



Security Council

Eighty-first year

10146th meeting

Tuesday, 28 April 2026, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Al Zayani/Mr. Alrowaieci	(Bahrain)
<i>Members:</i>	China	Mr. Fu Cong
	Colombia	Mrs. Zalabata Torres
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Mr. Mukongo
	Denmark	Ms. Lassen
	France	Mr. Bonnafont
	Greece	Mrs. Balta
	Latvia	Mr. Viļumsons
	Liberia	Mr. Brown II
	Pakistan	Mr. Ahmad
	Panama	Mr. Moscoso
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Somalia	Mr. Osman
	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 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: I would like to warmly welcome the high-level representatives present in the Security Council Chamber. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Cuba, Egypt, Iceland, India, Iraq, Ireland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, the Federated States of Micronesia, Morocco, Namibia, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Türkiye, Uganda, the United Arab Emirates, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Viet Nam and Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Europe, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations; and Mr. Tony Blair, member of the Executive Board of the Board of Peace.

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. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States; His Excellency Mr. Stavros Lambrinidis, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations; His Excellency Mr. Umar Hadi, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; and His Excellency Mr. Paul Beresford-Hill, Permanent Observer of the Sovereign Order of Malta to the United Nations.

I propose that the Council invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Observer State of Palestine to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Khiari.

Mr. Khiari: I am briefing the Security Council today at a moment of profound regional tension and instability, which are impacting the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of millions across the region and beyond.

The tensions and hostilities that have upended the Middle East over the past weeks have shifted attention from the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Away from the spotlight, the situation in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is steadily worsening. The population in Gaza faces ongoing and deadly Israeli strikes and dire humanitarian conditions, while in the West Bank, violence, including rampant settler violence, displacement and accelerating settlement activity are threatening entire communities and further eroding the prospects for a political process that will resolve the conflict on the basis of a viable two-State solution.

In Gaza, the ceasefire is increasingly fragile as Israeli strikes and armed activities by Hamas and other groups continue. While diplomatic efforts are ongoing with the goal

of consolidating the ceasefire and implementing the second phase of President Donald J. Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2803 (2025), talks on the disarmament of Hamas and other armed groups have thus far not resulted in an agreement, raising concerns about the potential return to widespread hostilities.

Civilians continue to bear the brunt of the ongoing violence. According to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, since the ceasefire began, approximately 800 Palestinians, including more than 200 children, and seven humanitarian personnel, have been killed as a result of Israeli airstrikes, shelling and gunfire. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has stated that its strikes have targeted Hamas militants and facilities.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian needs on the ground remain overwhelming. Some 1.8 million people — nearly the entire population of Gaza — are displaced and living in internally displaced persons camps, and are dependent on aid amid ongoing hostilities, devastated infrastructure and rising public health risks. While some improvements in access and aid delivery have been observed in recent weeks, unpredictable access, limited operational crossings and restrictions on critical humanitarian items designated as “dual-use” items by Israel continue to constrain the United Nations response. Food security remains a challenge, while essential services, in particular water, sanitation and healthcare, are again on the brink of collapse.

Plans must be advanced urgently, not only for humanitarian aid, but also for early recovery and reconstruction. On 20 April, the United Nations and the European Union released the final Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment, conducted jointly with the World Bank. According to the Assessment, recovery and reconstruction needs in Gaza are estimated at \$71.4 billion over the next decade, including \$26.3 billion required in the first 18 months to restore essential services, rebuild critical infrastructure and support economic recovery.

To begin addressing the staggering needs across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the United Nations has recently launched the Horizon Fund, co-chaired by Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa and Deputy Special Coordinator Ramiz Alakbarov. This Fund will enable the United Nations to implement early recovery planning across the entire Occupied Palestinian Territory in line with United Nations resolutions and international law. We deeply appreciate Member States' contributions to the Fund to date. In order to advance recovery, the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza must be allowed to fulfil its governance and administrative roles, as outlined in resolution 2803 (2025), in coordination with the Palestinian Authority, while the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan are implemented in full. These include the disarmament of Hamas and all other armed groups in Gaza, Israel's withdrawal from the Strip and the deployment of the International Stabilization Force.

Turning to the West Bank, between 14 March and 16 April, the Israeli authorities advanced plans for 1,080 housing units in the West Bank, including 680 in several settlements in Area C and a plan for 400 housing units in East Jerusalem. On 25 March, the Israeli Cabinet approved 34 settlements across Area C. These include new settlements and the regularization of existing outposts and neighbourhoods of existing settlements, representing the most extensive such approval to date in a single Cabinet decision. During the reporting period, 21 Palestinians, including 6 children, were killed by Israeli forces or settlers in the West Bank, and 310, including 45 children, were injured. According to Israeli sources, 1 Israeli was killed and 11 injured, including 1 woman, in Palestinian attacks against Israelis.

The frequency and severity of settler attacks continue to increase. Entire Palestinian communities are now routinely facing lethal violence, vandalism and harassment, often in the presence of Israeli soldiers or with their participation. I note

recent expressions of concern by some Israeli officials regarding settler violence and call on the authorities to take immediate action to stop the violence. The situation in northern West Bank refugee camps remains alarming. Israeli military operations and access restrictions have led to the prolonged displacement of more than 33,000 residents from Jenin, Tulkarm and Nur Shams refugee camps. These camps remain largely empty, marking the largest and longest displacement crisis in the West Bank in decades.

Economic conditions across the West Bank also continue to deteriorate. Rising costs, limited access to employment and movement restrictions are undermining livelihoods and increasing reliance on humanitarian assistance. The Palestinian Authority faces an existential fiscal crisis that threatens the institutional foundations of a future independent Palestinian State. Nine months of withheld clearance revenues, public debt exceeding \$14 billion and mounting pressures on correspondent banking arrangements leave the Palestinian Authority without the fiscal tools required to sustain itself.

On a positive note, on 25 April, Palestinians seized an important opportunity to exercise their democratic rights by participating in local elections in most of the West Bank and in Dayr al-Balah in the Gaza Strip. The United Nations commends the Palestinian Central Elections Commission for its credible administration of the electoral process given the significant challenges present in the West Bank and the extraordinarily difficult conditions prevailing in Gaza. The United Nations remains committed to supporting and strengthening Palestinian institutions and promoting democratic governance.

Turning to the region, the United Nations welcomes the three-week extension of the cessation of hostilities between Israel and Lebanon and the ongoing talks facilitated by the United States. We remain ready to support these efforts and continue to urge the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) towards a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution to the conflict. On the ground, the situation remains extremely fragile amid ongoing violence, with continued strikes by Hizbullah and Israel, violations of Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the possession of weapons outside Lebanese State authority. We urge all actors to exercise maximum restraint, fully respect the cessation of hostilities and comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, at all times. There is no military solution to this conflict. Diplomacy is the path towards sustainable peace.

Six peacekeepers — four Indonesian and two French — serving with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon have been killed since 2 March, with several more injured. We reiterate our strong condemnation of all attacks on peacekeepers and extend our deepest condolences to their family and friends, as well as to the Governments and people of Indonesia and France. Attacks on peacekeepers are unacceptable and must be promptly investigated, and those responsible must be held accountable. The safety and security of United Nations personnel and the inviolability of United Nations property must be respected by all. On the Golan, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) remained on the Bravo side and currently maintain 11 positions — 8 in the area of separation and 3 in the area of limitation in the vicinity of the Bravo line. The IDF continues to carry out operations on the Bravo side, including night search operations in villages and in some cases detaining civilians. Some of the civilians were released following interrogations by the Israel Defense Forces, while others remain in detention in Israel.

Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains central to achieving durable peace in the region, as it continues to fuel instability across the Middle East. The meetings on 20 April of the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution and of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC) underscored the ongoing commitment of the international community to preserving what has been built over the past decades,

identifying and reversing the deeply destructive current trends on the ground and finding ways to translate political will into concrete policy steps on the ground, backed by financial commitments. Despite the current challenges, and as also emphasized in the Global Alliance and AHLC meetings, there is no alternative to a political solution. A political framework that clearly advances the parties towards an end to the occupation and the achievement of a viable two-State solution is essential both to sustainably addressing the urgent needs on the ground and to achieving a just and lasting peace. The United Nations remains committed to supporting all efforts towards this goal.

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

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Espen Barth Eide, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway and representative of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians.

Mr. Eide (Norway): I would like to thank the Security Council and its presidency, the Kingdom of Bahrain, for allowing me to brief the Council today in my capacity as Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC). I particularly thank you, Mr. President, for presiding over this meeting and for inviting me.

Ever since the AHLC was established in 1993, the Committee has brought together the parties to the conflict, the key donor countries and those international organizations with expertise in the Palestinian economy. Its ultimate aim is to achieve self-determination for the Palestinian people within a two-State solution, with security and dignity for Israelis and Palestinians alike. The AHLC met again last week on Monday 20 April. I believe that the meeting led to some positive developments, which I am very pleased to share with the Council.

Resolution 2803 (2025), adopted by the Council on 18 November 2025, endorsed President Trump's 20-point Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict and create a credible pathway to Palestinian statehood. The peace plan offered new dynamics. The ceasefire in Gaza significantly reduced civilian casualties after years of suffering. Living and deceased hostages were finally returned home to Israel. The resolution also authorized a new transitional institutional architecture. It is vital that we do not lose this important momentum. Last week, the AHLC brought together key stakeholders, first and foremost Palestine, represented by their Prime Minister, His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Mustafa, but also the Board of Peace as a special guest, for an important conversation in Brussels. The meeting was co-hosted with the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Kaja Kallas. On our agenda was the question of how to implement the 20-point plan and how to improve the situation on the ground in Palestine. One objective of last week's meeting was to establish a clear link between the new, temporary structures established under resolution 2803 (2025) and the pre-existing, already established structures. This, in turn, should help consolidate alignment around unified coordination mechanisms. This is essential in order to speed up implementation on the ground, to mobilize donors for early recovery in Gaza, which is so urgently needed, and also to safeguard the economy in the West Bank.

Resolution 2803 (2025) welcomed the establishment of the Board of Peace in Gaza. While some States have joined the Board of Peace, other States, like my own, have chosen not to join. Still, we are convinced that we need to work together to implement this critical resolution that we all support. I would like to commend the United States for its essential role in reaching the ceasefire in October 2025. Continued, strong United States engagement is key in order to move forward.

As highlighted in the AHLC meeting held last week, Hamas' weapons must be decommissioned. This is essential for the plan to work. But this, again, must happen in

a context. The mediators' efforts must be supported, so that full recovery and the aspirations of the Palestinians can move forward.

Coordinated donor support is critical to humanitarian relief, recovery and reconstruction in Gaza. The AHLC aims to consolidate such efforts and to gather all stakeholders in the same room in order to pursue these common goals. The dedicated liaison committee between the Palestinian Authority and the Board of Peace institutions and the meeting between the Palestinian Prime Minister and the Board of Peace High Representative for Gaza held in the margins of the AHLC are important examples of the coordination urgently needed. The rapid damage and needs assessment that was already referred to was jointly undertaken by the World Bank, the United Nations and the European Union and published on the day of the AHLC meeting. This document constitutes an important basis for recovery and reconstruction efforts. In line with the report and Palestinian plans, donors should scale up assistance through the World Bank instruments, the United Nations multi-donor trust fund Horizon and other mechanisms for humanitarian support.

Civilians in Palestine, both in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, continue to suffer. The Palestinian economy remains severely constrained, notably by Israeli access and movement restrictions, fiscal challenges, limited Palestinian control over natural resources and a weakened private sector. There is deep concern among AHLC members about growing risks of systemic collapse of the Palestinian institutions and their economy, with ensuing risks to basic public service provision and potential public security implications.

Palestinian hospitals, schools, courts, police may stop functioning; banks may be at risk. This situation is also jeopardizing the pathway to Palestinian self-determination and independent statehood, long-standing and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. While improving economic prospects will require long-term structural change and a comprehensive political solution, it will be crucial in the short term to scale-up immediate financial support to the Palestinian institutions built over decades with donor support.

At our meeting last week, members of the AHLC acknowledged the Palestinian Authority's progress in advancing important reforms under challenging circumstances. They encouraged continued efforts on this path.

