressure on international humanitarian organizations, including deregistration measures and restrictions on humanitarian operations, are impeding assistance and protection for the most vulnerable. We strongly condemn Israel's continued attacks on United Nations premises and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), including the recent demolition of the United Nations compound in the Shaykh Jarrah neighbourhood of occupied East Jerusalem. Such actions undermine stabilization efforts and threaten the limited progress achieved so far. UNRWA's operations remain essential and must be safeguarded.

Pakistan, together with other Arab and Islamic countries in the Group of Eight, has joined the Board of Peace in support of its mandate, as endorsed by resolution 2803 (2025). In a joint statement, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group reiterated their support for the peace efforts led by President Donald Trump and reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the mission of the Board of Peace as a transitional administration, as set out in the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict and endorsed by resolution 2803 (2025), aimed at consolidating a permanent ceasefire, supporting the reconstruction of Gaza and advancing a just and lasting peace grounded in the Palestinian right to self-determination and statehood, in accordance with international law, thereby paving the way for security and stability for all countries and peoples of the region.

To ensure that the current initiatives deliver tangible results, Pakistan underscores the following priorities.

First, globally, on the process and its objectives, we hope that the Board of Peace, under the framework of resolution 2803 (2025), will lead to concrete steps towards the implementation of a permanent ceasefire, the further scaling up of humanitarian aid, the reconstruction of Gaza and the realization of the right to self-determination of the people of Palestine through a credible, time-bound political process, consistent with international legitimacy and United Nations resolutions, resulting in an independent, sovereign and contiguous State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders with Al-Quds and Al-Sharif as its capital. That is the ultimate goal supported by the international community. Palestinian-led governance and institutional strengthening, with a central role for the Palestinian Authority, are indispensable in this regard.

Secondly, and specifically on the ceasefire, full respect for the ceasefire must be ensured, with a view to a permanent cessation of hostilities. Any military escalation, unilateral measures or provocations must be strongly countered, as they jeopardize civilian protection and undermine confidence-building.

Thirdly, on the humanitarian situation, attacks on United Nations premises, UNRWA and humanitarian organizations, personnel and facilities, as well as administrative restrictions on international organizations, are unacceptable and contrary to international humanitarian law. Full, safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian assistance at scale must be ensured. UNRWA's role in this regard remains critical.

Fourthly, recovery and reconstruction should begin without delay, with no annexation, forced displacement or alteration of the territorial unity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The contiguity of Gaza and the West Bank is indispensable for the viability of the Palestinian State.

Fifthly, illegal settlement activity, settler violence and attempts to alter the demographic, legal or historical character of the occupied territory, including the holy

sites, must cease immediately. Israel, the occupying Power, must also be compelled to immediately halt its illegal and destabilizing actions in Syria and Lebanon in violation of their sovereignty and territorial integrity and the relevant Security Council resolutions. Israel must completely vacate all occupied Arab territories.

Sixthly, accountability is indispensable, for without justice and respect for international law, there can be no durable peace.

Finally, regarding the political horizon and a credible, irreversible and time-bound process culminating in the realization of Palestinian statehood in accordance with international legitimacy, all diplomatic initiatives, including President Trump's Gaza peace plan, the High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution and the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, must reinforce one another through coordinated and concrete implementation.

The international community, particularly the Council, bears the responsibility to translate renewed engagement into measurable change on the ground for the betterment of the Palestinian people. Pakistan's solidarity with the Palestinian people remains firm and unwavering. We stand ready to work with the members of the Council, regional and international partners and the United States to advance a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question and a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the delegation of the Federal Republic of Somalia and congratulate you on your presidency of the Security Council this month. I thank Mr. Ramiz Alakbarov, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his briefing. I also welcome Their Excellencies the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Greece and Liberia to our meeting today, and I welcome all participants to this meeting.

The Kingdom of Bahrain, the peoples of the Middle East and the world look forward to ending the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which has lasted for almost 80 years, inflicted on the region irreparable losses in lives, property, capabilities and infrastructure and deprived successive generations of the opportunity to live in security, stability, freedom and dignity, in the absence of a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question.

The Kingdom of Bahrain firmly believes in the need for a discourse of peace and hope to prevail in the region and for a secure, stable and sustainable environment to be provided to fulfil the rights of the brotherly Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of their independent and sovereign State alongside the State of Israel, thereby contributing to the promotion of peace, security and prosperity for all the peoples of the region and the preservation of international interests. This can be achieved by pursuing peaceful solutions to end this conflict through dialogue, negotiation and diplomacy.

