



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9484th meeting

Wednesday, 22 November 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Zhang Jun/Mr. Geng Shuang (China)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil	Mr. França Danese
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
Japan	Mr. Yamanaka
Malta	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Israel to participate in this meeting.

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Sima Sami Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women; Ms. Catherine Russell, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund; and Ms. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund.

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

I give the floor to Ms. Bahous.

Ms. Bahous: Allow me to thank you, Ambassador Zhang Jun, for your remarkable efforts during China's presidency to maintain focus on the situation in Gaza. And thank you to Ambassador Nusseibeh and Ambassador Frazier for calling for this meeting, and to the members of the Security Council, for this opportunity to brief the Council about the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory.

I just returned last night from Egypt and Jordan. There, I met with government representatives, civil society partners, humanitarian workers and volunteers, all working tirelessly to respond to the suffering of the Gazan people and end the crisis. I commend their efforts to ensure humanitarian aid gets to those in need. I welcome the news that 50 hostages, all women and children, will be released in return for the release of 150 Palestinian women and children, and a much-needed humanitarian pause. I thank the Governments of Egypt,

Qatar and the United States of America for facilitating that agreement. I hope that this is the beginning of a permanent truce and lasting relief for the people of Gaza and all the hostages held by Hamas.

We have witnessed six rounds of violence in Gaza in the past 15 years. Yet the ferocity and destruction that the Gazan people are being forced to endure under our watch has reached an intensity we have never seen before.

I have been consistent in my briefings to the Council, in reminding the Council that women and girls are paying the highest price of conflicts. Before 7 October, 67 per cent of all civilians killed in the occupied Palestinian territory in the past 15 years were men, and less than 14 per cent were women and girls. Since that date, that percentage has been reversed. Not only is the number of civilians killed since 7 October twice that of the past 15 years combined, now 67 per cent of the more than 14,000 people killed in Gaza are estimated to be women and children. That is two mothers killed every hour, and seven women killed every two hours. We mourn them all.

We also mourn the more than 100 United Nations colleagues who have died in just a month of this crisis. They served the mandate of our United Nations and the principles we have sworn to uphold, and they paid the ultimate price for it. Despite their knowledge of the dangers they faced, they did what they believed in until their final breath, whether in schools, hospitals or wherever they were needed. We carry their memories with us throughout this crisis and beyond.

It has been 47 days since the 7 October attack on Israel, in which 1,200 people, many of them women and children, were killed. Each day that passes marks another 24 hours of unspeakable fear and uncertainty for the hostages, including women and girls, held by Hamas. I continue to call for their immediate and unconditional release.

It has been 47 days since the more than 2 million Palestinians in Gaza have been spending every moment fearing for their lives, mourning their dead and living under conditions that would break every single one of us. Thousands of women in Gaza have lost their homes. Forty-five per cent of all housing units have been destroyed or damaged. Thousands more are injured, unable to find any medical support from a totally shattered health system.

As many as 180 women are delivering babies every day without water, painkillers, anaesthesia for caesarean sections, electricity for incubators or medical supplies. Yet they continue care for their children, the sick and the elderly, mixing baby formula with contaminated water — when they find it — going without food so that their children can live another day and enduring multiple risks in severely overcrowded shelters. They have been robbed of their livelihoods, security and dignity. Women in Gaza have told us that they pray for peace, but that if peace does not come, they pray for a quick death, in their sleep, with their children in their arms. It should shame us all that any mother, anywhere, has such a prayer.

Before the current escalation, there were 650,000 women and girls in dire need of humanitarian assistance in Gaza. Now that estimate has increased to 1.1 million, including the nearly 800,000 women internally displaced. And while the situation of women and girls in Gaza rightly preoccupies us because of its immediacy and the overwhelming imperative to act, we are seeing an escalation in the West Bank, where demolitions of public infrastructure, the revocation of work permits, increased settler violence and detentions have had a significant impact on the lives and livelihoods of women.

I am alarmed by the disturbing reports of gender-based and sexual violence. I reiterate my call from when I last spoke in the Chamber in October (see S/PV.9452), that every act of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, is unequivocally condemned and must be fully investigated with the utmost priority. I am reassured that Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten has activated the United Nations action network, which she chairs, to proactively share United Nations-sourced and verified information on incidents, patterns and trends of conflict-related sexual violence to aid all investigations.

I am confident that there will ultimately be a reckoning for all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in this conflict. The work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel is crucial.

Gaza's only two women's shelters are now closed. Women-led organizations continue to operate in Gaza, although under severe constraints. Where they function, they are using their networks to source and distribute emergency items and to document and respond to

protection concerns. I salute their courage and reiterate the need to ensure that they have whatever they need to continue their crucial work.

UN-Women's response plan for Gaza, working with partners including the World Food Programme, will in its initial phase cover food and cash assistance to 14,000 women-headed households — one third of all women-headed households in Gaza. We will support and work urgently with the Egyptian Red Crescent and the Jordanian Hashemite charity organization to advance the distribution of items identified by women in Gaza as priority needs. I commend the many female staff and volunteers of the Egyptian Red Crescent for their exceptional service in these challenging circumstances. I also welcome the establishment of a new Jordanian field hospital in Khan Younis, including, notably, female medical staff, such as doctors and nurses, for the first time. That is a significant milestone.

We are providing flexible financial support to women's organizations across the occupied Palestinian territory. The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund has launched a new appeal to mobilize an additional \$10 million. And we will support women's leadership in the political space. As always, we will continue to work with our sister entities and through the broader Inter-Agency Standing Committee membership to ensure that the humanitarian response serves women and girls to the fullest. I thank our development partners for their support to us in implementing the plan, but much more funding is needed. I encourage all donors to increase their allocations, including to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which remains the only lifeline for thousands of Palestinians.

UN-Women has met with and heard from Israeli women, who shared with us that they, and civil society organizations, are working to document gender-based atrocities, and they shared their hope for peace, with women — both Israelis and Palestinians — at the table.

During my mission, I heard unequivocal calls time and again that we need an immediate and unconditional ceasefire. I also heard calls from partners across the region that the forced displacement or transfer of Palestinians from their land is a red line, and that we must ensure the protection of civilians and facilitate unhindered access to aid. I heard calls for an end to occupation and for concerted progress towards a peaceful two-State solution.

I suspect that I am not unique in finding this one of the lowest moments for the international community and for peace and security that I can recall. But it is precisely at moments such as this that multilateralism is at its most important. This institution and others of the United Nations are where we come together to find peace. Our track record is varied. International justice mechanisms are actively resisted. The growing pushback against women and girls and their rights is gaining momentum. The Charter of the United Nations and our global norms are flagrantly ignored. And as we abandon the instruments of multilateralism, the volume of arms transfers and the market value of arms manufacturers skyrocket.

I welcome the resolution adopted last week by the Security Council (resolution 2712 (2023)) and hope that that will only be the start of greater consensus in the Council to find a solution. I call for its immediate implementation. But that resolution, like the more than 100 resolutions adopted on the so-called Palestinian question since 1948, makes no reference to gender issues. I also welcome the General Assembly resolution adopted on 27 October, calling for an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities (General Assembly resolution ES-10/21). I urge the Council to include the voices of Palestinian and Israeli women working for peace, to recognize their leadership and to call for their meaningful participation in any negotiation efforts.

This crisis must be a wakeup call to our multilateral system. The world is looking to us to model its highest ideals, not to reflect its greatest failures. Now more than ever, we must be faithful to our Charter and to our shared humanity. Now more than ever, we must reject those who seek to sow hatred and division. Now more than ever, we must seek peace, and in doing so, we must recall that women remain the largest and most reliable constituency in that cause. And now more than ever, we must uphold the principles of justice and accountability for crimes committed, in order to stop the crimes that are ongoing and deter the commission of those that have yet to occur. I call for this truce to be extended to a ceasefire and for the remaining hostages to be released unconditionally. I call for an immediate end to the current siege, beginning with ensuring access to water.

Let me end with a sentiment that we are hearing from women in Gaza. They note that the international community spends a significant amount of time reiterating numbers — numbers of people killed,

numbers of children under the rubble, numbers of houses destroyed. Yet the women in Gaza feel completely abandoned. They hear that more humanitarian relief is coming but they can see that the trickle of aid does not meet the ocean of need. More than anything, they tell us that they want the violence to stop, and to stop now. For the sake of women and girls, I leave the Council with a call for a return to a genuine and purposeful commitment to a just peace.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Ms. Bahous for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Russell.

Ms. Russell: I thank Ambassadors Nusseibeh, Zhang Jun and Frazier for bringing us together to speak about the worsening situation of children in the State of Palestine and Israel.

I would also like to thank the Security Council for its adoption of resolution 2712 (2023), a text that acknowledges the disproportionate impact that this war is having on children by demanding that the parties to the conflict afford children the special protection that they are entitled to under international law. Critically, the resolution calls for extended humanitarian pauses and corridors in Gaza, which I hope will be urgently implemented so that humanitarian partners can reach the civilians in need, especially children. UNICEF also welcomes the limited ceasefire agreement. We are positioned to quickly scale up the delivery of desperately needed humanitarian aid in Gaza, but of course more resources are needed to meet the ever-growing needs.

However, that is far from enough. The war must be brought to an end and the killing and maiming of children must stop immediately. Before briefing the Council in more detail on the situation in Gaza, I would like to draw the attention of members to the plight of children in Israel and the West Bank. Since 7 October, 35 Israeli children have reportedly been killed, while more than 30 are being held hostage in Gaza. As the Secretary-General has said, the agreement to release hostages is welcome, but much more needs to be done. UNICEF will call on the parties to safely release all abducted children. Last week UNICEF's Deputy Executive Director travelled to Israel, where he met with families of the child hostages. They shared their anguish and deepening fear over the safety of their children. I had planned to travel to Israel and the West Bank last week as well, but as many Council members will have heard, I was advised by doctors to postpone

my visit after sustaining injuries in a car crash en route to Rafah. Our Deputy Executive Director visited the West Bank to assess the deteriorating security and humanitarian conditions there. Over the past six weeks 56 Palestinian children have been killed, while scores have been displaced from their homes. We estimate that 450,000 children in the West Bank need humanitarian assistance. UNICEF and its partners are providing mental health and protection support, water and sanitation services and remedial education for 280,000 children in the West Bank.

Turning to Gaza, I just returned from a visit to the south of the territory, where I was able to meet with children and their families and with UNICEF staff on the ground. I am haunted by what I saw and heard. When I visited the Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis, it was teeming with people. In addition to the patients and medical staff, the hospital is sheltering thousands of internally displaced people. They are sleeping on blankets along corridors and in the hospital's common areas. While I was there, I spoke with a 16-year-old girl lying in a hospital bed. She was badly injured when her neighborhood was bombed, and the doctors have told her she will never walk again. In the hospital's neonatal ward, I saw tiny babies clinging to life in incubators, as doctors worried about how they could keep the machines running without fuel.

During my time in Khan Yunis, I also spoke with a UNICEF staff member who, despite losing 17 members of her own extended family, is working heroically to provide children and families in Gaza with access to safe water and sanitation. As a mother of four, she is one of countless parents in Gaza in constant fear for her family. Given the terrible toll this war has exacted on Gaza's children, their fears are well founded. More than 5,300 Palestinian children have reportedly been killed in just 46 days. That amounts to more than 115 a day, every day, for weeks and weeks. Based on those figures, children account for 40 per cent of the deaths in Gaza. That is unprecedented. In other words, today the Gaza Strip is the most dangerous place in the world to be a child. We are also receiving reports that more than 1,200 children remain under the rubble of bombed-out buildings or are otherwise unaccounted for. It is notable that the number of deaths in the present crisis has far surpassed the total number of deaths during previous escalations. For comparison, in 17 years of monitoring and reporting of grave violations between 2005 and 2022, a total of 1,653 children were verified as having been killed.