Resolution 2803 (2025) was an innovative resolution that established new transitional structures in Gaza. It has taken some time to integrate these new structures with the pre-existing structures for assistance and development. At the AHLC meeting, we came a long way in committing donors to a coherent, coordinated and consolidated effort towards our shared objective of improving conditions on the ground, however, further action is required.

As Chair of the AHLC, I call on Hamas to decommission its weapons without delay. The 20-point plan hinges on this essential piece. It must be a sequential process with steps, including guarantees, monitoring mechanisms, an overarching security architecture and confidence-building measures.

I call on the Government of Palestine to continue its reform efforts, including to prepare for its resumption of governance in Gaza, in line with the 20-point plan and resolution 2803 (2025).

I call on the Government of Israel to lift restrictions on access and movement, to ensure continued flow of clearance revenues in full, to lift the cap on repatriation of physical shekels and secure corresponding banking relations, to reverse the expansion of settlements, address settler violence and hold perpetrators accountable. Israel must furthermore allow for the unimpeded delivery and sustained distribution of

humanitarian aid at scale throughout Gaza, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

As for the international community, it should increase assistance at scale and in a timely fashion to the Palestinian people, including budget support and direct assistance to strengthen the Palestinian Authority and enable its reform efforts at a critical moment in time.

All parties and States Members of the United Nations should support the implementation of the 20-point peace plan and resolution 2803 (2025), including through financial support through World Bank financing instruments and through the United Nations.

We should also welcome and support the procedures agreed between the Palestinian Authority and the transitional Board of Peace institutions. And I want to highlight this, it was made crystal clear by all parties at the meeting in Brussels last week that the transitional arrangements are indeed that, transitional and administrative, and that there is only one recognized Government in Palestine. I left the meeting convinced that this important clarification would help facilitate better two-way cooperation between the Palestinian Authority and the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza.

The purpose of resolution 2803 (2025) adopted by the Council is to ensure that the ceasefire and President Trump's 20-point plan is implemented, for all people in the region to finally live in peace. It is the duty of all of us to do our utmost to support the parties in this endeavour and, step by step, lay the groundwork for a better future.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Blair.

Mr. Blair: It is my honour to give the Council an update on Gaza following the briefing given by High Representative Nickolay Mladenov in March (see S/PV.10125). When Mr. Mladenov spoke to the Council, he vividly described the horrors of the 7 October 2023 attack on Israel and the devastation in Gaza following the conflict. I adopt that description and do not need to repeat it. Instead, I shall focus on Gaza as it is now and where we stand with the implementation of President Donald J. Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, endorsed in resolution 2803 (2025).

The situation in Gaza remains precarious. The war has stopped, violence has fallen dramatically, but ceasefire violations continue. Food assistance has improved. The Rafah crossing is partially open, particularly for medical evacuations. More truckloads of humanitarian aid and commercial goods are entering Gaza to address basic needs. But much more must be done to improve shelter, health, water and sanitation. Life remains desperate for many. In one half of Gaza are the people and Hamas, in the other the Israeli Defense Forces.

The hope resides in the substantial progress made in the implementation of the President's Plan, including the formation of the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza; the International Stabilization Force, which has completed its predeployment assessment mission; and in funding for Gaza, with now over \$7 billion of firm pledges.

The recent AHLC meeting, as we have just heard, showed the breadth of support for Gaza and its people. The critical demilitarization talks with Hamas are continuing, led with immense effort by the mediators Egypt, Qatar and Türkiye, together with the High Representative and representatives of the Board of Peace.

We have reached a pivotal juncture. I urge Council members to continue to provide clear and consistent political support for the implementation of the 20-point plan and to mobilize financial contributions for the humanitarian response and recovery in Gaza

through the United Nations and the World Bank, in full coordination with the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, backed by the Board of Peace.

The reason President Trump's peace plan succeeded in bringing the war in Gaza to an end was that it was based on a strategically coherent framework. It was clear after 7 October that Israel would never tolerate a situation in which the organization responsible would continue in power and clear also that a perpetual cycle of conflict would destroy any possibility of a decent future for Gaza's people.

This was the worst, but not the first, Gaza conflict. On previous occasions, they ended not in a solution but effectively in a series of truces. This time, the scale of destruction and the determination of President Trump led us to propose something fundamentally different, harder and more ambitious, which if done, will endure because it deals with the roots and not the manifestation of the issue.

This United States Administration, in my view, has understood two very crucial things. Not just that Israel is entitled to protect its security, but that it will protect its security. Therefore, there will be no peace in Gaza unless the threat that it will be used as a launching pad for violence against Israel is ended; and the people of Gaza cannot prosper if pinned between the Israel Defense Forces, on the one side, and Hamas, on the other.

The President's Plan has three elements to it.

First, Hamas, as presently constituted, can have no role in governing Gaza — not directly running the government in Gaza or indirectly by retaining their weapons and therefore their power. Were Hamas to change, to agree that the goal of a Palestinian State should be pursued through political negotiation and that such a State should live in peace with the State of Israel, it would be free to engage with the politics of Gaza, as with any other party that accepts these internationally agreed principles. But until it does so, it cannot. It follows from this that Hamas and every other armed group in Gaza should disarm and decommission weapons as part of a Palestinian-led process with monitored and verified implementation. The new government of Gaza should be the sole legitimate authority with arms. This is expressly set out in the demilitarization part of resolution 2803 (2025).

Secondly, equally important but often overlooked: the plan also provides that if disarmament occurs, the network of restrictions on people and goods entering and leaving Gaza — in other words, what has made daily life in Gaza so difficult and Gaza's economic future so constrained — loses its rationale and should and will be lifted. This is a huge prize for the people of Gaza. Plans for reconstruction being worked on by the Board of Peace, the Office of the High Representative for Gaza and the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza are based on this premise: Gaza not rebuilt, but reimagined, with a port, the free movement of people and goods, proper infrastructure, new housing and fully able to access the digital economy.

Thirdly, because trust is so low and scepticism is so high, we need a transitional period where international support is necessary to help Gaza on its feet and disarmament to happen in a manner that Israel will accept. That is why we established the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, an apolitical transitional governing body of respected Palestinians with the highly capable Mr. Ali Shaath as its head; the Office of the High Representative for Gaza under the excellent leadership of Nickolay Mladenov, who also liaises with the Palestinian Authority; the International Stabilization Force to give credibility to the new security arrangements and the new civil police force; and oversight from the Board of Peace, which under American leadership binds together the key countries of the region, along with many others.

We need Hamas to agree with the process of demilitarization of Gaza and to abide by its terms. And we need Israel to abide by its obligations under that same process. Once there is agreement, that will unlock immediately vital progress for the people of Gaza: additional humanitarian aid and material; new medical facilities; greater freedom at the crossings, including Rafah; the staged withdrawal of Israeli forces; and the entry into Gaza of the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza. On completion of the process, there will be the full withdrawal of Israeli forces in accordance with the terms of the process and freedom for Gaza's people.

Resolution 2803 (2025) also references a political horizon — a time when a reformed Palestinian Authority resumes control of both Gaza and the West Bank, and the possibility of a pathway to a Palestinian State. For many, adherence to the notion of two States is an article of faith. But truthfully, for obvious reasons, many Israelis and Palestinians have given up believing it. As I learned in Northern Ireland, after years of bloodshed, people come to disbelieve. There is zero trust. Those who try to make peace are considered naive. But so is the notion of total victory.

In the 25 years that I have been involved in this issue, in many different guises, the population of Israel has risen by over 50 per cent and that of the Palestinians by over 70 per cent. Neither people is going anywhere; the State of Israel will remain and so will the Palestinian people. Our task is to help the Parties to create the conditions for peaceful coexistence. That is why we devised this Plan for Gaza. If implemented, its people can be prosperous and Israel secure. It is why we also need to address the urgent situation in the West Bank, so that Palestinians there can share in that prosperity and peace.

If Israel is no longer under threat, there is no reason to deny the Palestinian people self-government. If the Palestinians know that this is an attainable objective dependent on their own efforts, there is every reason to pursue that objective peacefully. Gaza is the test, for all of us, whether we repeat the history or change it.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Varsen Aghabekian, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Observer State of Palestine.

Ms. Aghabekian (State of Palestine): Allow me, at the outset, to express our appreciation for your decision, Mr. President, to convene this meeting at the ministerial level and to preside over it. I also wish to express our full solidarity with your country and people and the other Arab countries confronted with outrageous attacks against their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Allow me also to express our appreciation to Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Europe, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific; Mr. Espen Barth Eide, Foreign Minister of Norway and Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians; and Mr. Tony Blair, member of the Executive Board of the Board of Peace, for their briefings and efforts.

In a devastated Gaza, while many lives were saved by the ceasefire, the suffering continues. We have welcomed the peace efforts undertaken by President Trump, together with those of the other mediators, Egypt, Qatar and Türkiye, which secured a ceasefire agreement that must be fully upheld. The situation of the Palestinian civilian population must be a top priority in this regard.

The killing of Palestinians, including children, by Israel must stop. There is no justification for the delays by Israel in allowing shelter in, or the restrictions on aid and humanitarian access. The spread of rodents and diseases, the vulnerability of communities to adverse weather, the delays in restoration of basic services and recovery, and the human and humanitarian consequences of this man-made reality demand

immediate attention and response. We reiterate the need for coordinated efforts to address this situation and have established a liaison committee with the Board of Peace for that purpose.

We welcome the convening of two important international meetings in Brussels: the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, led by Saudi Arabia, Norway and the European Union, and the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, chaired by Norway and co-sponsored by the European Union and the United States. Both meetings highlight the understanding of the international community that Palestine must remain a priority. It is imperative for this resolve to be translated into transformative action.

As we embark on phase two of the ceasefire, we reiterate our vision of one State, one Government, one law and one gun, and the need for full Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Gaza is an integral part of Palestine, and transitional arrangements must be conducive to the reunification of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip under the Palestinian Authority, as foreseen by the Council, leading to Palestinian self-determination and independent statehood.

After so much death, destruction, displacement and devastation, it is time for life, healing, recovery and reconstruction. It is essential not to derail these efforts by pursuing policies that President Trump's plan rejected: forcible displacement and annexation. It is clear that Israel still pursues these objectives, not only in Gaza, but also in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Annexation is prohibited under the Charter of the United Nations and under peremptory norms of international law. It is a crime against peace, and it is rejected by the world and by President Trump himself. The Council, the General Assembly and the International Court of Justice have all condemned annexation. Yet annexation is under way — in legislation, in policies and in measures — in full defiance of the law and of the will of the international community. It destroys Palestinian communities and the prospects for peace.

Israel has further escalated its military incursions, settlement expansion, settler terrorism, mass arbitrary arrests and abuse against prisoners, including through the death penalty law, as well as its severe restrictions on movement and the demolition of homes, fragmenting the land and isolating and uprooting communities by the tens of thousands. In parallel, the Israeli Government seeks the collapse of the Palestinian Authority. It considers chaos in the West Bank, like destruction in Gaza, as a means to force people to leave by creating impossible conditions of life. In this context, Israel's withholding of our tax revenues is not merely a financial matter. It is an existential threat against Palestinian institutions and the people they serve. It further undermines our people's right to education, health, water, safety and much more, and it is a matter of international peace and security, deserving the immediate attention and action of the Council.

In 2019, settlers shot and killed 38-year-old Hamdi al-Na'san, a father and a husband. A few days ago, in an attack by Israeli soldiers and settlers near a school in Mughayyir, Aws al-Na'san, the 14-year-old son of Hamdi, was himself shot dead — a father and a son killed a few years apart, victims of the same violence. The world condemned settler terrorism then and condemned it again now. But our communities, our people and our children were never afforded the protection they deserve, are entitled to and desperately need. The situation today is extremely alarming, as settlers terrorize Palestinians on a daily basis. This has to stop immediately.

In the Council, security is often mentioned when it comes to the Middle East, but it rarely refers to the blatant and prolonged insecurity that the Palestinian people endure. Our response to this devastating reality could have been paralysis, rejectionism or violence. We chose a different path: to reaffirm our commitment to liberation by

peaceful means and our unequivocal rejection of violence and condemnation of all attacks against civilians, whether Palestinian or Israeli.