This meeting coincides with the International Day of Peaceful Coexistence, which my country, the Kingdom of Bahrain, initiated at the United Nations, based on our belief that establishing a culture of dialogue, mutual respect, tolerance and coexistence among peoples is an indispensable foundation for achieving just and sustainable peace, especially in a region such as the Middle East, which has long suffered from conflicts and strife. The Kingdom of Bahrain commends the positive initiatives that are paving the way for achieving a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace in the region. We once again welcome the announcement of the start of the second phase of the Comprehensive Plan to End the Conflict in Gaza under the auspices of His Excellency United States President Donald Trump, as well as the

formation of the Palestinian National Committee for the Administration of Gaza as an interim transitional body. We wish the Committee success in its tasks in service of the Palestinian people in order to alleviate their suffering and improve their living conditions. In this context, the Kingdom of Bahrain signed the charter of the Board of Peace, in Davos, upon the directives of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain. We signed the Charter in order to welcome the invitation extended to His Majesty by the President of the United States to join the Peace Council because the Kingdom believes in the importance of the agreement and the full implementation of the peace plan for the Gaza Strip, which represents an international framework for the protection and preservation of the legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people and for achieving sustainable peace in the region.

The Kingdom of Bahrain affirms its appreciation for the efforts made by the United States of America to end the war and establish sustainable peace in the region, expressing its hope that the Peace Council will contribute to promoting and supporting stability and achieving development and prosperity for all. The Kingdom of Bahrain also calls on all parties to work on ensuring the success of recent diplomatic efforts, particularly President Donald J. Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, and to emphasize the use of dialogue and negotiation to address any obstacles or concerns, affirming the importance of establishing a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire in Gaza, facilitating the sustainable and adequate delivery of humanitarian aid to all civilians in the sector and beginning the process of reconstruction and recovery.

In addition, we reject any attempt or scheme to forcibly evict persons from Palestinian territories or to expand settlements, which is considered a violation of resolution 2334 (2016), or anything that would undermine the historical or religious status of the city of Jerusalem, which throughout history has been home to the three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in harmony and peace. In this context, we affirm the outcomes of the thirty-third Arab Summit, in Bahrain, and its initiative, which called for convening an international peace conference and intensifying diplomatic efforts aimed at increasing international recognition of the State of Palestine and supporting its admission as a full member of the United Nations, as well as the need to guarantee the right to education and health services for those affected by conflicts in the region.

We also emphasize the importance of supporting all regional and international efforts aimed at alleviating the suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people, including the relief efforts undertaken by the United Nations through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to provide support and relief to millions of refugees in the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon until a just and comprehensive political solution is reached in a manner that guarantees all their legitimate rights in accordance with international law and international legitimacy resolutions. The Kingdom of Bahrain commends the positive steps taken by the Palestinian Authority, including its acceptance of the Plan of the United States President for Gaza and resolution 2803 (2025), as a positive path towards a permanent and stable situation in the Gaza Strip as an integral part of the Palestinian State. The Kingdom of Bahrain also welcomes the Palestinian Authority's intention to hold local elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on 15 April, affirming the importance of the democratic process and the participation of the Palestinian people in determining their future.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Bahrain renews its call to the international community to support the rights of the Palestinian people to establish an independent national State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the two-State solution and the relevant international legitimacy resolutions, and the acceptance of

the State of Palestine as a full member of the United Nations. We also stress the need to work towards achieving a just, comprehensive and sustainable peace in the Middle East in accordance with all the relevant United Nations resolutions, the most recent of which was resolution 2803 (2025), as well as the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002. In that regard, we stress the commitment of the Kingdom of Bahrain, as a member of the Security Council, to continue working with Council members and other parties concerned to support efforts aimed at guaranteeing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and to contribute effectively to achieving a just and lasting peace in the Middle East in a manner that preserves regional security and stability, promotes international peace and security, and provides an opportunity for prosperity for all the peoples of the region.

Mr. Mukongo (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): The Democratic Republic of the Congo would like to congratulate the Federal Republic of Somalia for the diligence with which it has led the work of the Security Council throughout the month of January, which is now coming to an end, and for taking the initiative to organize this quarterly debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine.