Children who manage to survive the war are likely to see their lives irrevocably altered through repeated exposure to traumatic events. The violence and upheaval around them can induce toxic stress that interferes with their physical and cognitive development. Even before this latest escalation, more than 540,000 children in Gaza — half of its entire child population — were identified as needing mental health and psychosocial support. Today more than 1.7 million people in Gaza, half of whom are children, are displaced. We are particularly concerned about reports of increasing numbers of displaced children who have been separated from their families along evacuation corridors to the south, or who are otherwise arriving unaccompanied at hospitals for medical care. Those children are especially vulnerable, and they urgently need to be identified, provided with temporary care and given access to family tracing and reunification services.

In addition to bombs, rockets and gunfire, Gaza's children are at extreme risk owing to catastrophic living conditions. One million children — or really all the children inside the territory — are now food-insecure, facing what could soon become a catastrophic nutrition crisis. We project that over the next few months, child wasting, the most life-threatening form of malnutrition in children, could increase by nearly 30 per cent in Gaza. Meanwhile, water production capacity has plummeted to just 5 per cent of its normal output, with families and children relying on three litres or less of water per person per day for drinking, cooking and hygiene. At the same time, water pumping, desalination and wastewater treatment have all ceased to function because of the lack of fuel, and sanitation services have collapsed. Those conditions are leading to outbreaks of disease that could be life-threatening for vulnerable groups such as newborns, children and women, especially those who are malnourished. We are seeing cases of diarrhoeal and respiratory infections in children under the age of five, and we anticipate that the situation could worsen as the colder weather starts to set in.

The public-health risks in Gaza are compounded by the virtual shutdown of the health-care system. More than two thirds of hospitals are no longer functioning because of the lack of fuel and water, or because they sustained catastrophic damage in attacks. Moreover, the World Health Organization estimates that at least 16 health workers have been killed and 38 injured while on duty. Hospital patients are being injured and killed or are dying from a lack of medicine and care. Last

week UNICEF was part of an inter-agency mission that relocated 31 babies from Al Shifa Hospital to the Emirati hospital, in the south of the Gaza Strip. Twenty-eight of those babies are now receiving care in Egypt. Hospitals should never be attacked or used by combatants, and with thousands of displaced people sheltering in Gaza's health facilities, I cannot emphasize that point enough.

We are also seeing devastating attacks on schools, with close to 90 per cent of all school buildings sustaining damage. Nearly 80 per cent of the remaining school facilities are being used as shelters for internally displaced people. But even these spaces, where children and families have sought safety after fleeing their homes, have come under attack. This past weekend, strikes on two schools, including the Al-Fakhoura school of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which was sheltering displaced people, reportedly killed at least 24 people. UNICEF condemns all attacks on schools.

Across the State of Palestine and Israel, parties to the conflict are blatantly committing grave violations against children — including killing, maiming, abductions, attacks on schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access. But in Gaza, the effects of the violence perpetrated on children have been catastrophic, indiscriminate and disproportionate. And when the war ends, the contamination by explosive remnants of war will be unprecedented, with potentially tens of thousands of remnants scattered across Gaza and beyond — a lethal threat to children that could last for decades. Inside Gaza, the war has also caused the largest-ever loss of life for United Nations personnel, with more than 100 UNRWA staff killed. And in recent days, a World Health Organization colleague was killed along with her 6-month-old baby, her husband and her two brothers.

For children to survive and for humanitarian workers to stay and effectively deliver, humanitarian pauses are simply not enough. UNICEF is calling for an urgent humanitarian ceasefire to immediately put a stop to this carnage. We are concerned that further military escalation in the south of Gaza would exponentially worsen the humanitarian situation there, causing additional displacement and squeezing the civilian population into an even smaller area. Attacks on the south must be avoided.

UNICEF is strongly opposed to the establishment of so-called “safe zones”. No place is safe in the

Gaza Strip. And the proposed zones do not have the infrastructure or protection measures in place to meet the needs of such large numbers of civilians. We also reiterate our call on the parties to immediately and fully respect international humanitarian and human rights law, including the principles of necessity, distinction, precaution and proportionality. We ask them to go beyond what the law requires — to protect children and the civilian infrastructure they rely on, and to immediately and unconditionally release all civilian hostages held in the Gaza Strip, especially children. We call on the parties to abide by resolution 2712 (2023) and to provide safe and unrestricted humanitarian access to and within the Gaza Strip, including in the north. Parties must allow the immediate entry of life-sustaining supplies, including fuel, that are needed for trucking, water desalination, water pumping and flour production. We must be permitted to bring in essential water, sanitation and hygiene supplies, tarpaulins, tents and poles. We also call on the parties to ensure the voluntary movement and safe passage for all civilians seeking emergency shelter and a safe place to stay, to reopen, repair and augment the capacity of all water lines into the Gaza Strip and to ensure that the water is safe and not contaminated.

The true cost of this latest war in Palestine and Israel will be measured in children's lives — those lost to the violence and those forever changed by it. Without an end to the fighting and full humanitarian access, the cost will continue to grow exponentially. The destruction of Gaza and killing of civilians will not bring peace or safety to the region. The people of this region deserve peace. Only a negotiated political solution — one that prioritizes the rights and well-being of this and future generations of Israeli and Palestinian children — can ensure that.

I urge the parties to heed this call, starting with a humanitarian ceasefire as the first step on the path to lasting peace. And I urge the members of the Security Council to do everything in their power to end this catastrophe for children.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Ms. Russell for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Kanem.

Ms. Kanem: I thank Malta, the United Arab Emirates and the members of the Security Council for convening this important briefing and for affording me the opportunity to address the Council.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) deplores the loss of life in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territory in the escalating crisis since 7 October. We are deeply concerned for the safety and well-being of all women and girls caught up in the conflict. The situation they face is beyond catastrophic.

UNFPA delivers reproductive health and population-related services focusing on women and girls in over 130 locations, mainly developing countries around the world, including the delivery of humanitarian aid to pregnant women and new mothers. This assistance aligns with the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. We have worked in the occupied Palestinian territory since 1986, where we are now providing desperately needed support.

Some two thirds of all the thousands of people killed in Gaza are women and children, showing yet again that they pay the steepest price in conflicts. Amid the ongoing fighting and devastation in Gaza, there are currently 5,500 pregnant women expected to give birth in the coming month. Every day, approximately 180 women deliver under appalling conditions, the future for their newborns uncertain. At a moment when new life is beginning, what should be a moment of joy is overshadowed by death and destruction, horror and fear. The situation is most dire for women facing obstetric complications — some 15 per cent of pregnant women. Their lives are at risk owing to severely limited access to health care and to emergency obstetric care. UNFPA is deeply worried about the more than 7,000 women who gave birth over the past 47 days. They lack access to postpartum care, water, sanitation and nutrition.

Owing to attacks on health facilities, as well as the lack of fuel, electricity and supplies, half of all hospitals have shut down. Those that remain open are at the breaking point. There are 2.2 million people in Gaza, where an entire population is besieged and denied access to the essentials for survival. More than 1.6 million people are living in overcrowded conditions without sufficient clean water and sanitation. That creates multiple health risks, including for women who have no access to menstrual hygiene, as well as those who are pregnant or have recently delivered. Lack of food and water across Gaza will have an adverse impact on the health and well-being of pregnant and breastfeeding women. They have higher daily water and caloric intake requirements. A woman called Reham,

who is two months pregnant and experiencing bleeding, told us:

“There is a treatment that I should take, but I am not able to get it. Pregnant women like me should be drinking milk, eating eggs. All bakeries have been bombed. There is no bread, no water”.

In the West Bank, where settler violence is on the rise and households have been displaced, more than 70,000 women are pregnant and 8,000 are expected to give birth in the coming month. We are deeply concerned about the protection risks facing women living under these conditions, especially gender-based violence. Lack of access and the loss of communications limit our ability to deliver the support and services that gender-based violence survivors require.

Al Shifa Hospital is no longer functioning, and across Gaza health supplies are running dangerously low. There are reports of women having to undergo caesarean sections without anaesthesia. Military strikes and operations near hospitals are jeopardizing the lives of patients and of women and girls who desperately need medical care but are unable to receive it. Hospitals, health workers and civilians must never be targets. They have special protection under international humanitarian law. When health facilities are under attack, the lives of critically ill patients and health workers, and all seeking shelter at these facilities, are at risk. They have nowhere safe to go.

Thus far, UNFPA has managed to deliver five truckloads of reproductive health kits to Gaza, containing pharmaceuticals, equipment and supplies for emergency obstetric and neonatal care. That includes anaesthetics for use during caesarean sections. UNFPA is distributing clean delivery kits to improve the hygienic conditions for birth, wherever they may occur, as well as kits for women who have recently given birth. UNFPA also provides cash transfers to pregnant and breastfeeding women, breast cancer patients and survivors of gender-based violence.

UNFPA perseveres in providing life-saving services, yet the assistance delivered in Gaza to date is nowhere near enough to meet the tremendous needs of women and girls. Operational constraints and the fact that our own staff and most partners are directly affected by the conflict themselves severely impinges on our ability to deliver essential services. Our colleagues recount the impact of that daily trauma on their own families. One said, of her fourth evacuation:

“We were running without purpose, unsure where to find shelter and refuge. The sounds of bombing filled the air, and dust enveloped us.”

In Israel, civilians are experiencing profound pain as they mourn the killing of 1,200 people in the brutal attacks of 7 October, which we once again condemn while once again calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas. We join the Secretary-General in welcoming the announcement of the recent deal regarding the release of some of the hostages, including women and children.

UNFPA welcomes resolution 2712 (2023) of 15 November, noting that it calls for urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and for corridors throughout Gaza to save and protect civilian lives. UNFPA has continued to call for an immediate ceasefire. In that regard, the announcement of a four-day humanitarian pause is a welcome development, which must be used to allow for additional aid to reach those in desperate need.

Indeed, more aid is urgently needed in Gaza to save lives and to stem the torrent of human suffering. Unimpeded access of humanitarian workers and of supplies, including sexual and reproductive health services, is a matter of life and death for women and girls. In line with the Emergency Relief Coordinator’s 10-point plan, the continuous and sufficient flow of humanitarian assistance to all those in need, wherever they are, is essential. That is especially true for women and children.

Civilians and the infrastructure they rely on, including hospitals, shelters and schools, must be protected. We call for the protection of humanitarian workers in Gaza, who risk their lives in the service of others, as we mourn the loss of over 100 United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East colleagues and scores of aid workers killed in the conflict.

UNFPA reiterates the Secretary-General’s call for international humanitarian law and international human rights law to be upheld by all parties and for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, who include women and girls.

On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, which will begin 16 days to “orange the world” against gender-based violence, UNFPA denounces in the strongest possible terms all acts of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, whenever and wherever they occur.

The violence must end. The fate of humankind does not belong in the hands of those wielding weapons. It rests with women and young people and their allies standing together, waging peace. In this urgent test of humanity, women and girls desperately need peace to prevail. I call upon the Security Council to do everything in its power to make that peace happen.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Ms. Kanem for her briefing.

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

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): I thank Executive Director Bahous, Executive Director Russell and Executive Director Kanem for their painful briefings. They highlight the critical turning point we have reached in Israel’s 47-day war on Gaza, which followed the 7 October attacks by Hamas on Israel, and the grave choices that lie before Israel in its prosecution of the war.