We have engaged positively with regional and international efforts that led to the adoption of the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution. We have welcomed President Donald J. Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict and are working constructively with the United States Administration. We have embarked on reforms and advanced them in impossible circumstances, where, instead of being empowered to pursue them, we are being undermined. Two days ago, we organized local elections, including in Dayr al-Balah in Gaza, as part of our efforts to exercise our democratic life. Help us demonstrate to the Palestinian people that the peaceful path does lead to freedom, peace and prosperity.

The Israeli Foreign Minister sat around this table a couple of months ago to defend illegal Israeli settlements (see S/PV.10108), claiming that Palestinians building on their own land was illegal. He negated the very existence of Palestine, claiming that it was a pure invention, when our existence is undeniable. He added that, since there is no Palestine, how could its land be occupied? He should ask his occupation forces, his military courts, his bulldozers and his armed settlers whose land they are stealing, whose lives they are shattering, if not Palestinian land and Palestinian lives.

I came to you from the Holy Land. Every square metre is filled with history and spirituality. All monotheistic religions — Judaism, Christianity and Islam — have a deep connection to this land. The Israeli Foreign Minister fell short in his explanation, as he stressed only one connection, espousing exclusivity.

Let me remind Council members: this is also the birthplace of Christianity, where Jesus was born, lived, preached, was crucified and was resurrected. This is the land where the Aqsa Mosque, the first of the two kiblans, stands in the heart of Jerusalem, the city from which the Prophet Muhammad ascended to the heavens. Diversity is this land's destiny. It is a blessing, not a curse. There is no space here for exclusivity, monopoly or supremacy. When Israel claims respect for this diversity, it should question its commanders who order the bombing of churches and mosques; its soldiers who deny the celebration of Palm Sunday or who attack pilgrims on Holy Saturday or during Ramadan; its ministers who perform Talmudic rituals at Haram al-Sharif; and Israeli Administrations breaching the historic status quo, which has been essential for the peaceful coexistence of people of all faiths in Jerusalem, in the Holy Land, and transcending them across the globe.

This is not a religious conflict. And the outrageous claim that the persecution of Palestinians is justified by a so-called war between the Judeo-Christian civilization against Islamic barbarism should be rejected by all. This narrative aims to make this conflict impossible to resolve and irresponsibly inflames tensions among communities across the globe. For us Palestinians, regardless of our faith, this conflict is about the negation of our rights and of our existence in our ancestral land. It will end with the end of the occupation and the recognition of our rights and the independence of our State. The two-State solution, based on international legitimacy, is the only way forward.

We will not achieve a brighter and more secure future by negating each other's existence, by inflaming historical and religious claims or by trying to justify monopoly and supremacy on a land whose history and geography have defined it as a land of pluralism and diversity. This is a dead end. How many more people have to die for all of us to choose another path? That path exists. It is within reach, if we finally make the right choices. It means a world in which Palestine and its people are free, and in which Palestinians and Israelis live side-by-side in security — a world in which two States, Israel and Palestine, are at peace. That peace is possible only among equals, not between

oppressor and oppressed, occupier and occupied or dominant and subjugated. It will not be achieved through more violence, more dehumanization or more wars. It must be based on mutual recognition, on justice rather than vengeance, on a vision for the future rather than a perpetuation of the evils of the past, and on a shared humanity in which we are all endowed with the same rights, and every life is sacred. Peace and the unleashing of the potential of the peoples in our region are long overdue.

Let me end by recalling that the Ketuvim says, “Seek peace and pursue it”; the Qur'an says, “O mankind, we created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may know one another”; and the Bible says, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God”. Blessed are the peacemakers who can finally reconcile this land with its true name and purpose — a land of peace and a beacon for the world.

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

Mr. Danon (Israel): First, I would like to thank the today's briefers for their briefings.

For more than two years since 7 October 2023, Israel has been fighting a war that was forced upon us, a war for our survival across multiple fronts — against Hamas in Gaza, Hizbullah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, Iranian-backed militias across the region and, above them all, the head of the snake, Iran. This was not spontaneous. It was a planned strategy with a single goal — the destruction of Israel — built over years through proxies, weapons and a growing missile programme. It is the kind of threat that the international system was not designed to confront. The Security Council must understand our reality.

Let me begin with Iran. We support the United States' objective to bring a real end to Iran's military nuclear programme and its support for terrorist proxies and to restrict its ballistic-missile capabilities. Iran must understand that it has no leverage. The choice is simple: comply or face the consequences. Iran has refused to comply and is instead trying to exert pressure and exploit the global economy. What we are witnessing in the Strait of Hormuz is a direct assault on international law: commercial vessels are being threatened, navigation is being obstructed and safe passage is no longer guaranteed.

Freedom of navigation is not optional; it is a legal right. Yet now we hear it openly: an Iranian lawmaker confirmed that Iran is charging ships to pass through the Strait. Let us be clear: it is not regulation, as they say. That is not security; it is piracy. It is not committed by rogue actors or isolated criminals, but by a State actor using fear to control a global waterway — a toll exacted through intimidation and a signal to the world that lawful passage can be turned on and off at will. I therefore ask the representative of Iran, Mr. Iravani, if he sees himself as a captain of those waters and if he is playing Captain Hook and demanding payment for passage. Stopping ships and charging for passage is not authority. It is piracy — piracy 2026.

While much of the world is focused on Iran, Israel is still confronting its proxies, including Hamas in Gaza.

A framework was put on the table. We heard Mr. Blair. Last month, we were all briefed here by Mr. Nickolay Mladenov (see S/PV.10125). Hamas responded in the same way it always does: with rejection, delay and excuses. Israel, meanwhile, is implementing its side of the deal: all major crossings are open; every day more than 600 trucks of aid enter Gaza. Since the ceasefire began, we have facilitated the entry of 1.5 million tons of food into Gaza. In the past week alone, more than 60,000 kilograms of food were delivered, more than 700,000 litres of fuel were transferred, thousands of vaccines were delivered to children at Rafah, and 150 patients crossed daily for treatment.

While the world is fixated on Israel, the cruelty of Hamas is being ignored. No one has mentioned it here. Just last week, the United Kingdom's *Daily Mail* reported that Gazans living under Hamas rule were beginning to break their silence. They described sexual violence by Hamas terrorists, blackmail for aid or money and abuse by those in positions of power. In one account, a Gazan man described a woman in his neighbourhood who had been blackmailed by "one of Hamas' charity organizations". They wanted her to sell herself in exchange for a food parcel or an aid voucher. That is what life looks like under Hamas. Additional *Daily Mail* reporting says that young boys in Gaza have been raped and that Hamas uses rape as a tactic to recruit and control them through fear and blackmail. Families describe being too afraid to speak for fear of Hamas' violence and targeting.

While this is happening, Hamas is doing what it always does — rejecting Gaza's disarmament plan, delaying, refusing to disarm, slowly but surely tightening its grip on the areas it controls in Gaza and exploiting vulnerable Gazans. And yet, where is the outrage? Where are the investigations? Where are the headlines? We all remember the campaign "All eyes on Rafah". Where are the eyes on Gaza now? Where are all the human rights organizations? When it comes to Hamas, there is silence. However, when Israel is falsely accused, there is outrage by default.

Some of our briefers today have mentioned the situation in Judea and Samaria, and I am sure that we will hear from my colleagues about it shortly. Israel condemns all violence against both Israeli and Palestinian civilians. When extremists act, we act. We have implemented the new Government's directive on combating nationalist crimes in Judea and Samaria. That includes strengthening our operational presence on the ground, enhancing technological supervision tools to monitor and enforce restrictions, and improving reporting mechanisms to expand access and accountability. Those are real actions, not just words. A dedicated police task force is now operating on the ground with expanded powers and resources.

Yet, to understand the situation, one must look at the full picture, not just at one side of the equation. Extremist violence by Israelis exists, but it is significantly smaller in scale compared to the scale of attacks carried out by Palestinian terrorists in Judea and Samaria. Yet that is not how the issue is presented. How many times have we heard the term "settler violence" in the Security Council? It is used as a blanket label. It suggests that an entire community is defined by violence. That is simply not true. More than half a million Israelis live in Judea and Samaria. They go to work. They send their children to school. They volunteer and contribute positively to society. They are decent, law-abiding, peaceful people.

A tiny number of extremists — dozens, not even hundreds — have engaged in criminal activity. They are condemned. They are investigated. They are indicted. They are convicted. But instead of being treated as individual criminals, their actions are used to define an entire population. This is a double standard. When Israelis are involved in criminal activity, people use a collective label "settler violence" for all of them. However, when Palestinian radicals — not all Palestinians — carry out attacks, the language becomes individual, specific and limited only to those responsible. No one generalizes the behaviour to an entire population. That is distortion. That is hypocrisy.

In relation to Lebanon, we hear many statements from the Council, many calls for calm, for a ceasefire, for peace. But one word is often missing. In the statements, too — I saw some draft statements about declarations the Council wants to present later this week — but it forgot to mention one word: Hizbullah. No one is mentioning Hizbullah. Just days ago, the Secretary-General put out a statement:

"I strongly condemn Saturday's attack on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon during which one French peacekeeper was killed and

another three were injured ... These attacks must stop. All actors must respect the cessation of hostilities and the ceasefire”.

All actors, he says? All actors? How can he speak about all actors without naming the terrorist group responsible? How can he condemn an attack and refuse to say who carried it out? Because if he cannot name Hizbullah, he cannot confront Hizbullah. And if one cannot confront Hizbullah, one is not addressing the reality on the ground.

Hizbullah is not just set on Israel's destruction. It is Lebanon's greatest obstacle to sovereignty. It has weakened the Lebanese Government. It has launched approximately 10,000 rockets, missiles and drones at Israeli civilians since 2 March 2026. It is a global criminal network that funds itself through illicit activity — drug activity all across Europe. The European Union has taken the right step of designation. But now every European country must follow through and enforce it in practice.

Israel prefers diplomacy. We have entered direct negotiations with Lebanon for the first time in decades. We are grateful to the United States for advancing these talks. But diplomacy cannot exist in a vacuum. While we negotiate, Hizbullah continues to fire at our civilians. As long as that continues, Israel will act to defend its people. Israel, like every country here, wants to see a stable, sovereign Lebanon. We are ready to work with the Lebanese Government. We want to see a Lebanese Government capable of enforcing its authority with proper resources. But the Council's support to Lebanon must be conditioned on performance and results, not just declarations. Ask the Government to prove that it is actually asserting control. Define the benchmarks, demand evidence, track the results. Make the Council's support conditional on delivery, because without accountability, there are no results. Without results, there is no stability.

Ask the Government the hard questions. Ask it how many Hizbullah weapons it has seized. Ask the Government what tunnels it has destroyed. Ask if it has stopped weapons-smuggling from Iran across the Syrian border. Ask it why the Lebanese Armed Forces still not fully deployed in the south. Ask it why the Iranian ambassador is still in Beirut. We spoke about this last month. Ask the Government the hard questions.

Last week, Israel marked 78 years since its establishment — 78 years of independence, 78 years of defending our people, 78 years of confronting threats that continue to evolve. Today that responsibility remains. We are facing a coordinated terrorist threat on multiple fronts. The threat is real; it is immediate, and it is existential. We will continue to act to protect our people and defend our State.

Israel does not want endless wars. We want peace. We want to build. We want to innovate, to work with others in the region. That future is within reach, but it will not happen on its own. The international community must act and stand up to terror and confront it now while it is weakened. What happens next will define what comes after. This is a test: a test of whether the international community can adapt to confront those who reject its rules entirely.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

(spoke in Arabic)

I am pleased to welcome and extend my gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations; His Excellency Mr. Espen Barth Eide, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway and representative of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians; and His Excellency Mr. Tony Blair, member of the Executive Board of the Board of Peace, for their valuable briefings.

I would like to reaffirm the unwavering commitment of the Kingdom of Bahrain, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, to cooperate with the international community in promoting international peace and security and to actively seek a just solution to the Palestinian issue, given its paramount importance to regional stability and lasting peace in the Middle East. Under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, may God protect him, and the directives of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister — may God protect him — we affirm our unwavering support for the legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people and, in particular, their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent and sovereign State along the borders of 4 June 1967 and with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant international resolutions.