We welcome the presence in the Chamber of the Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Liberia and Greece.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo remains concerned about the continuing tensions and pockets of instability throughout the Middle East, particularly in Syria, Yemen and Lebanon. The region is marked by a tangle of political, security and humanitarian crises. The fragmentation of regional dynamics, the proliferation of armed actors, and the constant risk of escalation underscore the urgent need for a comprehensive, coherent approach based on respect for international law in order to prevent the spread of conflict and preserve regional peace and security.

Our remarks this morning will focus more on the Palestinian question, the epicentre of the crisis in the Middle East. This meeting comes two months after the momentum generated by the adoption of resolution 2803 (2025). It provides an opportunity for the Council, at the beginning of 2026, to seize the premises for a return to peace and stability in the Middle East, particularly in the Gaza Strip. In resolution 2803 (2025), the Council has proposed a framework for an inclusive transition in Gaza, which is a significant step forward. The credibility of the Security Council will depend on its effective and transparent implementation.

At the outset, the Democratic Republic of the Congo would like to commend the leadership of the United States of America, as well as the actions of Qatar, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Republic of Türkiye in concluding the Comprehensive Plan to end the Gaza Conflict, particularly in the efforts undertaken to achieve a ceasefire between the parties to the conflict. This historic breakthrough certainly raises hopes for a positive dynamic in favour of the populations trapped by war, but it also serves as a reminder, once again, of the prevalence of restraint, dialogue and diplomacy as solutions to crises, even the most acute ones. The situation in Gaza also reminds us that without real political will and sincere commitment, no de-escalation or peace can be envisaged.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo notes with satisfaction the political and diplomatic progress made in resolving the crisis in Gaza. It particularly welcomes the recent appointment of the leaders of the Peace Council and the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza. Nevertheless, it wishes to draw the Council's attention to the humanitarian situation, which remains profoundly alarming. The protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel and civilian infrastructure must remain an

overriding priority in line with international humanitarian law. Despite some improvement in the delivery of aid, needs continue to be immense. The Democratic Republic of the Congo issues a strong appeal for safe, swift and unimpeded humanitarian access and for increased financial support with a view to bolstering the United Nations humanitarian response. In this connection, we underscore the need for a constructive approach to the role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the security guarantees to be afforded to United Nations personnel in the exercise of their duties, in particular guarantees concerning the protection of vulnerable civilian populations.

In conclusion, Council members bear a collective responsibility for ensuring that the ceasefire is followed and that it leads to lasting peace. They are required to remain united, vigilant and engaged so as to steer the parties towards genuine stability for the sake of all communities of the region.

Mr. Ilgis (Latvia): I would like to thank Deputy Special Coordinator Ramiz Alakbarov for his briefing.

There are prospects for stability in the Middle East. The terrorist networks of Hamas, Hizbullah and the Houthis have been severely degraded. The failed Iranian regime has been weakened, and its nuclear programme has been set back decisively. The collapse of the Al-Assad regime has brought relief to millions of Syrians and contributed to the wider stability of the region.

As the fragile ceasefire in Gaza continues to hold, we must collectively engage in its consolidation. We need to build on this progress to end the immense human suffering of the Palestinian people and to provide them with opportunities to secure their daily livelihoods, reconstruct infrastructure and regain their dignity and future. The people of Israel must be assured that they can live in peace and security and without the daily threat of terrorism. At last — 843 days since 7 October 2023 — all of the hostages taken by Hamas have finally been returned home. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Gvili family and all other families that endured this horror.

Latvia supports the full implementation of President Donald J. Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict. It must serve as a building block for broader stabilization in the Middle East. We welcome the launch of phase two of the Comprehensive Plan, which commenced with the announcement of the Executive Board — the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza. We also welcome the work of the Civil-Military Coordination Centre. Furthermore, it is imperative that Hamas disarm and relinquish power. We look forward to the Board of Peace, in its transitional administration capacity, as endorsed by resolution 2803 (2025), providing strategic oversight of the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and the redevelopment of Gaza for the benefit of its people. We also await the generation of the international stabilization force so that it can fulfil its security role.

With the transitional governing bodies taking up their duties, there is a pathway for tangible reconstruction and development, with drinking water, food, hospitals and schools accessible to everyone throughout Gaza. The Palestinian Authority must be assisted in building institutional capacities, implementing its reform agenda and addressing security challenges.