Just for a sense of scale, the war is taking place in a small yet highly populated area. Its largest city, Gaza City, is more densely populated than New York. That tiny area is home to families who have spent decades trying to build normal lives as a community, despite repeated wars and displacement and amid an ongoing blockade. Within the 25-mile-long strip, 12,000 locations have already been subjected to air strikes, according to the Israeli Government. That includes strikes on sites shielded by the laws of war, such as schools, hospitals and refugee camps.

History shows that women and children are disproportionately impacted by conflict, and Gaza is no exception. In the past 47 days, children have become orphans, mothers have become childless, and intergenerational families have been wiped out altogether by the largest indiscriminate aerial bombardment we have witnessed in the recent history of warfare. It therefore cannot come as a surprise to anyone that more than two thirds of the approximately 14,000 Palestinian fatalities are women and children. Many of those killed were teachers, journalists and doctors, or children who were aspiring to become like those adults one day. From what we know of their lives and dreams and aspirations documented over the past months by brave journalists and ordinary people, they did not want to grow up to become Hamas, nor did they ask to become the front line against Israel’s formidable military arsenal.

In Israel, too, parents have grieved the unfathomable trauma of children taken hostage by Hamas into the Gaza Strip. The 7 October attack on Israel also brought horrific reports to the world of the killing of innocent civilians and torture and sexual violence against women. They were rightly condemned and must be investigated, with the perpetrators held accountable.

Trauma has unleashed trauma in its response. We are witnessing grief and horror of immense proportions, as well as the normalization of hate speech and the dehumanization of the other across social media and in the real world. There is also an alarming rise in both antisemitism and Islamophobia unleashed as a result across the globe. So this conflict is not compartmentalized and contained in the Gaza Strip, and it threatens to unleash forces that destabilize all of us. That is why our efforts must be scaled up to defeat the rising tide of hatred.

We therefore welcome the announcement today of the agreed release of 50 women and children hostages held by Hamas in Gaza and Palestinian women and children detained in Israel, as well as some additional aid to enter Gaza. We thank Qatar, Egypt and the United States for their tireless mediation efforts, a welcome note of hope in what have been described as the darkest of days for the Palestinian people. We hope that the four-day truce announced can be extended to allow life-saving humanitarian relief in for Palestinians in Gaza and the safe return of the remaining hostages there. Many lives hang in the balance in the coming days, and those numbers have faces and names.

The truce did not come in time to save countless lives, like that of Dima Alhaj, a World Health Organization staff member who worked at the Limb Reconstruction Centre in Gaza. She was killed yesterday, with her 6-month-old baby, her husband and other family members. Dima and her baby should still be alive today, like all the other women and children whose lives were cut short by the war. We offer our condolences yet again to the United Nations, which has lost an unprecedented number of over 100 colleagues in the war.

The very high number of women and particularly children killed by the relentless bombardment is a strong indicator that international humanitarian law is being violated and that its fundamental principles of distinction and proportionality are not being respected. There have been many debates about that in the media, but the numbers speak for themselves, as do

the indiscriminate bombing targets. This must stop immediately. There can be no justification for attacks that imperil large groups of civilians, especially women and children. The laws of war, especially for the protection of civilians, are not optional or reciprocal. And they apply to all, including Hamas, and must be abided by.

In the West Bank too, Israel's growing restrictions on Palestinians' freedom of movement is limiting women's ability to provide for their families, is preventing access to critical services, including medical care, and is interrupting children's access to education. The numbers of Palestinians killed there by extremist settlers, including 53 children, since this latest round of the conflict in Gaza, is another indicator that extreme ideologies are being mainstreamed today. That includes some Israeli Government statements calling for the forced transfer of the Palestinian population, which must stop. Misinformation can lead to grave miscalculation, and all Government leaders are accountable for that.

Let me emphasize that what is at stake is not only the now — women's and children's lives, their well-being and dignity — it is also their future. Women's full, equal and meaningful participation in negotiating and working towards the two-State solution will be critical to secure a lasting and sustainable peace for Israelis and Palestinians. We are watching those peacemakers lose their lives by the thousands.

Ultimately, as United Nations officials have said, only a ceasefire will prevent further violence and suffering. But in the meantime, we call for the full and urgent implementation of resolution 2712 (2023), adopted just last week, and we recall the Council's request for the Secretary-General to give the Council the options to effectively monitor the implementation of this resolution as a matter of urgency.

We reiterate the need for safe, sustained and at-scale humanitarian access throughout the entire Gaza strip, and we encourage all efforts to that end. That must not be linked to hostage negotiations — we unequivocally reject that premise. That, in addition to other diplomatic efforts, will help alleviate the desperate plight of women and children, who were the priority of Council deliberations last week (see S/PV.9479).

If there is one crisis in which the Council should deploy every tool at its disposal today, this is it. I would like to urge my colleagues to be creative and to break out of the paralysis of the status quo approach.

Prioritizing efforts to stop the violence and working towards the long-term resolution of this conflict is the only rational strategy to ensure security and stability for both Palestinians and Israelis. And Palestinian and Israeli women and children deserve that political horizon. As we watch this war unfold, we are seeing any chance for a peaceful future slip away. But we do not have to take that path, and clear choices lie ahead for Israel and for Hamas.

We have all felt anger, despair and helplessness as we have stared into the abyss of Gaza's grief, but we must not act without the courage and resilience that the innocent have shown and taught us these past weeks — and we should all feel angry if we fail them again today.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I thank the Executive Directors of UN-Women, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund for their important briefings today.

Malta and United Arab Emirates called for this meeting as we are deeply concerned about the disproportionate impact this conflict is having on women and children. It is harrowing to learn that around 68 per cent of casualties since 7 October are women and children, with many still believed to be caught under the rubble.

Since that day, Malta has spared no opportunity to condemn the atrocious terror attacks by Hamas. They have left hundreds — including innocent men, women and children — brutally tortured and murdered. We reiterate our solidarity with the victims and their families.

Malta deplores the kidnapping, torture and killing of hostages, which include babies, young children, men and women. Hamas must release all hostages, safely and unconditionally. We welcome the truce deal for the release of several hostages and a four-day pause in the fighting. We commend the mediation efforts of all parties involved — the United States, Qatar and Egypt — is this very important step.

We also remain deeply concerned about reports that civilians and civilian structures, including hospitals and schools, may have been used as human shields. Furthermore, the indiscriminate rocket fire attacks on Israeli civilians must not go unnoticed. Israeli men, women and children are also suffering from internal displacement, as well as emotional and psychological trauma.

Likewise, while acknowledging that Israel has the right to defend itself within the parameters of international law, we call on Israel to stop attacks on Palestinian civilians.

It is clear to all that the humanitarian situation in Gaza is catastrophic. Civilian lives, including those of women and children, must be safeguarded. UN-Women estimates that there are more than 2,000 new female-headed households since the start of the conflict, many having been displaced and taking shelter in overburdened facilities belonging to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and in hospitals.

Standard necessities for survival, such as food, water and medicine, continue to be scarce and are disproportionately affecting children's health and women as primary caregivers. Coupled with that is a lack of access to hygiene supplies, adequate privacy and increasing gender-based violence and community tensions, all due to overcrowding in shelters. Such conditions also have an acute effect on the thousands of pregnant women, who suffer from heightened vulnerabilities and require specific needs and care. Those are only a few of the reasons why Malta continues to underline the need for urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors for a sufficient number of days, as outlined in resolution 2712 (2023).

Even amid this unbearable situation, women in Gaza are among the first responders. Support for women's civil society organizations must be given urgent priority. Women human rights defenders and activists, including journalists, must be protected. We must also strive to include gender-related issues and perspectives into the Council's considerations of this agenda item.

Children continue to disproportionately bear the burden of the escalation in this conflict. The killing and maiming of children, attacks on schools and hospitals, abductions and denial of humanitarian access are grave violations against children and violations of international law. We are also deeply distressed about the death of premature babies at Al Shifa Hospital. While the evacuation of babies in critical condition into hospitals in the Sinai peninsula is a welcome development under current circumstances, we must not ignore the fact that their lives and well-being continue to be in grave and imminent danger. In that regard, we express our heartfelt gratitude to all countries that assisted or facilitated those efforts.

The adoption of resolution 2712 (2023) last week clearly called for a number of provisions that aim to offer a respite to families and children suffering from this conflict.

Furthermore, attacks on schools threaten children's right to education, which will have negative long-term consequences. Malta deploras last weekend's attack on UNRWA schools that killed at least 24 people.

We are also deeply concerned about the situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Military incursions, settler violence, demolitions and the forced transfer of Palestinians risk the opening of a third front — a real possibility. Incidents at various checkpoints in Jerusalem are also on the rise. Hence, we call for restraint.

This untenable situation needs to end. When it does, we need to be well prepared to prevent a reversion to the status quo in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territory. Such a change in the political trajectory towards reconciliation and peace must also include women as legitimate stakeholders and effective peacebuilders.

To that end, Malta underscores its commitment to a lasting and sustainable peace in the Middle East, on the basis of a two-State solution in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Executive Director Bahous, Executive Director Russell and Executive Director Kanem for their briefings. We appreciate all that they are doing to alleviate the suffering of all women and children around the world. And I want to take this moment to wish Executive Director Russell a full recovery from her injuries.

At the outset, I want to say that it is also critical that the Council hear from academic and civil society briefers who can speak to the plight of women and girls living under the conflict. On that point, I am disappointed that our request to have Ms. Ruth Halperin-Kaddari brief the Council was not accommodated. Ms. Halperin-Kaddari served on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for 12 years and has dedicated her life to the cause of ending violence against women. She should have been able to brief the Council today.

Last night, we got welcome news: a deal that President Biden and the United States helped to broker in

partnership with Egypt and Qatar. The deal was reached to secure the release of at least 50 hostages, including Americans, taken by Hamas during its brutal terrorist assault against Israel. Over the coming weeks, we will work to reunite all hostages with their families — every single one. We also appreciate the commitment that Prime Minister Netanyahu and his Government have made to support an extended pause to ensure that the deal can be fully carried out, to ensure the provision of additional humanitarian assistance to help alleviate the suffering of innocent Palestinian families in Gaza and to allow time for Palestinian civilians to move to safer locations. All aspects of the deal must now be fully implemented, and we must encourage all Council members to support those aims.

While this is real cause for hope, it does not undo the devastating toll that the conflict has had on women and children and on all innocent civilians in Israel, in Gaza and the West Bank — lives cut short tragically, debilitating injuries and emotional scars that for many, including those taken hostage, will never fade. That is the dark reality of conflict that Hamas set in motion. It has been less than two months since Hamas carried out its barbaric terrorist attack against Israel. But many members of the Council seem to have forgotten or attempted to erase the horrors of that day. And many still cannot bring themselves to unequivocally condemn Hamas's acts of terror. I therefore feel an obligation to speak about those horrors, lest we forget. It is outrageous, and it is an insult to the victims of Hamas's brutal attack: the children who were executed in front of their parents, the families who were burned alive and the young people who were gunned down with glee. We have also seen horrifying footage that points to Hamas's rape and sexual assault of innocent civilians. Where is the universal condemnation, and where is the outrage?

This moment is a test of our capacity to empathize with the suffering of all. We must continue to hold space in our hearts for the victims of the 7 October attack, for those in Israel whose homes are targets of Hamas's rockets and for the hostages in Gaza who were pried from their families. But let us be clear: we must also have the same compassion for the innocent Palestinian civilians who have been killed and injured during the conflict, for the innocent civilians, mostly children, under the rubble, for the people in Gaza who are in dire need of humanitarian assistance, water, food, shelter and other essentials, for the young girls who are no longer able to attend school, for the elderly

who have fallen ill from a lack of adequate nutrition, and for those with disabilities who are unable to move.