In response to the recent developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Kingdom of Bahrain affirms the importance of implementing resolution 2803 (2025) as a binding reference for ending the conflict in the Gaza Strip, consolidating the ceasefire and establishing the Board of Peace. The participation of His Majesty the King in the inaugural Board of Peace meeting held in Washington and chaired by His Excellency President Donald Trump embodied a number of humanitarian and diplomatic messages. Among the most notable was the contribution of the Kingdom of Bahrain, as a member of the Council, to facilitating the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, in affirmation of its commitment to dialogue, diplomacy, the peaceful resolution of disputes and support for the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. That was also embodied in His Majesty's initiatives as Chair of the thirty-third Summit of the League of Arab States in support of peace and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, as well as in the provision of health and education assistance to those affected by conflicts. The Kingdom takes pride in its strategic partnerships with regional partners and the States of the region.

Achieving stability and peaceful coexistence in the Middle East requires respect for the legal and historical status quo in the city of Jerusalem, the maintenance of religious holy sites, support for the role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as custodian of the Islamic and Christian holy places, and support for the Al-Quds Committee, chaired by His Majesty the King of the Kingdom of Morocco. We must categorically reject any attempts at forcible displacement or alteration of demographic makeup, put a stop to the illegal settlement expansion in the West Bank and prohibit any illegal measures or provocative practices aimed at undermining the chances of peace or fuelling hatred and extremism.

In a related context, the Kingdom of Bahrain believes that lasting regional peace requires addressing all sources of tension, escalation and conflict in the region. That includes resolving the Iranian crisis through genuine and constructive dialogue that will guarantee Iran's compliance with the principles of good neighbourliness; implementation of international law; respect for the sovereignty of States; non-interference in their internal affairs; freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz and other vital waterways; an end to Iran's nuclear, missile and drone programmes; the non-funding of proxies and armed militias; and a rejection of unjustified attacks violating the sovereignty of the member States of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, in line with resolution 2817 (2026), with a view to reaching a comprehensive settlement that promotes security, stability and prosperity for all the States of the region.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms, at this critical time, the urgent need for the international community to shift from crisis management to finding solutions, giving priority to wisdom, dialogue and diplomacy to achieve a just and

comprehensive peace, promote coexistence and tolerance and build a future that is more secure, stable, hopeful and prosperous for all.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Viļumsons (Latvia): I thank the Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Khaled Khiari, for his informative briefing. I also welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway and representative of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, Mr. Espen Barth Eide, and thank him for outlining the international community's continued efforts in Gaza and the West Bank. I also welcome the member of the Executive Board of the Board of Peace, Mr. Tony Blair, to this meeting, and thank him for his valuable contribution.

Over the past two months, the Middle East has fallen into a new wave of violence and reignited threats to international peace and security. Iran's decision to take global navigation and shipping hostage by closing the Strait of Hormuz created a grave and immediate global economic and energy crisis. The consequences of Iran's unprovoked attacks against Arab countries in the region, aided by Russia, are felt worldwide. Iran's belligerent actions are totally unacceptable and must stop, as set out in resolution 2817 (2026). The recent extension of the ceasefire provides a glimmer of hope that diplomatic efforts will provide a lasting solution to the Iranian nuclear issue and the regime's destabilizing activities across the Middle East. We appreciate the mediation efforts of Pakistan and other countries in this regard.

Hizbullah has chosen the interests of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps above the interests of the Lebanese people. It has dragged the civilian population into this conflict, who now bear the severe brunt of this escalation. Lebanon is experiencing massive humanitarian crisis. The Lebanese Government has made steps towards re-establishing State control throughout the whole territory. Continued and increased international support is necessary in this regard. We welcome the Government's decision to ban Hizbullah's military and security activities and encourage further efforts to strengthen the capabilities of the Lebanese Army and internal security forces, in view of implementing resolution 1701 (2006). We reiterate our firm commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. Latvia welcomes the cessation of hostilities and the historic direct talks between Israel and Lebanon, mediated by the United States.

We recall that the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) implements the mandate authorized by the Security Council, and the mission must not be targeted by either side. Latvia condemns in the strongest terms the attacks that have led to the deaths of the UNIFIL peacekeepers of Indonesia and France and have left several peacekeepers severely injured. International humanitarian law is non-negotiable and must be respected in all circumstances. Civilians, medical facilities and civilian objects, such as homes and villages, must be protected. Exercising the right of self-defence must not lead to occupation of the sovereign territory of another country.

At a time when international attention is focused on resolving the conflict in the wider Middle East and Lebanon, we must not lose sight of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Despite the international community's consistent call to stop the unlawful settlement expansion in the West Bank, the establishment of 34 new settlements was recently approved by the Israeli authorities. The spiralling violence is creating immense suffering and increasing security risks for both Palestinians and Israelis. We call on the Israeli authorities to take immediate and effective action to prevent further settler attacks and ensure accountability. We condemn policies and threats of forcible displacement and annexation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and urge Israel to abide by its obligations under international law.

In alignment with the European Union joint statement, we recall that the approval of the death penalty bill by the Israeli Parliament marks a grave regression from Israel's own commitments. We are deeply concerned about the de facto discriminatory character of the bill. We await the judgment of the Supreme Court of Israel and call on the Government not to implement this law, in line with Israel's previous commitments.

In Gaza, a fragile ceasefire holds, awaiting the next steps in implementing the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict put forward by President Trump and endorsed by the resolution 2803 (2025). The tangible restoration of living conditions, including unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance at scale, is urgently needed. Hamas and other non-State armed groups must disarm and relinquish power. We strongly condemn Hamas for rejecting the disarmament plan prepared by Nikolay Mladenov. We look forward to the deployment of the International Stabilization Force and internationally trained Palestinian civil police and to the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Gaza.

Along with the urgent need for early recovery and reconstruction, it is necessary to create a social and political environment conducive to a reunited Palestinian governance. We congratulate the Palestinian Authority for organizing the municipal elections on 25 April, notwithstanding the multiple challenges. We must continue support for the Palestinian Authority's reform agenda and maintain a political perspective that addresses the security concerns and legitimate aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians. We reiterate that a negotiated two-State solution, in accordance with internationally agreed parameters, as defined by Security Council resolutions and the New York Declaration, remains the only viable path to a lasting peace. Latvia is committed to working with the Council members towards this objective.

Mr. Waltz (United States of America): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Foreign Minister Eide for their briefings. We are especially happy to have Mr. Tony Blair here in his capacity as Executive Board member for the Board of Peace. I thank Mr. Blair for his clarity, for shedding some light on a realistic plan forward, as frankly quite the contrast from some of the tired talking points we hear in the Council month after month. So, I thank him for his leadership and clarity. We are very pleased to hear of the strong collaboration with the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee and the Board of Peace and other mechanisms that were established by resolution 2803 (2025) as we all seek to move forward.

I want to be clear that every day matters right now. Every day, we either move closer to a future where Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank live in freedom and prosperity at peace with Israel, or we drift back towards chaos, rockets, hostages and rubble. The American people, President Trump and our partners on the Board of Peace are working every day towards that brighter vision, towards that future.

I want to share with Council members a story or a glimpse, of that future that we saw just last week. Our good friends in the United Arab Emirates helped organize a mass wedding for 300 brides and grooms in Gaza. Twenty thousand people — families, community leaders and young Palestinians — all celebrated in Dayr al-Balah. For just a moment, we witnessed laughter, joy and relative calm. This was no small feat in Gaza. And candidly without the ceasefire enabled by President Trump, without the Board of Peace, without our regional partners stepping up, it would have been unimaginable. It was unimaginable, just months ago, when the entire region was at war.

Those are the normal moments. That is the better life. We want to see more of that in Gaza. But there is one obstacle: Hamas. Hamas must accept that they will not have any role in Gaza, directly or indirectly, through weapons, terrorism and violent intimidation. I think we are all unified in that vision. That also means that Hamas and other terrorist and militant groups must demilitarize. They must irreversibly surrender

their path of terror, their offensive infrastructure, on which they have wasted billions and billions of dollars and supplies. They must move away from the tunnels and weapons production facilities, not try to hide them.

We heard a very realistic and comprehensive plan from High Commissioner Mladenov, who briefed the Council, as we had promised during the negotiations for resolution 2803 (2025) to keep the Council informed. We heard a reasonable plan for demilitarization.

The United States and its partners on the Board of Peace, in consultation with the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, will continue to press Hamas. We will not ease up. We will not look away. And for those here, who state in speech after speech that they are committed to the two-State solution, we have to ask ourselves: will Hamas seek a path of peace and politics, or will Hamas seek a path of terrorism and war? The time is now. Those negotiations are happening right now — today and in the coming week. So, for those with those relationships, now is the time to use them, because that is the obstacle to what we talk about here month after month. Therefore, if we are serious about actually unlocking that path to peace and not having these meetings and passing them on to the next generation, this week is the moment. And I encourage all of Council members to press Hamas to the path of peace. That is it; it is really that simple.

The United States will continue to support the International Stabilization Force as it seeks to enable the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza to create the conditions for governance and stability in Gaza. I want to particularly thank Kazakhstan, Albania, Kosovo, Morocco, Indonesia and others that are committed to stability and are actually putting troops and treasure forward — more than words — for stability in Gaza moving forward. It is their work that will allow the Israel Defense Forces to withdraw from Gaza based on real standards, milestones, time frames and independent international monitors, all of which is laid out in the plan, all governing demilitarization.

But again, Gaza will not be safe, free or prosperous if weapons are shifted from Hamas to one of its look-alike groups, or if weapons are simply shuffled around from one corner of Gaza to another, for radicals to pick up later for yet another cycle of violence. Their weapons of terror must be permanently placed beyond reach.

A decommissioning process supported by an internationally funded buy-back and reintegration programme is on the table. One party stands in the way. We can continue to have these discussions, or we can use every element of diplomatic, economic and other mechanisms that we have in our toolkit to press Hamas to accept what is a reasonable deal for which they signed up.

If we do not get Hamas to disarm — and that means all of us must push it to disarm and follow through on the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict to which they agreed — we may never get this moment back, at least in the foreseeable future. And so, we urge all Member States to join us in supporting this progress, in line with the Council's historic resolution 2803 (2025), which endorsed the Comprehensive Plan, welcomed the establishment of the Board of Peace, paved the way for the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza and authorized the International Stabilization Force.

The task facing the Committee in particular is immense. We welcome the liaison office with the Palestinian Authority. Since the ceasefire, we have delivered significant, concrete improvements to humanitarian access and aid delivery in Gaza. We are pushing every day to make that process better through the Civil-Military Coordination Center, and we are pushing every day to expand it. We know that life in Gaza remains difficult, and uncertainty about the future is high.

But I will state over and over again. We must be honest about what is holding Gaza back — it is Hamas. It is okay for all of my colleagues in the United Nations Secretariat and otherwise to say that out loud, to call that out for what it is.

We have a plan for reconstruction and development in Gaza. There is financing. There are partners ready to build. There is a pathway to peace; there are eased security restrictions; and there is a path to prosperity. The moment Hamas agrees to demilitarize, a new chapter in Gaza's history will be written. It is as simple as that.

Mr. Moscoso (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Panama would like to thank the presidency of the Kingdom of Bahrain for convening this quarterly open debate and the speakers for their detailed briefings, which have highlighted the particularly complex situation facing the Middle East, where tensions persist, escalate and evolve simultaneously, creating an increasingly fragile and volatile environment.

In Gaza, despite the international initiatives launched in recent months, as we have just heard, at least 637,475 school-age children still lack sustained access to in-person education; more than 18,500 patients are critically ill, including 4,000 children requiring medical evacuation; and approximately 81 per cent of structures have been destroyed or damaged.

Panama calls for continuing to guarantee full, sustained and unrestricted humanitarian access; urgently facilitating the medical evacuations necessary to save lives; and making progress on international efforts to alleviate the suffering of the people of Gaza.

Meanwhile, in the West Bank, according to figures presented by the United Nations, in the month of March alone, 21 Palestinians were killed, 306 injured and 521 displaced, adding to the 39,000 people displaced in the recent period, reflecting a steady deterioration of the situation on the ground.

Panama reiterates the need to put an end to the violence, prevent forced displacement and avoid measures that further undermine the conditions necessary for a sustainable political solution.