The past two years have confirmed that breaking the cycle of violence requires sustained investment in a viable political solution: a peace that addresses the security concerns and the legitimate aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians. We should not lose sight of the objective of the two-State solution, in accordance with international parameters and as defined by Security Council resolutions and the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the

Implementation of the Two-State Solution, endorsed in September 2025. A just and lasting peace requires Gaza and the West Bank to be addressed as one unified entity.

The unprecedented levels of violence, land confiscations, house demolitions and settlement expansion that are emerging across the West Bank undermine international efforts aimed at achieving peace and stability in the region. We strongly oppose any steps towards territorial or demographic change in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and urge Israel to halt its settlement policy in the West Bank.

The ultimate value of any plan is determined not by its quality on paper, but by its effective and efficient execution in the real world. We commend the dedication and courage of humanitarian workers, who, despite extremely difficult circumstances, have responded swiftly to the urgent needs of civilians in Gaza. The immediate flow of aid following the peace agreement in October 2025 provided a vital lifeline and should be continuously ensured without interruption or obstruction. Humanitarian needs remain immense and are further exacerbated by dire weather conditions, with most civilians still lacking access to shelter, clean water and basic medical care. In this regard, the adoption of new registration requirements for international non-governmental organizations raises serious concerns about their potential impact on humanitarian assistance. Safeguarding an enabling, predictable and non-discriminatory operating environment remains essential to ensuring that this vital assistance can continue in line with international humanitarian and human rights law. We call on Israel to engage in meaningful dialogue with the affected stakeholders.

The situation in Iran has reached an alarming level of repression. The regime has killed thousands of innocent protesters. It continues to carry out mass repression in an attempt to silence protesters. Latvia stands in solidarity with the brave people of Iran. We demand an immediate end to the violent oppression of its people, who are simply exercising their fundamental rights. Iran's ongoing support for armed proxies and its aggressive regional interventions undermine security and stability across the Middle East and beyond. Continued material support from the Iranian regime for Russia's war against Ukraine is despicable.

We also take note of certain positive developments in the region that merit continued support from the international community. We welcome the Lebanese Government's political commitment and efforts to foster economic recovery, reconstruction and security, including steps taken to ensure the State's monopoly on weapons. We reaffirm our support for the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and the important role of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Emerging from decades of violence and grief, the new Syria has a historic opportunity to shape a future of peace, security and prosperity for its people and neighbours. We welcome the efforts of the Syrian transitional Government to sustain security and advance an inclusive political transition and socioeconomic recovery.

In conclusion, let me emphasize that at a time when there is a glimmer of hope for stability and lasting peace in the Middle East, the international community must strengthen its collective commitment to this goal. In doing so, we must focus on the needs of the people and their aspirations for security and dignity.

Mrs. Zalabata Torres (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate. I thank Special Coordinator Ramiz Alakbarov for his briefing and welcome the delegations taking part in this meeting.

As it takes the floor for the first time as a member of the Council at a meeting on the question of Palestine, Colombia reaffirms its solidarity with the Palestinian people and its commitment to the fulfilment of their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination.

More than three months have passed since the launch of the first phase of the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict. While discussions on a second phase are being announced, repeated and increasingly serious violations of the ceasefire persist, as do the restrictions on humanitarian access imposed by Israel.

For three months, survivors of the genocide in Gaza have faced the total destruction of their livelihoods, enduring the harsh winter weather while the occupying Power keeps the crossings closed, unjustifiably restricts the entry of goods that are essential for survival and attacks more than 37 humanitarian organizations that are the only lifeline for millions of Palestinians.

Added to this there is the systematic use of torture and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, including sexual violence, against Palestinian detainees, among them women and children. These practices, documented by United Nations mechanisms, have intensified in the past two years and are committed in a context of almost total impunity. The level of cruelty of these acts demands clear condemnation and immediate accountability.

Meanwhile, the disinformation campaign against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) continues unabated. The extremely serious attacks and the demolition and deliberate destruction of United Nations infrastructure at the UNRWA compound in Sheikh Jarrah are compounded by decisions taken by the Knesset that flagrantly contravene the privileges and immunities of the United Nations and disregard Israel's obligations under international law, as made clear by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion of 22 October 2025.

We must not lose sight of the fact that peace and stability can only be built on principles, on justice, accountability and full recognition of the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination. The only just and sustainable solution is the two-State solution and the establishment of a sovereign, viable and contiguous Palestinian State, within the pre-1967 borders.