We must scale up our humanitarian assistance to Gaza. The Council knows that the United States continues to work with the United Nations and partners in the region to do just that. We are pleased to see the first deliveries of much-needed fuel following a commitment by Israel. That will help to keep vital communications networks running and help the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) deliver humanitarian aid. But much more aid, including fuel, is needed urgently. As we heard today, Palestinian women also lack access to sexual, reproductive and maternal health care. And humanitarian partners have in many cases been unable to provide gender-based violence response services in Gaza. That is not for lack of trying. UNRWA is doing everything in its power to continue to provide those services, even in the face of grave danger. But those women and girls need more support and protection. The United States is committed to doing everything possible to help women and girls in all conflict zones, consistent with resolution 1325 (2000).

Make no mistake: Hamas is not concerned about protecting any civilians, including any Palestinian civilians. No, they are deliberately and callously putting them in harm's way, hiding behind the skirts of their women and innocent civilians. Still, that does not lessen Israel's responsibility to protect civilians, consistent with international humanitarian law, as it exercises its right to safeguard its people from acts of terror. Efforts to mitigate and respond to civilian harm are both a moral and a strategic imperative, and we are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of lives at the United Nations Al Fakhoura school in Gaza. Any harm to civilians sheltering at protected sites is unacceptable.

Even at this perilous moment, we must work towards a sustained peace and towards a future in which two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace. Women and girls can and must help chart that better future. With their support and leadership, I believe that we can at long last secure peace, freedom and prosperity for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Lastly, on this day before Americans celebrate their Thanksgiving, recalling all the things that we are thankful for, we must not forget those who are suffering, those who are in mourning and those whose children are going to bed hungry. We must do everything possible to alleviate their suffering.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We fully support the convening of this emergency Security Council meeting on the situation in the Gaza Strip, with a focus on the protection of civilians, especially women and children. We thank the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Sima Sami Bahous, the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Catherine Russell, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, Ms. Natalia Kanem, for their briefings on the situation in the Palestinian enclave.

Since early October, an increasingly tragic situation has unfolded in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict zone. The killing and violence to which Israeli civilians have been subjected cannot be justified. All terrorist acts against civilians, including hostage-taking, warrant categorical condemnation. However, Israel's subsequent retaliatory action against the Gaza Strip, including the ground operation, has resulted in bloodshed on an unprecedented scale in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in Gaza, where a veritable humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding. We have heard new statistics today that vividly illustrate its scope. The number of Palestinians killed in less than two months — around 14,000, half of them children — is staggering. The unprecedented number of internally displaced persons since 1948 — 1.6 million — is also appalling. In short, the worst predictions of a disaster of near-biblical proportions are coming true, and the Palestinians are facing it before our very eyes.

At the same time, Israel is depriving the international community, including Russia, of the opportunity to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to Gaza. The Gaza Strip remains cut off from steady and sufficient supplies of water, food, medicines and fuel, which Israel has allowed to trickle in selectively only one month after the start of the blockade. Such a situation is absolutely unacceptable, including in terms of protecting women's rights and ensuring the implementation of numerous Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. Israel is obliged to take measures to comply with those documents, especially given that it has incorporated resolution 1325 (2000) into its national legislation and has declared its commitment to the subject.

The mass killing and maiming of children committed by the Israeli army in the course of its operations, as well as attacks on schools and hospitals

that have claimed innocent lives, are of the utmost concern. The strikes are also targeting other civilian sites — mosques, churches, refugee camps and the United Nations facilities where the women and children of Gaza seek refuge from the bombing — in blatant violation of international humanitarian law. We have heard allegations of Hamas command posts and bunkers being located in such facilities, but we have yet to see any convincing evidence of that. We would particularly like to stress the unacceptability of denying humanitarian access to children, which is an absolute priority given the appalling conditions in Gaza. As a result, more children have died in Gaza over the past month than in all other conflicts over the past few years combined. Every day, dozens, if not hundreds, of children are killed or maimed in Gaza. Three children were killed by Israeli shelling in southern Lebanon. Palestinian children's right to life is at stake, and our common task is to save those lives. The Secretary-General's sobering words stating that Gaza has become a graveyard for children came nearly three weeks ago, yet children continue to die. We asked the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflicts to keep the situation in Gaza under particular scrutiny and to inform the Council of the measures being taken.

We are also concerned about West Jerusalem's and Western States' violations of the rights of those who express disagreement with Israel's actions, which includes violations of the freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and the persecution of human rights defenders. We believe that, given those circumstances, the Council should make it a rule to invite representatives of Palestinian civil society, including women, to its meetings in order to obtain first-hand information on the situation in the occupied territory.

All that the Council has managed to achieve against that completely unacceptable backdrop is to adopt, on 15 November, resolution 2712 (2023), submitted by Malta and concerning the humanitarian situation in the enclave, focusing on the impact of the conflict on children specifically (see S/PV.9479). Unfortunately, that resolution was watered down and did not contain a demand for a ceasefire; neither did it provide for practical measures to ensure broad and unhindered access to those in need and to provide assistance to the victims. Russia therefore abstained in the voting, yielding to requests from the Palestinians and Arab countries themselves not to prevent the Council from finally being able to adopt at least some kind of product

on the conflict for the first time since 2016. At the same time, the resolution left out Israel's violent raids on the West Bank, the arbitrary air raids on Syria and the growing tensions along the Blue Line with Lebanon, which create a risk of the crisis spreading out further throughout the Middle East region.

The absolute moral and humanitarian imperative to end hostilities was reduced to a vague and undirected call for some kind of pauses, which are not backed by Israel's relevant obligations under international humanitarian law, or by monitoring or implementation mechanisms. At the same time, there is no doubt that no humanitarian pause can change the current unacceptable situation. An immediate ceasefire in the conflict zone is necessary. Only that will make it possible to avoid new casualties and ensure that the necessary humanitarian assistance is provided to those in need, particularly children. Unfortunately, the Israeli leadership took full advantage of the United States-induced rift in the Security Council and did not hesitate to call the adopted resolution meaningless, declaring their intention to ignore it and continue clearing out the Gaza Strip.

The question is still in the air as to how long the Council would tolerate such an attitude towards its own decision, which runs counter to article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations. Under no circumstances can we allow resolution 2712 (2023) to remain only on paper. Now that the resolution has been adopted, the Secretary-General must provide the Council with the proposals asked of him by the resolution, in particular regarding its monitoring mechanism. Immediately following the adoption of resolution 2712 (2023), the Israeli air force attacked the Al-Fakhoura and Tal Al-Zaatar schools, run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), as well as the Al Shifa and Al Ahli Hospital complexes. In a context where more than 200 bombings were taking place per day, according to the UNRWA Commissioner-General, Mr. Lazzarini, there are no safe places left in Gaza in which to shelter civilians. Even United Nations facilities, the coordinates of which are known to West Jerusalem and which are flying blue flags, are becoming targets. The United Nations rightly calls such actions blatant violations of international humanitarian law and a total disregard for humanity. The Israeli leadership cynically calls casualties among Palestinian civilians inevitable collateral damage and is ready to consider isolated pauses in hostilities only through the prism of its own military interests.

Yesterday we learned of an agreement reached between Israel and Hamas on a four-day pause and an exchange of some of the hostages held by Hamas for Palestinian women and children held in Israeli jails. One must be clear that those important agreements, the implementation of which will dictate the fate of thousands of people, was possible not following resolution 2712 (2023), but rather thanks to the effective mediation efforts of Qatar and Egypt in their contacts with the Hamas leadership. We hope that the agreement will be strictly enforced by all parties and will contribute to the development of further contacts in the interest of addressing acute humanitarian issues. We also hope that it will be an important step towards a general de-escalation of the situation. For our part, we intend to contribute fully to that, in close coordination with regional stakeholders.

We all know that addressing the current outbreak in Israeli-Palestinian violence, however serious it might be, should not let us lose sight of the search for a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue, and we look forward to a focused discussion of the issue in the Council meeting on 29 November.

Mr. De Rivièrè (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Bahous, Ms. Russell and Ms. Kanem for their briefings, and I would like to reiterate to them that France fully supports UN-Women, UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund in their efforts to help the people of Gaza.

France welcomes the agreement reached in the past few hours, which should allow for the release of several dozens of hostages and a truce. It welcomes the role of Qatar, the United States and Egypt. That could set in motion a positive cycle. Other releases must follow. France calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all the hostages detained by Hamas and other terrorist groups since 7 October. Among those hostages are women and children. France condemns the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas and other terrorist groups on 7 October, as well as the sexual violence and abductions of children committed on that day; the Security Council must do the same in unequivocal terms. Israel has the right to defend itself and the duty to do so in accordance with international law.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is catastrophic. The number of wounded or killed Palestinian civilians is increasing day by day. Women and children are particularly vulnerable and represent two thirds of the victims. France calls for the immediate implementation

of resolution 2712 (2023), adopted by the Council last week (see S/PV.9479), and it will scrutinize very carefully the proposals that will be made by the United Nations to ensure the monitoring of its implementation. In the interim, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip must be assured as a matter of urgency. All crossing points must be open. The number of convoys must be commensurate with the need, which is immense. France has fully played its part in the humanitarian effort: it has already deployed more than 100 tons of humanitarian freight and, since 7 October, has increased its support to €100 million. It will continue its efforts in the coming days by providing further food and medical aid. The international humanitarian conference, held in Paris on 9 November, under the aegis of the President Macron, allowed more than €1 billion in contributions to be raised. We must do more.

With regard to sick or wounded children who need urgent care, France is mobilizing all the resources at its disposal so that they can be treated in France, if that is useful and necessary.

Civilian infrastructure and hospitals, as well as humanitarian and health-care personnel, must be protected in accordance with international humanitarian law. France condemns all shelling of civilians and civilian infrastructure. We reiterate that the buildings of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in which civilians are sheltering must not be targeted. Once again, France hails the commitment on the ground of the United Nations, UNRWA staff, non-governmental organizations and all humanitarian actors.

We also condemn the occupation of civilian infrastructure by Hamas, which runs counter to international humanitarian law.

The extremely serious nature of the situation in Gaza must not lead us to forget the scale of the violence perpetrated against the Palestinian population in the West Bank. France demands that the Israeli authorities immediately put an end to that violence.

We are fully committed to preventing the conflict from spreading to the rest of the region. The safety of the peacekeepers in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization must be guaranteed.

We condemn the Houthi firing towards Israel and the hijacking by the Houthis of a commercial vessel on 19 November.

A tangible political horizon must be restored to enable Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace and security. The resumption of a peace process is vital, because otherwise the current tragedy will be inexorably followed by other tragedies. That process must lead to a two-State solution, with essential guarantees for Israel's security and a State for the Palestinian people. That is the only viable solution.

With that in mind, France will continue to call for an immediate humanitarian truce leading to a ceasefire, which we must all work towards. The Council must now speak with one voice on this issue.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting, devoted in particular to the situation of women and children in the context of the Middle East conflict.

We are today accompanied by a glimmer of hope. Switzerland welcomes the agreement enabling the release of 50 hostages and the establishment of a four-day humanitarian truce. We thank all the countries that have contributed to the agreement, in particular Egypt, Qatar and the United States, and wish the freed hostages and their families a speedy reunion and wish the hostages a speedy recovery from their physical and psychological wounds.

We call for the full implementation of resolution 2712 (2023), adopted a week ago by the Council, which stresses the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law. That includes the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages still being held by Hamas and other groups in appalling conditions in Gaza, as well as the observance of pauses to allow the rapid, safe and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians through all possible crossing points.