In Lebanon, since 2 March, the escalation of violence has left thousands dead and injured, in addition to tens of thousands displaced in collective shelters. Furthermore, attacks against healthcare workers have been recorded. We deem such acts unacceptable.

We also reiterate, as we have in the context of all global conflicts, the importance of fully respecting Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, as well as recognizing and supporting the efforts of its legitimate Government, which has emphasized the need for a ceasefire, which has been achieved through the mediation of the United States of America and which has enabled and facilitated channels for dialogue between Lebanon and Israel. We urgently call for the current ceasefire to be extended and consolidated.

Panama rejects the attacks perpetrated against the Blue Helmets in Lebanon. Those attacks have claimed the lives of and caused serious injuries to staff members, who were performing essential tasks in fulfilment of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. We express our sincerest condolences to and solidarity with all affected troop-contributing countries, in particular the French, Indonesian, Ghanaian and Polish contingents. We reiterate that the Blue Helmets must never be the target of attacks, hence the need to ensure their security and the mission's freedom of movement fully, in strict compliance with international law and resolution 1701 (2006).

The situation in Yemen remains alarming. There are millions of people in need of humanitarian assistance, including 2.2 million children under 5 years of age who are in need of treatment for acute malnutrition, in one of the world's most severe humanitarian

crises. Panama reiterates its deep concern about and rejection of Houthi actions aimed at hindering the delivery of humanitarian aid and the detentions of the staff of the United Nations and humanitarian organizations. Such actions contravene international law and exacerbate human suffering.

With regard to Syria, the political transition process remains under way. We therefore underscore the need to spare the country from regional instability and the impact of the conflicts in its immediate environs. Syria must remain in control of its destiny and retain full sovereignty over its entire territory, as it has managed to date. It is therefore key to ensure full respect in the Golan of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces, as an element that is crucial for regional stability. We urge all parties to refrain from actions that could undermine the implementation thereof.

Turning to Iran, the situation in that country is becoming increasingly worrisome. The dangerous escalation in the Strait of Hormuz, characterized by a cycle of attacks and reprisals, has demonstrated just how rapidly tensions can escalate beyond a given theatre, increasing the risk of greater instability and directly affecting multiple States in the region, with global economic consequences. We underscore the restraint shown by Gulf countries, which, despite being the target of attacks, have opted to prevent greater escalation and instead sought to create conditions for restoring regional stability. We reiterate our solidarity with and backing of Gulf countries and other countries that have been the target of unprovoked attacks. We insist that it is urgently necessary to prevent greater escalation and to maintain in place and extend the cessation of hostilities by all parties as the first step that cannot be deferred, towards building trust and holding negotiations that contribute to restoring regional stability and maritime security.

To conclude, Panama reaffirms its support for respect of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States in the region. These are fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the vital basis for stability and peace. The experience of the region has repeatedly shown that there can be no military solution to any of the conflicts under way. Peace and stability cannot be imposed. Rather, they are built upon dialogue, diplomacy and good-faith negotiation as the only viable paths to addressing the root causes and creating genuine conditions for peaceful coexistence. The region requires decisions that put an end to these hostilities, that will make it possible to restore trust and that will once again make it possible for the civilian population, including children, to live in dignified and secure conditions.

Mr. Osman (Somalia): I thank you, Mr. President, and the Kingdom of Bahrain for convening this important and timely quarterly open debate. We also thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his insights and acknowledge the presence of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Norway, Palestine and Latvia in this meeting. We also thank Mr. Tony Blair for his remarks.

We meet at a moment of acute and escalating instability in the Middle East. These consequences are not confined to the region; they are reverberating around the globe, shaking the very foundations of peace, stability and security.

Let me begin with the Occupied Palestinian Territory, because some wounds are too deep to silence, and some cries for justice cannot wait. Just days ago, in northern Gaza, a pregnant mother carrying twins was killed by an Israeli regime artillery shell, along with her two children: Hamza and Naya. These were two children, not in a distant headline, but in a home that once held laughter, bedtime stories and dreams for the future. We do not know if the twins that she carried were boys or girls. We will never know their names, never see them grow up, never witness them enjoying the love and care of their family and community.

How many more Hamzas and Nayas must we lose before the world stops turning away? Two more lives are now gone, in a place in which too many have already perished in some of the worst documented crimes against humanity in the twenty-first century. How many more pregnant mothers, cradling life within them, must be shattered by shelling before we take action and hold the occupying Power accountable for atrocities against the very meaning of humanity?

In the West Bank, we are deeply alarmed by the surge in settler terrorism, which has reached unprecedented levels. We condemn the deliberate attacks on ambulances and the systematic restriction of medical supplies; these are not random acts, but a premeditated obstruction of the fundamental right to health and life, further worsening an already dire humanitarian situation. The recent approval by the occupying Israeli force for the establishment of a school in Shaykh Jarrah is a calculated move to alter the city's demographic and cultural character, reflecting a persistent disregard for international law and Palestinian rights.

The occupying Israeli regime's escalating campaign against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East must stop. Israel must allow unfettered humanitarian access in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Any restrictions on aid, including food, water and medical supplies, are a violation of international law.

The future of Gaza and the West Bank must be determined by Palestinians themselves. In that regard, we welcome the current efforts to hold local elections in the West Bank and in the municipality of Dayr al-Balah in the Gaza Strip, as these represent a vital opportunity for Palestinians to exercise their democratic rights. The end of the Israeli regime's long-standing occupation of Palestine and the establishment of a sovereign, independent State of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, remains the only viable pathway to achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

Turning to Lebanon, the Blue Line situation remains dangerously volatile, owing to repeated Israeli violations of resolution 1701 (2006) and risks of miscalculation. Somalia condemns reported attacks by the Israeli occupying forces in southern Lebanon, which have killed thousands of civilians — mostly women and children — and attacks on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon that killed and injured Ghanaian, Indonesian and French peacekeepers. Targeting peacekeepers is a war crime; those responsible must be held accountable. We welcome the 16 April ceasefire and its extension facilitated by the United States, enabling the first direct engagement in years, and we urge full adherence to the ceasefire arrangements and respect for Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As to Syria, Somalia remains concerned about Israel's destabilizing actions in Syria. The occupied Syrian Golan Heights remain Syrian territory under resolution 497 (1981), requiring Israel's full withdrawal and compliance. A Syrian-led political process under resolution 2254 (2015) is essential for unity, sovereignty and the return of refugees.

Turning to the wider Middle East, the recent escalation represents one of the most dangerous developments in recent years. The expansion of the conflict into the maritime, air and territorial domains has brought the region to the brink of a wider confrontation. In this context, Somalia welcomes the ceasefire arrangements between the United States and Iran, facilitated through Pakistan. We commend the brotherly nation of Pakistan for its mediation role and all efforts aimed at de-escalation, and we urge the parties to build on this momentum towards a durable and comprehensive political understanding.

Beyond the Middle East, Somalia condemns the so-called "recognition" of a separate enclave in north-western Somalia and rejects the Israeli regime's recent

appointment of the so-called “Ambassador” — a move made as a cover for establishing Israeli military bases in Somalia. This not only violates Somali sovereignty but also threatens the stability of the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea and is part of broader forced relocation schemes targeting Palestinians. Somalia unequivocally rejects any demographic or territorial alteration under this pretext.

Across all these crises a clear pattern emerges: the erosion of international law, the persistence of impunity and an absence of political will to resolve the root causes of conflicts, particularly the long-standing violations by the Israeli occupying regime in the region and now in the Horn of Africa. A most vivid illustration of this is that in Palestine, an estimated 1.2 million children in Gaza are reported to be even losing their voice; they are silent not by choice but as a result of trauma and injuries from attacks. They are suffering in silence, unable to speak at all. So, I will end with this Arabic proverb, and I say this with urgency:

(spoke in Arabic)

When the people of truth remained silent in the face of falsehood, the people of falsehood came to believe that they were in the right.

(spoke in English)

Members of the Security Council must not let their silence become that lie. Speak and take action before another mother, another Hamza and another Naya are silenced forever.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) *(spoke in Chinese)*: I welcome Minister for Foreign Affairs Al Zayani’s presiding over today’s meeting. I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari, Minister for Foreign Affairs Eide and Mr. Blair for their briefings.

For some time, the situation in the Middle East has been escalating dramatically, with consequences continuing to spread, gravely undermining regional stability and affecting the global economy and energy security. President Xi Jinping has solemnly put forward a four-point proposal on maintaining and promoting peace and stability in the Middle East, including upholding the principles of peaceful coexistence, national sovereignty and the international rule of law, and balancing development and security, thus providing China’s solution for ending conflict and achieving peace. The current situation stands at a critical juncture of transition from war to peace. China urges all parties to seize this window for peace, exercise the utmost restraint, demonstrate unreserved sincerity and remain committed to the path of political settlement so as to ensure that the momentum for a ceasefire and negotiations is not lost and strive for the prompt restoration of stability in the Middle East and the Gulf region.

The Palestinian question is, and always will be, at the heart of the Middle East issue and must not be marginalized under any circumstances. For decades, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has continued in cycles, its fundamental crux being that the two-State solution is only half-realized. The State of Israel was established long ago, while the State of Palestine remains out of reach. Although the intense clashes have come to a halt, the Palestinian people are still forced to live alongside death and suffering, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories continues to worsen, and the foundations of the two-State solution are at risk of being eroded. Turmoil and war are not the fate of the Palestinian people. The international community must act with the utmost sense of urgency to reverse this negative trajectory and rectify the historical injustice endured by the Palestinians. I wish to make three points.

First, Gaza is not a permanent battlefield. The suffering of its civilians must cease immediately. While efforts by the international community to broker a ceasefire in Gaza are welcome, the most pressing task remains that of cementing the ceasefire and scaling up aid. Since October 2025, Israel has launched relentless attacks and intensified its

military build-up, claiming the lives of more than 800 and wounding more than 2,000. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza remains dire, characterized by shortages of essential supplies, deplorable sanitary conditions and a healthcare system teetering on the brink of total collapse. China calls on all parties concerned, especially Israel, to abide fully by the ceasefire agreement, to ensure a comprehensive and durable ceasefire throughout Gaza. Israel must fulfil its obligations under international humanitarian law, lift all restrictions on humanitarian access and guarantee that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and other humanitarian agencies can carry out their aid work.

Secondly, settlement activities are unacceptable. Tensions in the West Bank must be defused. Israel is currently ramping up settlement expansion, having recently approved the construction of 34 additional settlements and has started rebuilding of the Sanur settlement, which had been shuttered for many years. The violence in the West Bank is equally concerning. Settler violence is intensifying, and the occupying Power frequently conducts searches, arrests and raids, even enacting death penalty legislation specifically targeted at Palestinians, which heightens tensions. Settlement activities contravene international law and Security Council resolutions. Prolonged illegal occupation will not make either party feel safer. Rather, it will only intensify a vicious cycle. Israel must heed the strong appeals from the international community, immediately halt illegal settlement activities, effectively curb settler violence and ensure robust accountability for all attacks.

Thirdly, the two-State solution is irrefutable, and independent Palestinian statehood must be supported. It is deeply concerning that voices opposing the two-State solution continue to emanate from Israel, with some even threatening to stifle the very idea of a Palestinian State. The two-State solution remains the only viable pathway to resolve the Palestinian question. Any unilateral action that erodes its foundation must be firmly rejected, and any future arrangements and the formation of new mechanisms must adhere to the principle of Palestinians governing Palestine and serve to promote, rather than undermine, the two-State solution.

We commend the successful municipal elections held in Palestine last week. The international community must step up support for Palestine and work towards the swift establishment of a fully sovereign and independent State of Palestine, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. China stands ready to continue working alongside the international community to bring an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people, effectively implement the two-State solution and achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting resolution of the Palestinian question at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Bonnafont (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate. I thank Mr. Mohamed Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Europe, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, His Excellency Mr. Espen Barth Eide, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway and representative of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, and His Excellency Mr. Tony Blair, member of the Executive Board of the Board of Peace, whom we welcome, for their timely and enlightening briefings. I also listened closely to the briefings by Ms. Varsen Aghabekian, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Palestine, and by our colleague from Israel, His Excellency, Mr. Danny Danon.