In the current circumstances, the Council must be absolutely clear on the following.

First, no armistice line can be interpreted as a redefinition of internationally recognized borders, and the annexation of territories in both Gaza and the West Bank is unacceptable.

Secondly, the forced displacement of the population and the creation of ghettos are unacceptable and incompatible with international law and human dignity.

Thirdly, respect for the principles of neutrality, independence and humanity in the delivery of humanitarian aid is non-negotiable, and the United Nations must remain at the centre of the response, including through UNRWA. Access to basic services such as health, education and food for the Palestinian population currently depends on the work of UNRWA and non-governmental organizations, whose work is being hampered.

Let me now turn to the situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which continues to be increasingly alarming. In recent months, we have witnessed an unprecedented escalation in settler violence, often encouraged by the Israeli authorities themselves and perpetrated with the acquiescence or protection of the occupying Power's security forces.

The accelerated expansion of settlements, the approval of new units by the Knesset, attacks on universities and civilian infrastructure, the deliberate suffocation of the Palestinian economy and daily attacks on the lives and property of the

Palestinian population leave no doubt about the existence of a systematic policy aimed at making life impossible for Palestinians throughout the West Bank. This dynamic of de facto and de jure annexation undermines the prospects for a two-State solution.

The persistence of the occupation and the absence of a just solution to the question of Palestine continue to have a direct impact on regional stability. Although the national efforts of Syria and Lebanon are evident, they are undermined by actions that threaten their sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. The Council must persist in supporting those national efforts, reiterating the urgency of consistently and effectively implementing its own resolutions, in particular resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006).

Before concluding I would like to emphasize a fundamental principle. The future of Palestine must be decided by the Palestinian people. New forms of protectorate or systems of external administration that reproduce a colonial mindset are unacceptable, both in Palestine and elsewhere in the world. Self-determination is a cornerstone of this Organization, and Colombia will continue to defend it. The Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and cannot cede its powers to opaque or biased mechanisms.

We will closely monitor progress in the implementation of the second phase of the peace plan, as authorized by resolution 2803 (2025).

We call for the Council to be kept informed in a timely manner and to fully incorporate the priorities and needs of the Palestinian people. It is our responsibility as Member States to ensure that the United Nations is an integral part of efforts to achieve a just, sustainable and lasting peace in Palestine and throughout the Middle East region; a peace based on respect for life, international law and human dignity.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Somalia.

It is my honour, in my capacity as the President of the Security Council, to convene this high-level quarterly open debate on the Middle East. I welcome Her Excellency Ms. Sara Beysolow Nyanti, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia, and His Excellency Mr. Georgios Gerapetritis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, to the meeting. I also want to thank Deputy Special Coordinator Alakbarov for his valuable briefing.

We meet as the Middle East faces an overlapping political, security, humanitarian and socioeconomic crisis, with challenges whose effects are felt far beyond the region. The common thread running through this crisis is the urgent need for sustained international engagement, renewed trust in multilateral diplomacy and an unwavering commitment to the Charter of the United Nations.

Let me begin with Palestine, where the ongoing tragedy in Gaza continues to shock the world's conscience.

For years, civilians have endured relentless bombardment, mass displacement and the collapse of essential services. The scale of destruction and the catastrophic humanitarian conditions demand that the Council act with unity and resolve. Somalia stresses that international humanitarian law must be upheld fully, without exception. The protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel, United Nations staff and civilian infrastructure is a binding legal obligation. We reiterate the imperative of an immediate, comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire and unhindered humanitarian access through multiple entry points.

Just two days ago, the Council debated the rule of law among nations, a principle central to peace, security and equality for all States (see S/PV.10096). Yet Israel has repeatedly violated these tenets without remorse or remedy. Its actions in Gaza, the West Bank and beyond defy international law, Security Council resolutions and the most basic norms of the international system. This persistent impunity undermines not only justice in Palestine, but also the credibility of the Council and the international order.

Somalia is gravely concerned about Israel's escalating campaign against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which remains vital for the survival and dignity of millions of Palestinian refugees. UNRWA is not only a humanitarian actor; it is a lifeline, delivering essential services to a population under occupation. Undermining UNRWA is a violation of humanitarian principles and an abdication of Israel's responsibilities as an occupying Power under international law. Israel must ensure the welfare of the Palestinian population, not obstruct or penalize those who provide critical support.