Allow me also to thank the Executive Directors of UN-Women, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Sima Sami Bahous, Catherine Russell and Natalia Kanem, for their poignant testimonies, which we will not soon forget. We also thank the Head of UNICEF for her visit to Gaza last week. I would also like to thank all those involved, in particular the World Health Organization, for the rescue last weekend of 31 newborn babies from Al Shifa Hospital.

Switzerland remains deeply concerned by the high number of civilian casualties in Israel and throughout the occupied Palestinian territory since the acts of terror perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October, which we strongly condemned. We heard that two thirds of the victims are women and children. As the Executive Director of UN-Women told us, two mothers are killed every hour, seven women every two hours. That high number is unacceptable. Given their vulnerability and specific needs, the protection of children is of paramount importance.

While recognizing Israel's right to ensure its own defence and security, Switzerland has consistently called on the parties to protect civilians and respect international humanitarian law, in particular the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution.

My country also remains deeply concerned by the catastrophic humanitarian situation and its impact on all civilians. In Gaza, the health situation is deteriorating very quickly, in particular for the 1.7 million displaced persons, of whom again many are children. Switzerland has allocated \$100 million in emergency aid to the region.

We recall that all civilians, the wounded and sick, humanitarian and medical personnel and civilian infrastructure—including the schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East—are protected by international humanitarian law. All civilians must have access to services essential to their survival, such as drinking water, food and electricity. The impact of the conflict on women and girls also deserves our full attention, as we have just heard from the Executive Directors of UN-Women and the UNFPA. Access to medical care is essential, in particular for pregnant women.

We must avoid at all costs an even more serious escalation or even a spreading of the conflict in the region. We see worrisome signs of that in both the West Bank and Lebanon. In the West Bank, Switzerland recalls that in the context of operations by the Israeli security forces, the use of force must in particular meet the criterion of proportionality and respect the rights of every individual to life and security of person. We also recall that Israel is bound by international humanitarian law to guarantee, to the fullest extent possible, the satisfaction of the basic needs of the population throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. It must also respect and protect human rights. Independent investigations must be conducted into all violations of

international law in Israel and throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, so that the perpetrators can be brought to justice.

The Council must unite around the bedrock of the two-State solution, which is the only solution that can guarantee peace and stability in the region. We also heard the appeal to bring on board the voices and contributions of Palestinian and Israeli women, as called for by resolution 1325 (2000). We must all contribute to rebuilding — without further delay — the bedrock of two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace, within secure and recognized borders.

Mr. Yamanaka (Japan): I thank the Executive Directors of UN-Women, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund for their briefings.

Japan is deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, which is worsening to an unprecedented level. There are no words to explain this horror. Most of the people in Gaza have now been displaced and are desperately searching for food, water, medicine and shelter.

Today we just heard about the dire and inhumane conditions confronting women and children in Gaza, who are forced to live in such vulnerable situations. Premature babies are dying, as critical systems shut down, and women are giving birth in unimaginable conditions. As the Executive Director of UN-Women just described, women and children are facing disproportionate impacts of the war.

More than 3,000 women reportedly have been killed in Gaza. An estimated 575,000 women and adolescent girls of reproductive age are also facing critical gaps in their access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health services. That has resulted in births without adequate care and the deaths of premature infants. In that context, Japan would also like to reaffirm the importance of ensuring the protection of medical and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2286 (2016).

The children in Gaza are also facing extremely challenging conditions. As the Secretary-General said recently, Gaza is becoming a graveyard for children. Reportedly, more than 4,500 children have been killed and at least 6,800 have been injured to date, with more than 400 being killed or injured every single day. Many

children are believed to be trapped beneath the rubble of collapsed buildings.

It is profoundly distressing to learn that women and children account for nearly 70 per cent of the death toll in Gaza. No other place on Earth is as horrifying as Gaza right now. All parties to the conflict must remember the grave impacts of armed conflict that those women, children and their families will have to endure for many years to come. The protection of women and children must be prioritized, and they must be provided with essential humanitarian assistance such as food, water and medicine continuously. In that regard, full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access must be ensured, in line with international humanitarian law and the newly adopted resolution 2712 (2023). Japan welcomes that resolution and calls for all parties to act faithfully based on it.

Many women and children are among the victims and the hostages subject to the acts of terror committed by Hamas in Israel. Japan demands the immediate and unconditional release of all the remaining hostages. We once again express our unequivocal condemnation of the horrifying terror attacks committed by Hamas and other Palestinian militants. At the same time, we call for all parties to act in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law. In that regard, Japan welcomes the recently announced deal for the release of hostages and a pause in fighting for four days as an important move towards the release of further hostages and the improvement of the humanitarian situation and commends the efforts undertaken by the countries concerned. We expect the deal to be implemented in a steady and timely manner.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize that no military action can resolve this conflict. Diplomatic negotiations must be relaunched, leading to a two-State solution, with Israel and a future independent State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security. In addition, the concept of women and peace and security has shown that we can move closer to sustaining peace by having women actively participate as leaders in conflict resolution, reconstruction and peacebuilding, while also protecting and helping women and girls. A women and peace and security perspective must be ensured when working to improve the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and to de-escalate the situation as soon as possible, as well as in the subsequent recovery and reconstruction. Japan will work tirelessly to that end.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Executive Directors Bahous, Russell and Kanem for briefing us today.

The humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza is acute. The loss that innocent civilians are suffering is incomprehensible. Too many — including women and children — are losing their lives. Our collective priority must be to alleviate that suffering. It is crucial that all sides uphold international humanitarian law and take all possible measures to protect innocent civilians, including at hospitals and schools.

We welcome the announcement of the agreement reached today for a coordinated release of hostages and a pause in the fighting. That is a crucial step towards providing relief to the families of the hostages and addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. We urge all parties to ensure the agreement is delivered in full. The United Kingdom welcomes the immense international cooperation, including the efforts of Qatar, Egypt, the United States and Israel, that has led to an agreement being reached.

This pause provides an important opportunity to ensure that much greater volumes of food, fuel and other life-saving aid can reach Gaza on a sustained basis. We are particularly concerned for civilians in northern Gaza, where there has been no water or food supplied for at least two weeks, and hospitals and health centres are unable to function. Those people urgently need help, and they need it now.

The United Kingdom continues to call and advocate for increased land access through the Rafah crossing and the full opening of the Kerem Shalom crossing in order to get critical goods into Gaza at much greater speeds. We continue to press Israel to authorize the entry of at least 200,000 litres of fuel per day.

While the United Kingdom regrets that resolution 2712 (2023) could not clearly condemn Hamas's terror attacks of 7 October, we strongly support the objective of that resolution: to get aid in, and hostages and civilians out. And to achieve that objective, we call for the resolution's urgent implementation.

Finally, we share colleagues' concerns about escalatory actions that disrupt regional peace and security. The United Kingdom is intensively engaging with partners to prevent further escalation. We condemn the unlawful seizure of the *MV Galaxy Leader* by the Houthis on 19 November and call for the immediate and unconditional, release of the ship and its

crew. We continue to work towards a two-State solution that provides justice and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I thank Executive Directors Bahous, Russell and Kanem the information provided.

Like many others, we welcome the agreement reached to ensure the release of some of the hostages captured by Hamas. Women and children illegally held in captivity for more than seven weeks will finally be reunited with their loved ones. We commend the efforts of those involved, in particular the United States, Qatar and Egypt — and we encourage them to continue — and we reiterate our call for the release of all innocent civilians. The four-day pause and the partial release of hostages go in the same direction as resolution 2712 (2023), adopted recently by the Security Council, and which should be fully implemented (see S/PV.9479). This momentum should be fully used to contribute to ensuring the delivery of critical and vital humanitarian aid for all civilians in Gaza. Humanity always prevails in ensuring that things get better.

We acknowledge the extremely difficult circumstances the United Nations agencies and their international partners continue to face while operating on the ground. We pay tribute to their extraordinary efforts to help those in need. The pause will bring the much-needed relief to facilitate their work, guarantee their safety and ensure immediate, unrestricted humanitarian access for all civilians in need in order to save lives and prevent further suffering. Saving lives is the United Nations core mandate; it is the calling of those who serve it. That makes even more incomprehensible the unprecedented and unjustified losses the United Nations family has endured, with more than 100 of its staff killed in the line of duty.

In the face of the abhorrent massacre by Hamas of Israeli citizens, a carnage that evokes some of the darkest memories, we understand the efforts to root out Hamas in an act of self-defence and to make sure that such attacks never happen again. In the media landscape, the latest bad news reports quickly overshadow the previous ones, but Hamas's horrific crimes cannot be forgotten or relativized and should not go unpunished. At the same time, we acknowledge that fighting in such a densely populated area is very challenging because Hamas's military capabilities and its war infrastructure are deeply embedded within Gaza; its fighters intentionally hide among civilians, exposing the latter deliberately to high and heightened risks.

Wars, even the most carefully planned ones, are always a tragic event, as many things can and do go wrong. We are dismayed by the extreme disproportionate impact the Israeli response to Hamas is having on civilian lives in Gaza. The death toll of civilians is utterly disturbing, and the rules on the protection of civilians in conflict are being challenged constantly. The bombardments, the huge number of displaced people, the collapse of water and electricity systems, the lack of fuel and the limited access to food and medical supplies are — as we heard from the briefers — severely affecting maternal, newborn and child health care in an already dire humanitarian situation.

We have said it many times: wars have laws, and they must be respected. Hospitals and schools — wherever they are — enjoy protection under international humanitarian law, and that should be no different in Gaza. In responding to terror, Israel must abide fully by international humanitarian law, in line with the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. Let us not forget that any military strategy that ignores the human cost could ultimately have adverse effects, which, in the long term, risk playing into the hands of extremists and undermine long-term efforts to achieve peace and stability in the wider region.

As we are all aware, the Israel-Hamas war has spilled onto the world stage. Sharp political and social polarization has deepened far from the conflict zone. In such troubled times, people make little effort to understand; they rush to take sides, often unleashing the worst. We see with worry an alarming rise of acts of antisemitism, dehumanizing language, multiple acts of hate, anti-Muslim, anti-Arab or anti-Palestinian sentiment. They are becoming commonalities to unite multiple different and competing groups of bigots, which can quickly metastasize into senseless violence. The longer the war endures, the greater the danger of seeing that further expand and be exacerbated.

Today the prospects for peace and a long-lasting solution may well seem more distant than ever. We must resist that idea and feeling, and we should think and work for the day after the current conflict. Israel's right to exist and its security on the one hand, and a viable pathway for Palestinians to have their own State and freedom on the other, are not mutually exclusive. To the contrary, they form the tandem foundations of a future in security, dignity and prosperity for all. As Prime Minister Rama said yesterday,

“Palestinians in Gaza cannot be left with the impossible choice, either Hamas or Israel. We all have the duty to do more and better and work for a Gaza free of Hamas, but also without Israeli troops and able to reorganize its life and future in peace and in freedom.”

Mr. França Danese (Brazil): Brazil thanks the Chinese presidency for convening this meeting, and the United Arab Emirates and Malta for their timely request. We also thank United Nations Executive Directors Bahous, Russell and Kanem for their detailed updates on the dire reality faced by hundreds of thousands of civilians in Gaza, particularly women and children. We highlight that, appallingly, more than 5,000 children have been killed in Gaza as a result of Israeli attacks.

We gather here in the shadow of a humanitarian crisis of staggering proportions. Since the terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October and the subsequent military escalation, Gaza has been at the epicentre of an appalling humanitarian tragedy. The toll is heart-wrenching: over 14,000 lives lost, countless injured or missing and critical infrastructure destroyed. Such essential supplies as food, water, and medical items are scarce. The collapse of power and communication networks has plunged the region into darkness and isolation. The displacement of 1.5 million individuals has led to overcrowding and heightened the risk of widespread disease. Those conditions are not just dire; they are catastrophic.