The conflict in the Middle East must not draw the Council's attention or that of the international community away from Palestine, where the situation is deteriorating alarmingly rapidly, be it in Gaza, the West Bank or East Jerusalem. Six months after the adoption of resolution 2803 (2025), which endorses President Donald J. Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, that plan must be implemented fully and monitored. Mr. Mladenov's remarks a month ago and Mr. Blair's today came at an

opportune time. Their briefings indicate the intensity of the efforts undertaken to improve the situation.

However, as the opening briefings demonstrate, the ceasefire remains precarious, and the humanitarian situation remains catastrophic. France calls upon Israel to lift remove obstacles to aid, to protect United Nations facilities and staff, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and to facilitate medical evacuations through the World Health Organization.

We expect that phase two will tangibly improve the situation of Palestinians. The first step towards reconstruction will be the deployment of the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza as it prepares for the return of a reformed Palestinian Authority. Disarming Hamas is essential, as this terrorist movement, whose aims and methods we all know and condemn, cannot, as such, have a future in Gaza or in Palestine. France welcomes the launch of the United Nations Palestine Recovery Trust Fund, the aim of which is to support early recovery, in compliance with international law and in full respect of the fundamental rights of Palestinians and Palestinian unity, with the full involvement of the Palestinian Authority. France is getting ready to contribute to that fund, alongside its support for non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies.

In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the situation is alarming. The approval of 34 new settlements, forced displacements and settler attacks are unacceptable, as is everything entailed by a de facto annexation attempt. France supports European Union sanctions and reserves the right to adopt new positions if these actions continue. We also call on Israel to review the law expanding the scope of the death penalty, owing to its discriminatory nature and the fact that it runs counter to Israel's democratic obligations.

The Palestinian Authority on the verge of financial collapse, hindering its capacity for action and reform. France calls for the immediate repayment of tax revenues owed and for the lifting of restrictions on correspondent banking relationships. France welcomes the holding of municipal elections in Palestine on 25 April, under difficult circumstances, and commends the Palestinian Authority and the Elections Commission. They must pave the way for presidential and legislative elections that enable the Palestinian people to have their say in a democratic manner, as they have long aspired to do.

France is committed to the two-State solution, in the spirit of the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, which was overwhelmingly supported by the General Assembly. The meetings of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee and the Global Alliance on 20 April in Brussels confirmed this broad international consensus. We must re-establish a credible political horizon towards a Palestinian State, without which no lasting stability can be attained in the region.

Israel's right to guarantee its own security — a right that the Council recognizes and that France has always recognized — must be exercised in a manner that fully respects international law, humanitarian law and the rights of all States and peoples of the region, which, for their part, must respect Israel's right to exist and to live in security. That is the key to peace.

In Lebanon, we support the historic decisions taken by the President and the Government to establish State sovereignty over the entire country and in particular the decision to forbid military and security actions by Hizbullah, which has made a major strategic error by dragging Lebanon into war that does not concern it. The ceasefire and the courageous launch of direct talks between Lebanese and Israelis is a welcome first step to provide respite after a deadly conflict and pave the way for a lasting political

solution. France welcomes the involvement of the United States in this process. The situation remains fragile. In view of the violations, France calls on the parties to halt the violence and comply with international law, including resolution 1701 (2006). France condemns attacks on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and pays tribute to those Blue Helmets who have lost their lives. France will continue to support the authorities to strengthen State sovereignty, in particular the monopoly over weapons and territorial integrity.

Lastly, in Iran, there can be no lasting solution to this crisis unless the Iranian regime makes major concessions and radically changes its stance in a manner that allows the country to coexist peacefully within its regional environment. France calls for the immediate re-establishment of security and freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

Mr. Brown II (Liberia): We salute the gallantry of the men and women deployed across the Middle East in peacekeeping duties, under increasingly difficult conditions. We express condolences for all peacekeepers who have paid the ultimate price in the search for peace in the Middle East and other hotspots around the world under the blue flag. We pray for the full recovery of all those injured in the selfless pursuit of peace, and we wish their families well.

We express our appreciation to the briefers, Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations; His Excellency Mr. Espen Barth Eide, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway and Representative of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians; and Mr. Tony Blair, Member of the Executive Board of the Board of Peace, for their insightful interventions. We also welcome heartily the participation of the Observer State of Palestine, represented by Her Excellency Ms. Varsen Aghabekian, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, and that of the representative of Israel and the many Excellencies and colleagues from Member States who are taking part in today's debate.

The Council meets while the history of the Middle East is still being written in blood. This is not dramatic — it is realistic. But the truth is that a course correction is not yet beyond us. The present pause, however, in large-scale violence must not be mistaken for peace. Ceasefires may interrupt warfare; the truth, however, is that they do not by themselves resolve the political disagreement that produced the war.

The lesson before us is therefore a sobering one. When diplomacy repeatedly arrives only after devastation, which has been the unfortunate tale of the Middle East conflict, peace becomes about reconstruction instead of what it should truly be about: prevention of war.

Liberia speaks with the humility of a nation that learned through painful experience that wars prolonged by grievance do not end when the battlefields become quiet. They mutate into economic ruins, institutional decay and inherited trauma. My country knows what it means when justice is deferred in the name of strategy. We know that the pursuit of absolute security through permanent escalation often produces not strategic victory but strategic exhaustion and overall insecurity. A conquest that requires permanent vigilance is not peace; it is deferred instability. This truth is urgently relevant today.

In Gaza, as we have heard from the Secretariat, the humanitarian situation, while improving, remains desperate. Tens of thousands of lives have been lost since October 2023. Entire neighbourhoods have been erased. More than 370,000 housing units have reportedly been damaged or destroyed. Gaza's economy has contracted by more than 80 per cent, with development indicators pushed back by decades. These are not merely

statistics of destruction; they are indicators of a political failure — one that is so profound that humanitarian relief alone cannot and will not repair it.

We thank the Board of Peace, the United States and all countries contributing to the progress reported to us by Mr. Blair. What is also true is that Gaza cannot again become an internationally funded humanitarian holding pattern — rebuilt materially, abandoned politically and left strategically combustible without being properly and thoroughly disarmed. Reconstruction without irreversible political architecture will only recycle fragility.

Liberia therefore calls for a time-bound international framework that links recovery, governance, accountability and a credible irreversible pathway to the two-State solution. Bricks alone cannot build peace. Cement without political courage merely rebuilds future ruins.

As the Assistant Secretary-General reminded us, the Palestinian question remains central to peace in the Middle East, and the crisis is no longer geographically confined. From Gaza to the West Bank, from the Blue Line to the Red Sea, from the Strait of Hormuz to Yemen and Syria, we are witnessing the dangerous fusion of unresolved grievances into interconnected regional instability.

It is worth repeating because it is true: when nearly one-third of globally traded seaborne oil and a significant share of liquefied natural gas transit through vulnerable maritime corridors, disruption in the Strait of Hormuz is not a regional inconvenience; it is a systemic global threat.

For vulnerable economies, especially in Africa and certainly in my country, rising fuel prices mean higher food costs, weakened fiscal spaces, disrupted fertilizer supply chains and millions more already at risk of poverty slipping deeper into poverty. For Liberia, one of the world's leading maritime registries, attacks on international shipping are not abstract geopolitical events; they are truly assaults on the legal arteries of global commerce, sovereign equality and international order.

Freedom of navigation through international waterways, as we heard often from many Member States yesterday, is not optional; it is a legal obligation. The obstruction, weaponization or militarization of these routes risks transforming regional war into global economic depression.

Liberia therefore reasserts the African Union affirmation that international law cannot be selectively applied, whether on land, at sea or when it comes to humanitarian access. The forcible displacement of civilians, therefore, must not be normalized. Territorial acquisition by force cannot and must not be legitimized. Humanitarian aid must not and cannot be permitted to be weaponized. Maritime passage cannot be obstructed.

The selective enforcement of law does not preserve order; it actually weakens it. The Council must confront an uncomfortable truth: resolutions repeatedly invoked but inconsistently implemented do not strengthen our credibility or that of the international community. In truth, they erode it.

Resolutions 2720 (2023), 2735 (2024), 1701(2006), 2334 (2016) and 2803 (2025) cannot remain ceremonial texts recited in the Chamber while realities on the ground move in the opposite direction. Our collective resolve to implement our resolutions makes the real difference in peace and security in the Middle East. Liberia reaffirms its support for the inalienable political rights, dignity and statehood aspirations of the Palestinian people, alongside Israel's right to security, guaranteed not by perpetual siege but by enforceable coexistence within internationally recognized parameters, all of which are enshrined in many resolutions concerning the Middle East. These objectives are not contradictory. As we just heard from both representatives, durable peace through permanent insecurity of the other is

neither desirable nor sustainable. Neither side can secure durable peace through the permanent insecurity of the other.

The choice before this region is no longer simply war or ceasefire; it is whether leaders will invest in peace, however imperfect, today or pursue absolute advantage tomorrow, only to inherit insecurity across borders, economies and generations. The Middle East does not need another generation being taught to survive unresolved history; it desperately needs leadership that is willing to resolve the conflict that is faced by the Middle East today, with courage and unity of purpose, now and not tomorrow, so that a future generation has a better chance of a peaceful life and the chance of good neighbourliness. My country's own history — and excuse me if I am passionate — teaches us that the most dangerous conflicts are often not those that cannot be ended but those postponed until their political, human and economic costs multiply so exponentially that they become almost impossible to manage or resolve.

We therefore challenge the Council not merely to manage the fragmentation of the Middle East but to architect an irreversible path to peace. The Middle East does not need a perfect solution; it needs a renewed will, a renewed sense of urgency and determination and a new sense of good neighbourliness and determination by the Council, in the spirit of resolution 2803 (2025), whereby occupation ends, security is mutual, aid reaches civilians unimpeded, navigation remains free, and diplomacy is preventive not performative. We know that peace without justice will continue to be fragile, justice without implementation is delusional and fictional, and diplomacy without courage is merely a delay of the dreadful inevitable. Liberia chooses an imperfect peace over a perfect war.

The time has come for us not simply to call for peace but to construct one that is durable enough to outlast fear, grievance and the resultant war itself. The people of the Middle East deserve nothing less. They are not asking for our sympathy; they are asking for our collective will to help them help themselves, and they deserve it.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): It is right that we maintain the focus on Palestine, and the significance of this discussion is evident from the high-level participation that we see in the Chamber, from you, Mr. President, the Foreign Minister of Bahrain, presiding over this meeting, to many other ministers here, including the Foreign Minister of Palestine, whom we welcome. We thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari, Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide and Mr. Tony Blair for their briefings.

The serious situation in the Middle East remains extremely volatile, with multiple and interconnected crises. In this environment, strict adherence to international law, the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the principles of restraint, responsible conduct and diplomacy are indispensable to preventing further escalation and promoting durable peace, and this was so eloquently put across by my neighbour, the Ambassador of Liberia, in his statement just now.

But we see that, in Gaza, the ceasefire provided relief but remains fragile, with violations ongoing. More than 800 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli strikes since the announcement of the ceasefire, underscoring both the scale of the crisis and the sensitivity of the situation. Humanitarian aid has resumed but is faced with impediments and is thus falling significantly short of the requirements on ground. It is essential to fully respect and consolidate the ceasefire and ensure sustained, unhindered and scaled-up humanitarian assistance. We hope that phase two of the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict will be completed at the earliest opportunity. Any delay risks eroding the hard-won momentum and deepening human suffering. The Gaza peace plan, as endorsed in resolution 2803 (2025), must be implemented fully, in letter and spirit.

The rapidly deteriorating situation in the West Bank is also alarming. Escalating settler violence, the continued expansion of illegal settlements and illegal legislative

measures aimed at land confiscation are grave violations of international law that seek to alter the demographic and legal character of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

In a joint statement, on 2 April, the Foreign Ministers of the group of eight Arab and Islamic countries strongly condemned Israeli legislation and warned against the increasingly discriminatory, escalating Israeli practices that entrench a system of apartheid and a rejectionist discourse that denies the inalienable rights and the very existence of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In a separate joint statement on 23 April, the Ministers also condemned the repeated violations of the historical and legal status quo of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem by the Israeli occupation authorities, particularly the ongoing incursions into Aqsa Mosque. Such actions must cease immediately.