We further condemn Israel's recent actions to recognize a secessionist group in north-western Somalia as an independent entity and the reported plan to forcibly relocate Palestinians to a region in Somalia. Such actions are a direct violation of Somalia's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and threaten to draw the Horn of Africa into the destabilizing currents of the Middle East conflict. Attempts to impose new political realities on the African continent set a dangerous precedent and erode the norms of international law and regional stability.

The forced displacement of Palestinians from their homeland is unacceptable under international law. Any externally imposed schemes to relocate populations or redraw borders will only deepen grievances, inflame tensions and risk expanding the conflict.

We are also deeply troubled by Israeli actions at the holy mosque in Jerusalem. Such provocations violate the sanctity of one of the world's most revered sites and threaten to ignite religious tensions across the region. Respect for religious sites is a fundamental obligation, and all parties must refrain from actions or rhetoric that endanger these sacred places and the fragile coexistence that they symbolize.

The future of Gaza and the West Bank must be shaped by Palestinians themselves, restoring their political and territorial unity. Somalia reaffirms that the two-State solution, grounded in the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution remains the only credible framework for peace, justice and security for Palestinians and Israelis.

Turning to Lebanon, the situation along the Blue Line remains deeply concerning. Israeli violations of resolution 1701 (2006) are a serious concern, and cross-border exchanges and the constant risk of miscalculation threaten to drag the region into a wider conflict. Somalia emphasizes that the safety and freedom of movement of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon must be respected at all times. The stability, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon are essential for regional equilibrium.

In Syria, the consequences of conflict remain acute. The country faces political stagnation, humanitarian distress and ongoing instability. Any unilateral measures or externally driven arrangements risk undermining Syria's unity and sovereignty. Humanitarian access must be safe, principled and predictable. Resolution 2254 (2015) remains the only internationally agreed framework for a lasting settlement. We urgently call for a renewed commitment to a Syrian-owned process that advances national reconciliation and the safe, voluntary return of refugees. Repeated Israeli

strikes inside Syria, which escalate tensions, must cease, in line with international law.

In Yemen, the reopening of Aden airport and stabilization in parts of the south have improved access, but shifting control and the continued detention of United Nations and humanitarian staff in the north are unacceptable and must end. Chronic underfunding threatens life-saving operations. Yemen's path to peace requires a Yemeni-owned process grounded in established references. Stability comes when all parties honour their commitments and ensure that weapons remain under State control. We reject any attacks on Yemen's sovereignty, territorial integrity, national unity and independence.

Regional dynamics involving Iran remain worrisome. Rising tensions across the maritime, air and land domains risk miscalculation and expanding conflict. Somalia underscores the urgent need for restraint, de-escalation and respect for sovereignty. Structured regional dialogue, grounded in non-interference and mutual respect, is essential to stability.

Across all these crises, one truth stands out: the Middle East's challenges are deeply interconnected, and the common denominator is clear — lasting peace and stability can be achieved only when all parties respect international law, uphold their responsibilities and embrace dialogue over confrontation. Fragmented responses will not yield sustainable solutions.

Somalia urges coherent, principled engagement from the Council and renewed investment in political processes that put the aspirations and dignity of the region's peoples at their core. In that context, the late United States President Jimmy Carter's commitment to peace shaped the region, notably through the Framework for Peace in the Middle East Agreed at Camp David — a breakthrough that proved that dialogue and respect for agreements can replace conflict. I close with excerpts from his book, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*:

“The bottom line is this: Peace will come to Israel and the Middle East only when the Israeli government is willing to comply with international law, with the Roadmap for Peace, with official American policy, with the wishes of a majority of its own citizens — and honour its own previous commitments — by accepting its legal borders.”

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I wish 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. The flashing lights on the microphones will prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close after three minutes.

I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Mr. Obeidat (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting, and to thank the Deputy Special Coordinator for the Peace Process, Mr. Ramiz Alakbarov, for his valuable briefing. I also welcome the participation of Her Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia and His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece in this meeting.