Also of continued great concern is the situation of more than 200 people being held hostage by Hamas, including women and children. We reiterate our call for the prompt and safe release of all hostages, and we welcome the four-day truce and hostage release deal approved yesterday. We acknowledge the mediation efforts and express our hope that the deal will be upheld and immediately followed by new releases.

Brazil mourns the overwhelming loss of life in the conflict on both sides and that of more than 100 United Nations staff and humanitarian workers who have perished since the conflict escalated.

The situation in the Gaza Strip, especially for women and children, is nothing short of a calamity. Among those at highest risk are newborns and infants and pregnant women, many of whom go into labour each day in appalling conditions, without adequate medical care. That crisis is exacerbated for those experiencing complications during delivery. That has led to

distressing reports of women undergoing caesarean sections without proper anaesthesia. That situation exposes continuous violations of human rights.

Children are regrettably caught up in this spiral of violence. They face constant threats to their safety and well-being. This conflict is robbing them of their childhoods, their future and their lives. The psychological and physical impact of this crisis on entire generations of Palestinian and Israeli children will have long-lasting repercussions.

We deplore the recent attacks on two schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in under 24 hours, resulting in the tragic loss of life and injury to many, predominantly women and children. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians have been compelled to seek shelter in United Nations facilities across Gaza. Brazil reiterates the inviolability of those premises as part of the imperative to protect educational institutions in conflict zones. We urge all parties to immediately cease hostilities and all forms of violence. All parties must comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Brazil calls for the swift and unobstructed delivery of humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. That must be done through all available and secure crossing points. We appeal to all actors on the ground to work to ensure that those lifelines remain open and functional.

As we confront this crisis, it is equally vital to prevent its escalation and spillover into neighbouring areas, such as the West Bank and along the Lebanese-Israeli border. The risk of a regional spillover is real, and we must avoid further deterioration.

The international community cannot continue to overlook the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples to live in peace and security, which cannot be achieved without a sovereign Palestinian State. Our collective responsibility is to foster the conditions for dialogue and promote political pathways towards a lasting solution, in accordance and in compliance with international law and the Council's own decisions. Brazil welcomes the adoption of resolution 2712 (2023) as a positive first step, which must be fully and urgently implemented. However, more needs to be done. Brazil and a majority of Member States support an immediate, lasting and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities.

Finally, we reiterate our unwavering support for a two-State solution. The establishment of a viable Palestinian State coexisting in peace alongside Israel within secure, mutually accepted and internationally recognized borders is fundamental for the security and prosperity of Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): I wish to thank China's presidency for convening this important meeting. I also thank the United Arab Emirates and Malta for bringing this issue onto the Security Council's agenda.

We extend our appreciation to the briefers—Ms. Sima Bahous, UN-Women Executive Director; Ms. Catherine Russell, UNICEF Executive Director; and Ms. Natalia Kanem, United Nations Population Fund Executive Director — for their comprehensive insights on the situation on the ground, particularly on the challenges faced by women and children in Gaza.

The humanitarian situation of Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip has been dire for a long time, and the current escalation of hostilities only exacerbates it. In fact, since 7 October, women, girls and children in Gaza have endured attacks, displacement and social and economic disruption. Humanitarian agencies have repeatedly warned of an unprecedented humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza amid Israel's total siege. Air raids and bombardments have damaged several facilities, including hospitals, limiting access to care, particularly for pregnant women and for children.

Today the Council meets immediately after the adoption of the first resolution (resolution 2712 (2023)) on the situation in the Gaza Strip since 7 October (see S/PV.9479). It is our sincere hope that this meeting will be an opportunity for us to reflect and agree on the best practical paths and solutions towards alleviating the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. It is our responsibility to maximize efforts, energy and time towards implementing a coordinated response to save the lives of children, women and other civilians in this dire situation.

In that regard, Mozambique expresses its sincere appreciation for the latest news about the announced agreement between the Government of Israel and Hamas for the release of hostages, with priority to children and women. We will recall the recent resolution 2712 (2023), adopted by the Security Council on 15 November 2023. That resolution called for urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors throughout the

Gaza Strip to enable unhindered humanitarian access for United Nations humanitarian agencies and all other impartial humanitarian organizations in order to facilitate the provision of life-saving goods and services that are essential for the well-being and survival of innocent civilians, especially children. It is our hope that this positive signal could pave the way for a de-escalation of the conflict, leading to a humanitarian ceasefire allowing the entry of humanitarian assistance, including food, water, fuel and health supplies for women, girls and children in the Gaza Strip. There should be a unanimous call in this Chamber, and it should not be a conditional action. We are also of the view that, above and beyond access for humanitarian assistance into Gaza, we should consider scaling up the levels of such support and assistance due to the scale of the humanitarian crisis currently on the ground.

While acknowledging the encouraging signs, an immediate, durable and sustained cessation of hostilities and a return to constructive dialogue remain the best immediate option to remedy the calamitous situation in Gaza. We therefore reiterate the urgency for the parties to show the necessary leadership, wisdom and courage to engage in dialogue and work towards a long-lasting solution, allowing both Israelis and Palestinians to live side by side in peace and security as good neighbours, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The members of the Council should also exert their respective roles of influence for this noble and ideal goal.

In conclusion, we again appeal to all Council members to not spare a single effort to work towards achieving peace, security, self-determination and dignity for both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We join others in expressing thanks for the briefings received this morning, which allow us to learn more about what is happening in Gaza, especially because of the specific focus on the situation of women and children.

Women bear the disproportionate burden of conflicts. The explosion of violence unleashed by the Hamas terrorist attacks on 7 October is no exception. The acts that were perpetrated that Saturday in southern Israel prove the use of all types of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, which constitute particularly atrocious incidents. Then, in Gaza, as a result of the indiscriminate attacks, thousands of women became heads of their families, facing limited

access to humanitarian assistance, lack of water, food, medicine and personal hygiene supplies, as well as of safe housing for them and their children. The situation faced by the civilian population in Gaza is desperate, particularly for women, people with disabilities and children — many of them in situations of extreme vulnerability as they are forced to move without the accompaniment of their parents or adult guardians. The increase in the number of displaced people means that more women, adolescents and children are exposed to sexual violence, gender-based violence, depression and risks of suicide.

The war also threatens the life and integrity of pregnant and lactating women. It is horrifying to hear that every day women are subjected to obstetric procedures, and even caesarean sections, without antibiotics or anaesthesia, and that premature children are at risk of dying due to the lack of electricity supply.

We reiterate that all parties must comply with the rules of international humanitarian law, in particular with respect to the protection of civilians. Attacks on schools and hospitals threaten the safety of women and minors and must stop. Civilians must never — I repeat, never — be used as human shields, and all hostages must be immediately and unconditionally released, especially women and children. Likewise, we reiterate that humanitarian aid, including medicines, fuel, water, food and medical supplies, must reach those who need it in the necessary quantity and in a timely way. For that purpose, an immediate, lasting and respected humanitarian truce is required. It is impossible to do so while hostilities continue.

The resolution adopted by the Council on this issue (resolution 2712 (2023)) on 15 November (see S/PV.9479) must be immediately implemented in a way that can alleviate the extreme conditions faced by the civilian population, especially women and children. In that sense, the agreement announced last night that will allow the release of 50 hostages and a four-day cessation of hostilities is a hopeful first step.

Finally, we express our recognition of the deeply committed and risky work of United Nations teams and their associated agencies. Likewise, we recognize the efforts of several countries, including Qatar, the United States and Egypt, to reach effective agreements that alleviate the situation in Gaza.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): A week ago (see S/PV.9479), after several attempts, the Security Council managed to

adopt resolution 2712 (2023), which, among other things, called for urgent and extended humanitarian pauses in Gaza to help address the escalating crisis in the Middle East. Today's briefings by Executive Directors Sima Bahous, Catherine Russell and Natalia Kanem remind us of the sobering reality in Gaza, where an estimated 575,000 women and adolescent girls of reproductive age are facing critical gaps in access to health services. The death toll in Gaza has also surpassed 11,000, two thirds of whom are women and children; 1.7 million people have been displaced; more than 29,000 people are injured; and many are presumed dead or trapped under the rubble in Gaza as a result of the ongoing war.

Ghana is equally concerned about strikes against refugee camps and facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Those facilities are providing refuge to an estimated 1.5 million internally displaced people, including women and girls in dire need of humanitarian assistance. While we therefore reaffirm our condemnation of the horrendous attacks of Hamas against Israel on 7 October, which led to the deaths of 1,200 Israeli and foreign nationals and the abduction of more than 200 hostages, we are concerned by the high number of civilian casualties arising from the military response, which has created in its own wake disturbing concerns.

In that regard, we urge a strong recalibration of approach and welcome the decision reached by the Israeli Government with Hamas to cease hostilities for a four-day period in exchange for the release of 50 Israeli hostages — mostly children — and the counter release of some Palestinian prisoners, mostly women. We also welcome the agreement on additional daily trucks of aid and commend the mediation efforts that have been undertaken to achieve that outcome. We urge the commitment of the parties to the implementation of those arrangements and believe that the release of further hostages creates an opportunity to build confidence with other measures.

It is our expectation that further mutual measures will reinforce the parties' respect for international humanitarian law and the preservation of hospitals and schools from the conflict, as well as creating space for humanitarian access and supplies to civilians to prevent the deterioration of conditions, which could lead to a major health catastrophe. Moreover, it is important that any effort to build the confidence of the parties help to preserve the inviolability of UNRWA installations

and civilian infrastructure in Gaza, including schools, storage facilities and shelters.

The humanitarian actors operating in Gaza have done so under extremely dangerous and difficult conditions, and we acknowledge their efforts. We appreciate in particular the efforts made for the evacuation of 31 premature babies from Al Shifa Hospital to Rafah for proper neonatal care following the total collapse of medical services last Saturday, as well as the evacuation of children, women and seriously injured people to neighbouring countries for medical treatment. We regret that not all of the babies survived before the opportunity to evacuate.

We note that the death of several non-combatants on both sides is attributable to the continued air strikes and launch of rockets. We therefore urge their cessation beyond the agreed deadlines and aver that the continuous holding of innocent civilians hostage is a violation of their fundamental human rights. In that context, we believe strongly that the Council must remain steadfast in its commitment to ensure the protection of civilians in strict compliance with international humanitarian law.

We commiserate with the families and colleagues of all humanitarians who have lost their lives, including the 104 UNRWA staff members. We also regret the several deaths that have befallen the media fraternity, with some 48 journalists — 43 of whom were Palestinian, four Israeli and one Lebanese — having been killed. We continue to condole the families of all those who have lost their lives.

In conclusion, I reiterate our appeal for all of us to be guided in our conduct and engagement by the dire situation on the ground in the interest of peace. We recall our long-held position that the security of Israel and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to their homeland lie in a deepened commitment to a negotiated two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side within secure and recognized borders on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and with Jerusalem as the shared capital. It is our fervent hope that, as a Council, we can find further consensus to abate the conflict and bring the parties to the table of peace. We must help them to untie themselves from the burden of history and embrace the promise of a shared future of peace and security and prosperity.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and thank

the United Arab Emirates and Malta for the initiative to hold this important briefing, which allows the Security Council to remain mobilized in the face of the unprecedented scope of the deadly violence in the war between Israel and Hamas. I also thank Executive Director Sima Bahous, of UN-Women; Executive Director Catherine Russell, of UNICEF; and Executive Director Natalia Kanem, of the United Nations Population Fund, for the information shared with the Security Council and for their poignant testimonies.