The High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution in July, together with the General Assembly's endorsement of the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution in 2025, has established a credible multilateral pathway towards the realization of a Palestinian State. Efforts led by the President of the United States, Mr. Donald Trump, supported by Arab and Organization of Islamic Cooperation countries, have advanced the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict. We hope that all these efforts, including those of 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, resulting in an independent, sovereign and contiguous State of Palestine based on pre-1967 borders with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

In Lebanon, Israeli military actions, particularly in the south, have resulted in more than 2,000 civilian casualties. The extension of the ceasefire for three weeks, brokered by the United States, is a welcome development. But violations continue, as we saw over the weekend. There must be a complete cessation of hostilities. Full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) also remains essential for stability.

In Syria, Pakistan supports a comprehensive approach, based on full respect for its sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, supported by inclusive political progress and sustained humanitarian and economic support.

In Yemen, a Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned political settlement, supported by consistent international engagement, remains the only viable path to lasting peace.

Broader regional tensions continue to pose serious risks to international peace and security, as well as to global economic stability. The situation in the Strait of Hormuz is adversely impacting countries around the world, including Pakistan. Pakistan reaffirms its full support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all brotherly States in the region. We stand for universal respect for international law and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

At this critical juncture, restraint, dialogue and diplomacy must prevail. Pakistan remains actively engaged in advancing such diplomatic pathways and advocating for a peaceful resolution of this crisis. The recent talks hosted in Islamabad between the United States and Iran stand as a testament to this commitment. Pakistan will continue to support and facilitate efforts aimed at fostering dialogue and stability across the region.

The root cause of instability in the Middle East remains the unresolved question of Palestine and the continued Israeli occupation of the Arab lands. It is not with expansionist ambitions, not with the suppression of rights, not with the use of force, but

rather by vacating the occupation for the realization of a Palestinian State, the two-State solution — that is the only viable pathway to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace for all in the region. Pakistan will continue to support that objective, while reaffirming its unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people and their just cause.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We wish to thank Khaled Khiari, Espen Eide and Tony Blair for their briefings, and we welcome the participation in today's briefing of the Foreign Minister of Palestine.

We are deeply concerned by the developments in the Middle East. The failure to resolve protracted conflicts and attempts to resolve them overnight, combining brute force and the language of ultimatums, circumventing international frameworks, are planting bitter fruit, which we are harvesting today. This policy, in which the interests of one side are completely being ignored, naturally is being met with resistance and opposition. As a result, for two and a half years now, the region has been in turmoil due to periodic outbreaks of armed violence, followed by short-lived and unstable ceasefires that are repeatedly violated.

Consider Lebanon, despite the ceasefire reached between Beirut and West Jerusalem, active hostilities continue. Since 26 April alone, 14 people were killed and a further 37 wounded as a result of Israeli strikes. Since 2 March, more than 2,500 Lebanese have been killed and nearly 8,000 have been wounded. The Israelis have occupied the south of the country, have been systematically destroying entire residential neighbourhoods and have been blowing up bridges across the Litani River. For them, the concept of Lebanese sovereignty does not exist, their ships patrol the Lebanese coastline freely and their aircraft and drones have seized control over the skies above the capital.

Israel does not have any respect for the authority of United Nations peacekeepers. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon has been forced to seek permission from the Israeli military command for patrol movements two days in advance. However, even this is not a panacea. The Blue Helmets face all manner of obstacles. They are being fired upon, including from tanks, which has already caused the deaths of peacekeepers. And to ensure that United Nations representatives do not see anything they should not, their surveillance cameras are being disabled.

We demand a prompt investigation into all incidents involving security threats to peacekeepers. Those responsible must face the punishment they deserve, regardless of their position. We call upon both sides to respect the ceasefire and to strictly comply with resolution 1701 (2006), which stipulates, inter alia, the withdrawal of Israeli units from Lebanese soil. Without this condition, any peace agreements will remain extremely fragile, as was the case with the truce reached in November 2024.

Israel's policy of systematically expanding occupation, maintaining its military control and freedom of movement with unilateral demands for demilitarization, while refusing to assume any obligations of its own has to date become a decisive factor in the Middle East. At the same time, the justification for aggressive acts is being advanced with attempts to blame everything on the allegedly destructive activities of external forces who are plotting against Israel.

The fallacy of such reasoning is highlighted by the example of Syria, from whose territory not a single shot has been fired towards Israel in recent years. Damascus is willing to engage in serious dialogue with West Jerusalem on a comprehensive solution to security issues. Despite all this, Israel continues to occupy the south of Syria, fuelling centrifugal forces, and regularly carries out air strikes that undermine the capabilities of Syrian military personnel.

We call on the Israeli authorities to return to compliance with the provisions of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and to respect the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2811 (2025), which extended the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for a further six months. The statesmanship and strategic restraint of Damascus should not be confused with weakness. Its patience may run out.

The question of Palestine remains at the crux of the peace process in the Middle East. A fair resolution of this issue is the only way to achieve lasting peace and security in the region. The current Israeli leadership is not only completely refuting, but also systematically dismantling the core principles for the settlement that are enshrined in numerous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, above all the two-State solution. The options proposed to Israel's opponent in their preliminary ultimatums are deliberately unrealistic and unviable, but this does not bother the Israeli leaders who are clearly desperate to proceed with the armed confrontation. We deeply regret the fact that such escalatory steps, which have already caused a major war in the Middle East, enjoy the unconditional support of the United States.

Given the above, despite generally optimistic remarks by Mr. Blair, we see no tangible results from the work of the Board of Peace. The implementation of resolution 2803 (2025), adopted at Washington's initiative five months ago, has also stalled. However, this was foreseeable and proves the point. The International Stabilization Force for Gaza has still not been deployed. The National Committee for the Administration of Gaza remains located abroad. More than half of the enclave is occupied by Israel, and humanitarian access is still being obstructed. Since the ceasefire on 10 October, 800 Palestinians have been killed.

Unfortunately, our grim predictions have come to pass. We are witnessing attempts to literally buy out the Palestinians with flashy business projects like "New Gaza", rather than addressing the complex political issue of establishing an independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The situation in the West Bank is equally bleak, as this matter was not addressed in resolution 2803 (2025). There, we are witnessing creeping colonization, regular raids and ongoing violence by radical settlers.

Israel's infringement upon the functions of the Palestinian Authority, including the withholding of its duly owed tax revenues, constitutes an exceedingly dangerous path towards deadlock. Far from enhancing Israel's security, these actions radicalize Palestinian society. The same is true of West Jerusalem's destructive policy towards the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which remains an indispensable bedrock of humanitarian assistance for Palestinians, both in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and in neighbouring Arab countries. UNRWA's mandate has particular significance, as it constitutes a universally recognized international legal basis for a Middle East settlement, first and foremost by assisting Palestinians and ensuring their protection until their right of return is realized.

Against this backdrop, a rare piece of good news has been the successful holding of municipal elections in Palestine. The peaceful voting in Dayr al-Balah was particularly symbolic, as it demonstrated to the entire world that the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are inextricably linked and that all the attempts to artificially divide the Palestinian people are futile.

In conclusion, we wish to stress that a Middle East settlement cannot be achieved through hasty, short-sighted solutions or military options. It is only through taking on board the interests of all parties, on the basis of universally recognized international legal norms, including the two-State solution, that we can achieve results.

Mr. Mukongo (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): The Democratic Republic of the Congo reiterates its respectful greetings to His Excellency Mr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani and thanks his country, the Kingdom of Bahrain, for organizing this high-level open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. In the same spirit, we would like to once again welcome the Ministers and Deputy Ministers for Foreign Affairs to this meeting.

We also thank His Excellency Mr. Espen Barth Eide, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway and representative of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians; Mr. Tony Blair, member of the Executive Board of the Board of Peace; and Assistant Secretary-General Mohamed Khaled Khiari for their comprehensive briefings.

My delegation commends the ongoing commitment of the United Nations and international partners to promoting international peace and security in a region marked by persistent tensions, as evidenced by the particularly worrisome developments observed recently.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo expresses its deep concern about the escalation of violence in the region, particularly the recent clashes involving several State actors. Those hostilities, now of a multidimensional nature, encompassing security, humanitarian and economic dimensions, have caused civilian casualties, damaged essential infrastructure and disrupted strategic shipping routes, with direct repercussions for regional and international stability.

This gradual escalation of tensions, including in the maritime domain, highlights the risks of a wider conflagration and underscores, if any further proof were needed, that no exclusively military approach can offer a lasting solution. On the contrary, it would expose the region to an escalation with consequences that would be difficult to control.

Recalling resolution 2817 (2026), we reiterate our call for immediate de-escalation, for restraint by all parties and for strict compliance with international law, in particular international humanitarian law, in full accordance with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Regarding the situation in the Gaza Strip, the Democratic Republic of the Congo welcomes the appointment of the High Representative for Gaza of the Board of Peace and the designation of the Commander of the International Stabilization Force, as well as the efforts undertaken to organize a coordinated international response. Nevertheless, we remain concerned about the fragility of the ceasefire established there under resolution 2803 (2025) and about the continuing violence.

Restrictions on humanitarian access, including the intermittent closure of crossing points at Rafah and Kerem Shalom and the sporadic violence, undermine prospects for stabilization and hinder the implementation of expected phases of the ongoing process. The Democratic Republic of the Congo therefore calls on all parties to fully honour their commitments, respect their international obligations and engage in good faith with the diplomatic initiatives currently under way.

Furthermore, the Democratic Republic of the Congo reiterates that, in an increasingly interconnected regional environment, no tangible progress can be envisaged without the establishment of a controlled security framework, including curbing non-State armed groups that are likely to fuel tensions and undermine ongoing stabilization efforts.

We cannot fully grasp the question of Palestine without addressing the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The expansion of settlements, the violence and the forced displacement of populations in those territories must be given the Council's full

attention. It is also worth recalling that those actions undermine the prospects for a lasting peace and cannot be allowed to continue. Those facts, substantiated by the reports of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, are likely to permanently alter the parameters of a negotiated and pragmatic political solution in accordance with the agreements and provisions of international law in force.

My delegation reiterates that any unilateral measure aimed at altering the status of the territories in question constitutes a violation of international law and the relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016). The West Bank is also facing an alarming humanitarian situation. In that regard, the Democratic Republic of the Congo wishes to emphasize once again the indispensable role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), which remains a central pillar of the humanitarian response. Its work is of critical significance when it comes to delivering vital assistance, particularly in terms of healthcare, education and emergency assistance. We call for enhanced and sustained support for UNRWA, so that the Agency is positioned to fully carry out its mandate.

Reaffirming our unstinting commitment to the purposes and the principles of the United Nations Charter, particularly the sovereign equality of States, respect for territorial integrity and respect for human dignity, my country wishes to recall the fact that these principles cannot be applied in an isolated manner. They must, at all times, guide our collective efforts in a coherent and universal way and embody, in and of themselves, hope for the restoration of calm where the spectre of conflict and tensions looms large.

To conclude, the Democratic Republic of the Congo underscores the importance of a multilateral, balanced and impartial approach and urges the international community to step up its efforts to prevent the escalation of the regional conflict and to support peace initiatives.

Mrs. Zalabata Torres (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to welcome you, Mr. President, to this Council meeting. I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari; His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs for Norway, Mr. Espen Barth Eide; and His Excellency Mr. Blair, representative of the Board of Peace, for their briefings. I also welcome the delegations who are joining us for this meeting, particularly Her Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the State of Palestine.

More than six months have passed since the implementation of the first phase of President Donald J. Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict. However, the living conditions for the population remain precarious. Added to the more than 72,344 Palestinians killed by Israel since 7 October 2023 are the preventable deaths due to the lack of medical attention, hunger, malnutrition, hypothermia and the collapse of the healthcare system. These are not accidental deaths. They are the consequence of a deliberate policy to deprive the Palestinian population of the minimal conditions for a decent life.

According to the rapid damage and needs assessment, human development has been set back by 77 years. Millions depend on aid that is not arriving at the necessary scale. Crossing points remain largely closed, and Gaza today is the deadliest place in the world for journalists and humanitarian personnel to be. It is essential to guarantee that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East can fully carry out its work, which represents a lifeline for millions of Palestinians. It is also vital to guarantee unimpeded access for humanitarian agencies working in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Humanitarian aid cannot be instrumentalized. The reconstruction of Gaza must begin immediately, without conditions.