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

We are meeting today at a critical juncture, after more than two years of war waged by Israel on the Gaza Strip. The Arab Group affirms that it is important for Israel to abide by the ceasefire agreement reached in October 2025 through United States efforts and to cease its violations of the agreement. The Arab Group demands

the implementation of all aspects and provisions of the ceasefire agreement. In this regard, the Arab Group appreciates the role played by His Excellency the President of the United States in reaching the ceasefire agreement and the tireless efforts made by the Arab Republic of Egypt, the State of Qatar and the Republic of Türkiye to that end. We stress the importance of beginning the second phase of the agreement, leading to the full implementation of President Donald J. Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict and resolution 2803 (2025). We further emphasize the importance of launching early recovery and reconstruction efforts throughout Gaza and affirm that the future of the Gaza Strip must be based on its unity and reunification with the West Bank, with the Palestinian Authority assuming its responsibility in Gaza, ensuring its unity with the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and independent statehood. The Group of Arab States condemns all Israeli military, political, legislative and financial measures aimed at undermining the Palestinian Authority and calls on the international community to address such measures.

The establishment of the Board of Peace and the Palestinian National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, both ad hoc transitional bodies created pursuant to resolution 2803 (2025), must contribute to consolidating the ceasefire, preventing displacement and annexation, ensuring Israel's full withdrawal from the Strip, supporting Gaza's reconstruction and advancing a genuine political horizon that leads to the independence of a sovereign Palestinian State along the lines of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and achieving a just and comprehensive peace in line with international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative. The Group stresses the need to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to lift all restrictions and obstacles regarding the entry of humanitarian assistance and to open all crossings without selectivity or delay, ensuring that aid reaches all parts of the Strip in compliance with the obligations under international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The Arab Group reiterates its condemnation of all illegal Israeli policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including the continued expansion of settlements, home demolitions, land confiscation and settler terrorism in the occupied West Bank. We emphasize that Israel has no sovereignty over the occupied West Bank or any part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In this regard, the Group values and commends the reaffirmation by the United States President that Israel must not annex the West Bank. The Group also welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly of its decision endorsing the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution issued by 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 (General Assembly decision 80/506).

The Group also stresses that East Jerusalem is an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories and that Israel has no sovereignty over it. We emphasize the need for Israel to respect the historical and legal status quo at the Islamic and Christian holy sites. We affirm that the Jordanian Directorate of Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem Affairs of the Jordanian Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs and Holy Sites is the sole legal authority with exclusive prerogatives to administer all affairs of Haram al-Sharif, including access, under the Hashemite custodianship of the holy sites. The Arab Group also stresses the important role of the Al-Quds Committee and the Bayt Mal Al-Quds Al-Sharif Agency and supports all the Committee's efforts.

The Arab Group reaffirms the indispensable role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in providing essential services to more than 5.5 million refugees across its areas of operation pursuant to its United Nations mandate. In this connection, we recall the advisory

opinion of the International Court of Justice of October 2025 (see A/80/502), which affirmed Israel's obligation to fully respect the inviolability and immunity of United Nations premises, including UNRWA. Accordingly, the Arab Group calls on the Security Council and the international community to assume their legal responsibilities and address Israeli decisions and violations targeting UNRWA, the most recent of which was the demolition of the premises in the Shaykh Jarrah neighbourhood. The Group also renews its call for the international community to provide the political and financial support necessary for the Agency to continue its vital work. The Group further condemns Israel's arbitrary measures against civil society and humanitarian organizations operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and calls for an end to these actions.

In relation to Syria, the Arab Group condemns all Israeli attacks on Syria and incursions into its territories, which constitute a flagrant violation of international law and an act of aggression against Syrian sovereignty — a dangerous escalation that heightens tension and conflict. The Group calls on the international community and the Security Council to act immediately to implement international law and compel Israel to cease its aggression and withdraw from all the Syrian territories that it occupies in clear violation of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. The Group reiterates that the Syrian Golan is occupied Syrian territory and rejects Israel's decision to annex and impose its sovereignty over it.

Regarding Lebanon, the Arab Group welcomes the efforts of the Lebanese Government and the announcement by the Lebanese Armed Forces of the completion of phase one of the arms control plan, consistent with the State's determination to exercise full sovereignty over its territories using its own capabilities. We look forward to the international conference to support the Lebanese Army and internal security forces, to be held on 5 March and hosted by France with the appreciated efforts of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, France and the United States. The Group condemns Israel's daily violations of Lebanon's sovereignty and of resolution 1701 (2006), including its continued occupation of five border sites in southern Lebanon and the establishment of so-called buffer zones within Lebanese territories. The Arab Group calls on the security Council to uphold its responsibilities and compel Israel to halt its attacks, withdraw immediately from all Lebanese occupied territories and release all Lebanese prisoners.