The adoption, on 15 November, of resolution 2712 (2023) was a source of hope from the perspective of saving human lives, particularly those of children, women and civilians. It was a genuine hope to reconnect with international humanitarian law in the ruins of Gaza and in the risky exodus of its people. That hope is shrinking by the day in view of the ongoing fighting, which is increasing the terrible human and material toll in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

The barbaric attack by Hamas against Israel on 7 October left approximately 1,200 people dead, 4,629 injured and more than 230 taken hostage into Gaza, including women and children. To date more than 11,078 people have been killed during military operations in Gaza, including 3,027 women, 4,506 children and 102 personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

The devastating testimonies in the three briefings we heard this morning appeal to our very humanity, in particular the situation of women giving birth in indecent conditions, especially those having to undergo caesarean sections without anaesthesia, and the situation of the premature children dependent on incubators but without electricity. Those terrible situations must instigate greater concern than ever among all members of the Council — we cannot be complacent about the status quo. For the children, we must be more engaged as a Security Council and achieve a cessation of hostilities. We have a duty to protect the children, which is a part of both our mandate and our vocation.

Once again, Gabon calls on all parties to exercise restraint and respect their obligations under international humanitarian law. We must also demonstrate greater commitment to accountability for serious violations of international humanitarian law. We will never cease to repeat that the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be political and diplomatic, conducted through dialogue and negotiations in good faith while ensuring respect for the legitimate concerns of each party.

Gabon reiterates its strong condemnation of all indiscriminate and murderous violence and is deeply shocked by the multiplicity of strikes against schools, hospitals and ambulances, as well as refugee camps. The recent attack on the Indonesian hospital in Gaza, resulting in the death of 12 people, is unacceptable. The state of siege under which Gaza has been kept cannot continue. The logic behind the collective punishment of civilian populations is unacceptable and contrary to international humanitarian law. We reiterate our call for unhindered, safe and sustainable access for the delivery and distribution of essential goods and services for the millions of people in need.

Gabon notes with interest and is carefully following developments in the talks relating to the release of hostages. To that end, we welcome the involvement and commitment of the mediators, in particular Qatar, Egypt and the United States. However, it goes without saying that we must go above and beyond the agreed pauses in order to broaden the sphere of hope, particularly for children. We reiterate that all hostages must be released without conditions or blackmail.

I would like to conclude by reiterating Gabon's commitment to the two-State solution, in which Israel and Palestine live side by side in peace and on the basis of internationally recognized borders. Dialogue and negotiation are the essential channels to achieve that, with the United Nations playing a central role.

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

I join others in thanking Executive Director Bahous, Executive Director Russell and Executive Director Kanem for their briefings.

The Palestine-Israel situation has been a source of concern for the entire world. China has always made unremitting efforts to restore peace. On 21 November, the BRICS group — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — held its first summit since its expansion. During the meeting, President Xi Jinping elaborated China's position and proposal on ending hostilities and achieving a ceasefire, as well as realizing durable peace and security, thus speaking up for justice and peace and pointing the way to ease the current situation towards a fundamental settlement. Leaders in the meeting jointly called for the international community to support a just solution to the question of Palestine and facilitate the realization of the two-State solution.

On 20 November, a delegation of Arab Islamic foreign ministers visited Beijing and conducted in-depth exchanges and coordination with China on promoting the de-escalation of the current conflict, the protection of civilians and a just solution to the question of Palestine. Chinese leaders and the visiting foreign ministers agreed that the international community should take immediate and responsible actions to prevent a spillover of the crisis, resume peace talks and realize lasting peace and security in the Middle East.

The three briefings we just heard further highlight the gravity of the situation in Gaza and the urgency of saving lives. Since Israel's announcement of the evacuation order, 80 per cent of the population in Gaza have been forced to flee their homes. The medical system in Gaza, under blockade and siege, has seen a complete collapse. Out of 24 hospitals in the north, 22 have already shut down. The World Health Organization called Al Shifa Hospital a death zone. From schools run by the United Nations to the Indonesian hospital in Gaza, from the Jabaliya refugee camp in the north to the Khan Younis camp in the south, civilian facilities have been targeted frequently, and there is nowhere for the children in Gaza to run. In the past 46 days, more than 5,000 children have been killed.

All this should not and must not be allowed to continue. We must step up efforts to promote an immediate cessation of hostilities and realization of a ceasefire. Resolution 2712 (2023) is the initial step for promoting a ceasefire and easing the situation. It is of a great significance and must be implemented immediately and fully so as to achieve a lasting ceasefire and avoid a bigger humanitarian catastrophe. Israel must stop all military operations against hospitals, schools and other civilian facilities and contain the intensifying settler violence in the West Bank.

We welcome the active mediation by Qatar and Egypt, among others, to facilitate the release of part of the people held captive. We support further diplomatic efforts so that more people held captive can be released at an early date. We hope that this will create political space for dialogue and negotiation and the restoration of peace. We must step up efforts to protect civilians.

We strongly condemn actions in Gaza that clearly violate international humanitarian law. We oppose the collective punishment of civilians in Gaza, as well as their forced displacement or transfer. We urge Israel to lift its blockade of Gaza as soon as possible and fully restore the supply of essential materials such as water,

electricity and fuel. We call for the emergency opening of more relief channels to Gaza and the full utilization of crossing points, including Kerem Shalom, so as to ensure that sufficient humanitarian supplies can enter Gaza from all directions in an unimpeded and highly efficient manner.

China supports further actions by the Council in that regard, on the basis of resolution 2712 (2023). We must step up efforts to promote the revitalization of the political horizon of the two-State solution. No solution to the current situation should deviate from the two-State solution, which should be conducive to regional peace and stability. Any arrangement concerning the fate of Palestine must be based on the consent of the Palestinian people and accommodate the legitimate concerns of the countries of the region. The United Nations should continue to play an active role in consolidating international consensus and facilitating the peace process. The Council should be ready to take responsible meaningful action on the Palestine situation, at any time, that can stand the test of time and conscience.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): At the outset, allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for your able leadership of the Security Council. I also wish to thank the United Arab Emirates and Malta for calling for this meeting focused on women and children and for their efforts in elaborating resolution 2712 (2023), adopted by the Council few days ago (see S/PV.9479). Allow me also to thank the briefers and, through them, the United Nations as a whole for its mobilization in the face of this grave crisis and to express our gratitude to all the heroes on the ground who have taken every risk, even to their own lives, to provide their communities with humanitarian aid and relief. That includes doctors, humanitarian and medical personnel and rescue teams. Finally, I thank the journalists, who have put their lives in danger by reporting on this immense human tragedy and humanitarian catastrophe.

The State of Palestine welcomes the agreement for a truce, reached yesterday, and expresses its appreciation to all those who contributed to reaching this agreement, especially our brothers from Qatar and Egypt. Every 10 minutes without bombardments saves a Palestinian

child. Thanks to this truce, hundreds of Palestinian children will not be killed. We owe it to them and to all the civilians in the Gaza Strip to put a definitive end to this criminal assault on the Palestinian people.

All those who contributed to stopping this madness must now work tirelessly to ensure a way forward that averts the resumption of the aggression. That is the way to protect civilians, to prevent regional spillover, to help the millions suffering from this humanitarian catastrophe that we failed to avert and to release those held captive. A resumption of the aggression would undermine all those goals.

I want everyone here to think of the father who carried his wounded child and could not find a hospital to save him until he died in his arms. Since he could not stop to bury him, the father carried this immense love, now transformed into an unbearable sorrow, for miles, unable to stop walking — from nowhere to nowhere. I want everyone to remember a girl comforting her little brother with words that no child should ever have to utter, after they both said goodbye to their dead sibling at the hospital. I want everyone to remember the small child shivering in the hospital, who kept showing his wounds to another child with severe burns. I want everyone to remember babies lying together, out of their incubators, gasping for air until the lungs of several of them surrendered, failed by all of humankind. I want everyone to remember those images before once again, in a few days' time, giving any justification for this horrific assault to resume.

In the next few days, families will be able to embrace, to mourn, to start healing the wounds that can be healed, including the families that will be reunited with loved ones who were held captive. This cannot be just a pause before the massacres start all over again.

The Council's resolution (resolution 2712 (2023)) was clear about the enormous tasks that need to be undertaken during the truce: enabling rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access, facilitating the provision of desperately needed humanitarian aid throughout the Gaza Strip and rescuing and recovering the thousands who remain trapped under the rubble. That must be done immediately. The resolution also rejects the forced displacement of the Palestinian civilian population, in grave breach of international law. Already, unbearably, more than 1.7 million Palestinians in Gaza have been forcibly displaced from their homes. This is inhumane. This is a crime against humanity. Israel said its aim was security but could not refrain

from revealing its true plan — the forced transfer of Palestinians. Those intentions started with hints and then became explicit in interviews, memos and op-eds by its most senior officials. Israeli leaders keep talking about “voluntary resettlement”, which is the code name for forced transfer. What is voluntary about bombing and besieging and killing and maiming and arresting and humiliating? They deprive 2.3 million people of the means for their own survival and then tell them that they have a choice: leave this land or leave this Earth. That is the choice that they are giving them.

Israel is stunned that years of an unliveable life did not convince Palestinians to leave. We love our land. We love our homeland. We love the Gaza Strip. We love every part of the State of Palestine. Even when we are faced with the threat of imminent death, we still want to stay on our land. The Palestinian people are entitled to freedom and dignity on their land and during their lifetime. No more exodus, and no more delay. The Nakba has to end. Despair, devastation and destruction will never bring security to Israel. Dispossession, displacement and the denial of Palestinians' rights will never bring security to Israel.

While Israel claims that it is respecting the laws of war, it was unable to restrain itself from confessing to its crimes. Its statements, actions and clear objectives all converged to confirm its intentions: the destruction of the Palestinian nation and its legitimate aspirations. From calling Palestinians human animals to imposing a siege on them; from collective punishment to calls for their annihilation; and from indiscriminate, widespread and systematic bombing to the brutal force deployed by its occupation soldiers and settlers in the West Bank, all the evidence has concurred with and has confirmed its true objective. Council members have borne witness to those atrocities, which have been made possible only through systemic impunity.

There is no denying the suffering endured by Israeli families on 7 October, but Israel is not faced with an existential threat; Palestine is. Israel is not being destroyed; Palestine is. It is now 22 November, and the bombs have not stopped for a single day for 45 days. The assaults on the lives and dignity of our people in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem — everywhere in occupied Palestine — have not stopped for a single minute. Every Palestinian family has experienced pain and loss at the core of their being and souls. Only a few weeks ago, the Israeli Prime Minister addressed the world from the most

important platform in the world, the rostrum of the General Assembly, and presented his vision for the new Middle East, wiping Palestine off the map. For all those outraged by the slogan “from the river to the sea”, this is the map that the Israeli Prime Minister raised here at the United Nations. This is the map that he showed from the rostrum of the General Assembly, erasing the nation of Palestine and the Palestinian people — Israel from the river to the sea, by the Prime Minister of the State of Israel. And, for good measure, he added the unlawfully annexed Syrian Golan. What outrage did it spark? None. Because every Council member knew that that was Israel’s intention — to wipe us from the face of the Earth, which will never happen. It will never happen because we have existed from the beginning of history and time, and we will continue to exist as a proud Palestinian people in our own national homeland, the State of Palestine.