In the meantime, Israel is intensifying its policy of de facto annexation and violence in the West Bank, undermining the two-State solution and prospects for peace. These are not unforeseen events, but rather the result of a deliberate policy encouraged by hate speech, espoused by the highest levels of the Israeli Government, calling for ethnic cleansing. On top of the systematic use of torture and cruel and degrading treatment in Israeli detention centres, the parliament has now adopted inhumane and discriminatory punishment: the death penalty for Palestinian citizens. This decision entrenches a regime of segregation and apartheid that is contrary to international law and must be reversed immediately.

The impunity demonstrated by the Israeli Government in disregarding its obligations under international law has consequences that transcend Palestine. When one State is above the law, the credibility of the multilateral system, including that of the Security Council, is eroded. Recent events in Lebanon bear this out. The indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population are completely unjustified and are happening in a context in which the Lebanese authorities have demonstrated their readiness to further stabilize their territory and consolidate their monopoly over the use of force. Colombia expresses its solidarity with the Lebanese people and strongly condemns the attacks on the personnel of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Those acts could constitute war crimes and must be investigated.

Accountability cannot continue to be postponed. The Council is responsible for maintaining international peace and security. But all States also have obligations under international law, including *jus cogens* norms. It is our collective responsibility not to recognize illegal situations and not to aid or abet the continuation of such situations, particularly when they represent crimes against humanity. All States must ensure their cooperation with the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, respectively. Initiatives such as those promoted through the Hague Group show that progress can be made by taking collective steps to bring an end to impunity. Colombia will not be an accomplice to a genocide.

To conclude, Colombia reaffirms its principles-based position and its solidarity with the Palestinian people, who are the only ones who can decide their own future. There will be no peace and security, either for Palestinians or for Israelis, as long as there is no just and definitive political solution guaranteeing the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Peace cannot be built amid occupation, segregation or the denial of fundamental rights.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Bahrain for convening this important debate. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari, His Excellency Mr. Espen Barth Eide and Mr. Tony Blair for briefing us today.

The United Kingdom strongly supports the important work of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, and we welcome the constructive discussion that recently took place in Brussels.

As we have heard today, the region faces another period of crisis. But we must not be distracted from seizing the historic opportunity to implement the 20-point Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, endorsed by the Council in resolution 2803 (2025), and map a pathway to realizing a two-State solution. Mr. Blair's briefing set out how we can do that.

I will make three points.

First, it is vital that all parties fulfil their commitments, respect the ceasefire and engage constructively to implement phase two of President Trump's 20-point peace plan. We need a stable and phased security transition. This must include the demilitarization of Hamas and other armed groups, the deployment of the International Stabilization

Force, alongside a Palestinian-led police force, and the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces. The United Kingdom has been clear that Hamas can have no future in the governance of Gaza. We urge them to engage constructively in the demilitarization talks, which, as we heard, are taking place right now. We also need the right transitional governance arrangements in place. The National Committee for the Administration of Gaza and the Palestinian Authority must work together to deliver for the Palestinian people's immediate needs and support early recovery and reconstruction efforts.

Secondly, the humanitarian situation in Palestine remains grave. The World Food Programme has warned that, while famine has not returned to Gaza, the food and nutrition situation remains deeply concerning. The United Nations reports that, in the first quarter of this year, aid entering Gaza from the United Nations and its humanitarian partners declined by 37 per cent, compared with the previous three months. That is not meeting the targets defined in the 20-point Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict. Furthermore, the Government of Israel's deregistration measures for international non-governmental organizations continue to constrict the humanitarian space for critical assistance. That is unacceptable. The United Nations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and other humanitarian partners, must be able to operate unimpeded, with unrestricted entry and functioning crossings. Israel must allow in much-needed medical equipment, shelter items and fuel to support essential and life-saving services.

Thirdly, we are appalled by the deteriorating trajectory in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Violence, including extremely troubling reports of sexual and gender-based violence, forced displacement and illegal evictions, is surging. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Israeli forces and settlers killed 33 Palestinians and injured 790 others in the first few months of this year alone. Last week, two Palestinians, Jihad Abu Naim and Aws al-Na'san, were shot and killed by an Israeli settler in a school. Aws was just 14 years old. We deplore such egregious acts of settler violence. The Israeli Government has rightly condemned that violence and launched an investigation, but accountability for previous incidents has been severely lacking. Condemnation alone is not enough; it must be translated into concrete steps to prevent attacks against Palestinians, ensure the protection of civilians in line with international law and ensure accountability where crimes have been committed. We are also witnessing an unprecedented pace of illegal settlement expansion in the West Bank, as well as severe Israeli economic restrictions. These actions must stop; they undermine the 20-point Plan and the very viability of the two-State solution.

We stand at a historic juncture. We urge the parties to show courage, engage in good faith on the peace plan and seize this opportunity for the benefit of Palestinians, Israelis and the whole region.

Mrs. Balta (Greece): Let me thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and Mr. Espen Barth Eide, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway and Representative of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, for their briefings. I also thank Mr. Tony Blair, member of the Executive Board of the Board of Peace, for his remarks, and Ms. Varsen Aghabekian, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Observer State of Palestine for her presence here today. We also welcome the presence of the representative of Israel.

We acknowledge and warmly welcome today's discussion, which is timely and important. In relation to Iran, we welcome the ceasefire and express the hope that it will be sustained. Our objective must remain a return to the negotiating table, with a view to achieving a peaceful settlement of all issues, while fully ensuring that transit passage through the Strait of Hormuz is unimpeded and safeguarded in accordance with international law and the law of the sea, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. I take this opportunity to reaffirm our solidarity with Bahrain

and other Gulf nations and to express our strong condemnation of the illegal and unprovoked attacks against them.

Similarly, we hope that the very welcome extension of the cessation of hostilities to enable dialogue between Lebanon and Israel will be consolidated. We commend the mediation efforts of the United States and look forward to the success of the historic contacts between our two partners. Greece promptly stepped in to help Lebanon in its hour of dire need, contributing humanitarian and development aid in a spirit of tangible solidarity. We stand fully behind the Lebanese President, Mr. Aoun, and the Lebanese leadership as they take up a historic and daunting task. Greece will continue its steadfast support for Lebanese State institutions, including the Lebanese Armed Forces. We express our deepest condolences to the families of the Indonesian and French peacekeepers who paid the ultimate price while fulfilling their mandate. Attacks against the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon are unacceptable and must be unequivocally condemned; they must stop.

Perhaps away from the immediate gaze of the world, the situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is steadily deteriorating. The increasing and unprecedented settler violence targeting the Palestinian population, including Christian communities, is condemnable and must cease. We reaffirm the absolute primacy of international humanitarian law, which must be respected at all times, and the protection of civilians, including health workers and journalists. The preservation of and respect for the status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem is also of paramount importance. In the meantime, we are gravely concerned about the continuing trends of imposed restrictions, settlement expansion and accentuated forced displacement. We reject efforts to undermine the viability of the two-State solution, which deprive the region of the prospect of peace. Similarly, we reiterate our call for the release of Palestinian tax revenues being withheld, as the Palestinian Authority is on the financial brink. The health sector, including the East Jerusalem hospital network, are also suffering greatly. The West Bank and Gaza constitute a single, indivisible territorial unit for a future Palestinian State.

That brings me to Gaza, which, regrettably, features so frequently and intensely here in the Chamber. We must seize the momentum introduced by the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, endorsed by resolution 2803 (2025), which Greece supported, as Gaza transitions from conflict to a deeply challenging recovery. Governance arrangements must be legitimate and durable, while transitional structures should harmoniously complement existing institutions, avoiding parallel structures or the undermining of the Palestinian Authority. In that spirit, we welcome the establishment of a liaison between the Palestinian Authority and the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza. We stress once again that Hamas and other armed groups must urgently and fully disarm, as addressing the legitimate security concerns of Israel is a key precondition for sustainable peace. Similarly, we call for the sustainable, unimpeded and safe flow of humanitarian aid to those in need in Gaza, highlighting the importance of efforts such as the Cyprus maritime humanitarian corridor and the indispensable role that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East continues to play, despite the challenges and the deplorable demolition of its facilities in East Jerusalem.

As reaffirmed during the recent visit to Athens of the Palestinian Vice President, for Greece, the path ahead can only be a credible political process leading to a two-State solution that enables Palestinians and Israelis to live side by side in peace and security.

As reaffirmed by the recent convening of the meeting of the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution in Brussels and by the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, the international community fully backs this

prospect. We must now work together to mould these strands of effort into a coherent and collective vision for regional peace and prosperity.

Ms. Lassen (Denmark): Let me thank our briefers here today for their extremely useful updates and welcome all the foreign ministers and deputy foreign ministers who are honouring us with their presence here today.

Following many weeks of conflict in the region, we welcome the ceasefire between the United States and Iran, and we commend Pakistan and other regional partners for their mediation efforts. We reaffirm our full support for resolution 2817 (2026), which condemns Iran's attacks against regional neighbours. We hope that the ceasefire will lead to renewed talks between the parties towards a lasting peace, and we reiterate our position that Iran must never acquire a nuclear weapon. We call for the full, immediate and unconditional re-opening of the Strait of Hormuz to ensure freedom of navigation, in line with international law.

Furthermore, we welcome the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon, where the situation remains fragile. This was made painfully clear on 18 April, when peacekeepers from the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon were attacked, leading to the death of two French peacekeepers, in addition to the earlier loss of four Indonesian peacekeepers and the injury of several others. We strongly condemn these attacks and extend our deep condolences to the families of the victims.

We firmly support the extraordinary efforts of the United Nations to respond to the situation in Lebanon, and we call for rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access. We urge all parties to respect the territorial integrity of Lebanon, in line with resolution 1701 (2006), and we are encouraged by the historic direct talks between Israel and Lebanon and hope that they will lead to new opportunities for lasting peace.

The recent escalation in the region must not overshadow the deeply troubling developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The situation in the West Bank continues to deteriorate rapidly. Settler violence has reached record levels. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, this year more than 10 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli settlers, and in March alone, 170 Palestinians were injured by Israeli settlers — the highest number in 20 years.

Palestinians in the West Bank live in a constant stream of injustice and suffering. Relatives are killed or injured. Property is demolished. Water sources are obstructed. Children are prevented from going to school. Land is seized as more settlements, illegal under international law, are legalized under Israeli law, rendering the chances of lasting peace practically nil. We urge Israel to immediately halt these measures, and we call on Israel to comply with its obligations under international law as an occupying Power. We recall that attempts to change the demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory through forcible transfers or deportations are prohibited under international humanitarian law.

Denmark further expresses its deep concern about Israel's recent approval of the death penalty bill and its de facto discriminatory nature. We remain strongly opposed to the death penalty, which we consider inherently inconsistent with human dignity. We urge Israel to repeal the bill.

We welcome the reform efforts by the Palestinian Authority and encourage further efforts in this regard. We also welcome the organization of the Palestinian local elections on 25 April, in these challenging circumstances.

Turning to the situation in Gaza, the ceasefire has now passed its six-month mark, and while it still holds, the suffering in Gaza continues. Humanitarian access continues to be severely restricted, with constraints on humanitarian actors, medicines, shelter items and other items considered dual-use by Israel. We call on Israel to urgently remove

all barriers to the effective delivery of humanitarian aid and allow international non-governmental organizations and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to operate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Denmark continues to call for the full implementation of the 20-point plan, consistent with resolution 2803 (2025) and international law. Hamas must lay down its arms, as is being discussed right now in the talks on demilitarization, and Israel must lift its restrictions on humanitarian aid to pave the way for progress on the recovery and reconstruction of Gaza. We reiterate that Hamas cannot be a part of any governance in Gaza. Six months after the ceasefire, we had hoped for more progress.

Many of these points are well known and long-standing. They have been repeated in the Council on multiple occasions. The most urgent call, which Denmark reiterates resolutely today, is for the suffering to end and for the path towards lasting peace through the two-State solution to be restored, as charted in the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution. We call on all parties to approach this with greater determination.

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 1.15 p.m.