In conclusion, the Arab Group reaffirms that a just, comprehensive and lasting peace is a strategic Arab choice. The only path to this peace remains the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State on the 4 June 1967 lines, with the occupied East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with established terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. Manalo (Philippines): Since 1947, the question of Palestine has remained on the United Nations agenda, making it the longest-running issue before the Organization. It is not merely a territorial dispute but a defining political and moral issue, the resolution of which remains essential to peace and stability in the Middle East. The Philippines welcomes the cessation of hostilities in Gaza and the progress achieved under the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2803 (2025). After two years of devastating conflict and immense civilian suffering, the ceasefire offers an opportunity to stabilize a situation that has long threatened international peace and security. At the same time, the ceasefire remains fragile, making immediate and sustained Council attention to the implementation of the Gaza peace plan essential.

In this regard, the Philippines wishes to underscore the following.

First, humanitarian conditions in Gaza remain critical. While access has marginally improved, civilians continue to face severe food insecurity, widespread displacement and the collapse of essential services, further aggravated by winter conditions. Free, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access must be ensured without delay. In this connection, owing to recent developments in East Jerusalem, we are deeply concerned over the ability of the United Nations to provide the humanitarian assistance so urgently needed by the Palestinian people, especially in Gaza.

Secondly, the Philippines welcomes resolution 2803 (2025) on the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict. We note that the resolution calls upon Member States and international organizations to work with the Board of Peace to identify opportunities to support the reconstruction of Gaza and for the World Bank and other financial institutions to facilitate and provide financial resources to support the reconstruction and development of Gaza, including through the establishment of a dedicated trust fund.

Thirdly, stabilization and reconstruction should lead to a long-term and credible political horizon. The Philippines thus reaffirms its support for the two-State solution as the only viable and lasting path to peace. We support renewed diplomatic efforts, including the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution and the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, to advance lasting peace in the Middle East.

As a committed partner, pathfinder and peacemaker, the Philippines stands ready to work with the Council and other members of the international community to work towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Prabowo (Indonesia): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. We also thank the briefer for the valuable briefing.

Indonesia aligns itself with the statements to be delivered on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the core group of the shared commitments on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Allow me to make the following statement in my national capacity.

Indonesia reiterates its unwavering commitment to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, with the peaceful resolution of the question of Palestine at the centre. While collective support for the peaceful resolution continues to grow, the reality on the ground stands in painful contrast. We deplore ongoing violence in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as it undermines prospects for peace. We all understand that violence will only beget more violence. It is therefore our collective duty to take decisive action to end this catastrophe, ensuring the two States can live side by side, in peace and security, within their own sovereign and independent territories, in accordance with internationally agreed parameters and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

To this end, Indonesia underscores three urgent priorities.

First, any peace plans should aim towards a peaceful, just and lasting solution. The effectiveness of the second phase of the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict must be ensured to bring humanitarian assistance to the ground. In that regard, Indonesia welcomes the establishment of the National Committee for the

Administration of Gaza, and our decision to join the Board of Peace with other countries of the Group of 8 is based on our clear commitment to preserving the two-State solution and continues to be guided by resolution 2803 (2025).

Secondly, the centrality of the Security Council must be preserved. As the custodian of international peace and security, the responsibility to advance and safeguard an effective peace process remains with the Council, which must remain seized of the matter to ensure that all efforts and processes remain anchored in Charter of the United Nations and international law. That requires the Council to assert its leadership through consistent monitoring for compliance and by ensuring that United Nations agencies and United Nations-led humanitarian efforts serve as an integral part of the peace process.

Thirdly, the protection of civilians, the cessation of violence and unimpeded humanitarian access are prerequisites for a credible political horizon. These are not optional; they are legal obligations. We are therefore gravely concerned about the continued attacks on UNRWA, a blatant violation of international law, including the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and the October 2025 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Not ensuring these obligations would deprive millions of civilians of much-needed life-saving assistance.

The Council must be able to move beyond condemnation and rise to its responsibilities to halt all violence and violations of international law in order to generate genuine political momentum and create a just and lasting peace.

Indonesia once again reaffirms its principled position that the entire peace process must lead to ending the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory and achieving the two-State solution. This is the key to lasting peace in the Middle East. The international community must act with unity, resolve and moral clarity to ensure that peace, justice, dignity and humanity prevail.

The President: 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.