What Council members see today in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is the attempt to make this map a reality. Netanyahu must be stopped by all of you, led by our steadfastness to realize our national homeland, Palestine. It is time to chart a different path: one where the Palestinian people are not denied or deprived of their national rights — to self-determination, to statehood and the right of refugees to return; one where no one denies the existence of the other; one where two States live side by side in peace and security, in line with the relevant Security Council and the General Assembly resolutions; one where no Palestinian or Israeli is killed; and one where we enjoy equal measures of freedom, peace and security. The atrocities that we have witnessed over the past few weeks should lead us to the only conclusion possible: there is no military solution to the conflict, only a political one. And there is no peace possible in the Middle East without resolving the question of Palestine and without the attainment of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people.

There are those who argue that the killing of people who believed in peace in Israel and in Palestine in recent weeks demonstrates that they were wrong to believe that peace will ever be possible. We believe it proves that we should have all listened to them. Maybe we could have avoided these dark days. Dima Alhaj, referred to by my sister the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates, was 29 years old. She was part of the World Health Organization trauma and emergency team. She said a few months ago that she was proud of her work because it contributed to giving people hope and a new lease

on life. She was killed with her husband, her 6-month-old baby boy and 50 other members of her family and community. Vivian Silver was killed on 7 October. She kept repeating that there is no road to peace — peace is the road. Those were her words. We owe it to them to ensure hope prevails, that peace prevails. For that to be possible we need to start with ending this madness, and to ensure that morality prevails, legality prevails and humanity prevails.

We unequivocally oppose the killing of civilians and remain committed to the rule of international law. I repeat — we unequivocally oppose the killing of civilians and remain committed to the rule of international law. We have been clear — we believe in justice, not vengeance. We did not justify the killing of a single Israeli civilian while Israel was mobilizing its entire propaganda machine to justify the killing of more than 14,000 Palestinians, more than 70 per cent of whom are children and women. No one should condone atrocities based on the identity of the perpetrator. Victims are the ones who deserve members’ solidarity, and that includes Palestinian victims, including those under the bombs and the siege, those arbitrarily detained and all those suffering from occupation and racial discrimination, apartheid. We have a few days to mobilize to stop the war against the Palestinian people, and we have a very narrow window to advance peace. We cannot continue to be driven away from it.

What will we tell this generation of youth that has gone through multiple wars, surviving one to endure the next, who kept clinging to life, trying to find a way towards a better future? We owe it to them to do better. We should not be blind to each other’s wounds or traumas or history, or dismiss them. But that respect has to be built on a common vision of the future, where all can live and let live, in freedom, in dignity and in peace and security, not where one’s life is at the expense of another’s. There is no coexistence with supremacy or subjugation. This is a time for courageous decisions and resolute action, by all of us, guided by the imperative of upholding international law and by the urgent need to advance freedom, justice and peace.

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

Mr. Erdan (Israel): The Security Council’s primary role is security. Yet, for close to 50 days, the Council has not advanced a solution related to its mandate. We have heard here politicized condemnations, baseless suggestions, distorted calls for calm and extensive

outcry over the humanitarian situation of only one side. Yet what we have not heard was a single real solution. We can have many more briefings, debates and emergency sessions, but if the Council cannot suggest, united, a solution that also ensures the safety of Israelis, then it does not address the security of both Israelis and Gazans alike.

I reiterate: this war can end right now, today, without one more shot being fired. If Hamas returns all of the hostages and turns in all those who took part in the savage massacre, the war would be over immediately. This war did not start on its own on 8 October. It started on 7 October with a deliberate and planned massacre, the likes of which the Jewish people has not suffered since the Holocaust. My suggestion to end it, worthy of discussion here, and any suggestion to end it worthy of discussion here, is only one that will bring home all of our hostages and prevent such atrocities from happening again.

No country in a similar situation would agree to anything less. The hostage deal that was approved last night is clear proof that Israel is willing to take far-reaching steps. Try to comprehend what Israel agreed to do last night. We are releasing terrorists who have been convicted of harming Israelis in return for women and children who were savagely abducted from their homes by these Hamas Nazis. This is the deal. But make no mistake — as soon as the pause ends, we will continue to strive towards our goals with full force. We will not stop until we eliminate all of Hamas's terror probabilities and ensure that they can no longer rule Gaza and threaten both Israeli civilians and the women and children of Gaza. The Palestinian representative cannot tell the Council that he, too, does not want Hamas to rule Gaza. I hope the Council takes the days of this pause to advance a real solution that will help bring an end to this war, that will guarantee security rather than strengthen the terrorists committed to Israel's annihilation. This is the main concern. The time has come for the Council to tell the truth to the people of Gaza. I do not expect the Palestinian representative to tell them the truth, that Hamas is solely responsible for their situation, and that once Hamas is gone, the future can be brighter for everyone.

Today's briefing focuses on women and children. Let us put aside the fact that the war in Gaza began with Hamas's mass murder, rape and mutilation of Israeli women and children. Let us put aside the fact that there are still Israeli women and children, including babies,

being held hostage in Hamas terror tunnels. As members heard today, those are mere footnotes to our briefers and to the United Nations. But right now I want to ask one simple question: where has the United Nations been for the past 16 years? Where was UNICEF's outcry over Hamas's indoctrination of children to become martyrs? Where was its uproar at Hamas turning children's hospitals and schools into weapons caches? Where was UN-Women's outrage at Hamas treating women like property and using them as human shields? Why is it that only that they have decided to talk about the women and children of Gaza? It is not as if Gazans have been living in a utopia of human rights that, like the impression being made by the briefers, was upended by Israel five weeks ago. How can they have the audacity to suddenly remember Gaza's women and children, after ignoring them for so many years?

Under the rule of Hamas, the people of Gaza have been continuously exploited. Yet not a single utterance of condemnation has been heard from those bodies against Hamas's reign of terror and their poisonous brainwashing of children. Over the past weeks, they have all woken up — but sadly, not for the right reasons. All those vast, well-funded United Nations bodies are suddenly up in arms about the situation in Gaza because now they can blame Israel. The women and children of Gaza are their concern only if they can weaponize their suffering against Israel — and yes, they suffer. That is shameful. UNICEF does not really care about Gazan children, and UN-Women does not really care about Gazan women. If they did, they would not have remained quiet for the past 16 years as Hamas ruled Gaza with an iron fist.

I ask Council members to look at this picture. It is of Yahya Sinwar, the leader of Hamas, and the child he is holding is a victim of UNICEF's indifference. A picture is worth 1,000 words, and this says all we need to know about Hamas's treatment of children in Gaza. Has Executive Director Russell never seen this picture before? Is she unaware of the terror summer camps that Hamas runs every year in Gaza to indoctrinate children to murder? So many Gazan children were born into a culture of hate — a culture that glorifies violence and educates kids to murder. It is a death cult that puts martyrdom ahead of life, coexistence and the pursuit of peace. How many UNICEF reports have been written on that? None. I am telling everyone — none. While we teach our children to love and accept others, the children of Gaza — and they are not the ones to blame — are taught that the murder of Jews and Israel's

annihilation is their life goal. They are educated on that in their schools — yes, including schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East schools. Why has that child abuse never bothered UNICEF? There is absolutely no chance that UNICEF is unaware of this. I therefore ask Executive Director Russell, where has her organization been all this time? Rockets have been found in children's bedrooms in Gaza. Rocket launchers were located inside a scouts' youth movement clubhouse. Missile-manufacturing facilities have been found under mosques, and caches of assault rifles have been found in UNRWA schools. We have not heard any condemnation by UNICEF of Hamas's exploitation of Gazan children as human shields. Where is it?

Hamas wrote a script for the international community, and United Nations bodies are playing their parts perfectly. Hamas seeks to increase the number of civilian casualties in order to coax the international community to pressure Israel. They want it to ignore their crimes while pressuring a law-abiding democracy. Hamas exploits Gazans, weaponizes casualties and seeks to co-opt the United Nations to tie our hands and prevent us from eliminating them so that they can continue murdering and slaughtering in the future. That is their script. I just cannot understand why United Nations bodies are so willing to follow it. And that sick phenomenon of exploiting children is carried out on the streets of Gaza every day.

This is a photo that was taken a few days ago in Gaza. These savage Hamas terrorists are walking around in broad daylight, armed and in uniform after effectively strapping children to themselves as live body armour — as human shields. That is the enemy that Israel is defending itself against. That is who the bodies here today hardly have a single word of criticism against. I therefore ask again — where have the briefers been for all these years? Where are their voices now? Why are Hamas's crimes almost non-existent in this briefing, when Hamas and only Hamas is solely responsible for the situation in Gaza? There is no other explanation for that other than apathy towards Gazans, coupled with burning hatred for Israel. This is not a briefing. This is an inquisition.

I would now like to turn to the second elephant in the room. Our briefers today graciously decided to mention, thank God, the hostages in Gaza, among them women, children and the elderly. They weakly called for their return — pure lip service. But the briefers ignored a

very significant fact. They overlooked the 1,300 Israelis brutally massacred on 7 October and the 8,650 wounded that are still being hospitalized. In a briefing on women and children, our briefers intentionally — and I will explain why I am saying this — intentionally refused to thoroughly brief the Council on the barbaric acts of torture, sexual violence and rape perpetrated by Hamas against Israeli women and girls. I say “intentionally” because I have sent two letters to Executive Director Bahous extensively detailing those appalling war crimes. Yet not only did I receive no response, she also did not see it fit to detail those crimes here before the Council. So yes, that was an intentional act of omission. In a recent letter to Executive Director Bahous, I not only included written testimonies, but also concrete visual evidence — pictures of young, naked Israeli women being paraded around Gaza as the crowds jeered and cheered. UN-Women also received links to interrogations of Hamas terrorists, who said loud and clear that they had been instructed to rape Israeli women.

Just two days ago, Executive Director Bahous received another letter from me with additional evidence of mass rape and sexual violence perpetrated by Hamas. That included a first responder's testimony of finding girls with their pants around their knees, semen on their back and bullet holes in their heads and testimonies of pathologists identifying corpses, from young girls to elderly women, raped so violently that their pelvic bones were shattered. I sent this picture from a video of Naama Levi, who was dragged out of the trunk of a jeep by a Hamas terrorist, wearing sweatpants soaked in a blood around her backside. I also sent this picture of Shani Louk, who was dancing at the peace festival before she was abducted and murdered by Hamas. This is what her body looked like with a Hamas terrorist on top of her. Look at her. Look at Shani. If they want to discuss women in conflict and women's rights and dignity — what about the dignity of Naama Levi and Shani Louk? What about their rights as women? Sadly, to our briefers, the horrors endured by those young women are not worth mentioning. After all, they are Israelis, and as today's briefing has made abundantly clear, Israeli victims do not matter.

Nearly 50 days have gone by since those atrocities were committed — since young girls were savagely violated. Yet the world is still waiting to hear from UN-Women a clear public condemnation of Hamas sexual crimes. Shame on UN-Women. Is UN-Women

not charged with ensuring that, and I quote from their website, “all women and girls —

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to kindly remind the representative of Israel that he may fully express his different opinions in his statement, but that he should show a modicum of respect for the briefers invited to this meeting. That is a consistent practice of the Security Council and a rule that everyone should obey. I would like to draw his attention to that and invite him to continue.

Mr. Erdan (Israel): Is UN-Women not charged with ensuring that all women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence? Does the banner of UN-Women’s website not currently say “#NoExcuses”? Has the world not come to believe women? Has not the United Nations?

To the United Nations and its agencies, Israeli women are not women. Israeli children are not children. The United Nations, with Secretary-General Guterres at the helm, refuses to report on murdered, raped and kidnapped Israelis. Every United Nations body stands up solely for the Palestinians, while dehumanizing Israelis. That is the policy. The United Nations by choice refuses to accept Israeli numbers of statistics. The ridiculous claim is that Israeli casualties either are not part of the body’s mandate, or that they have no way to verify facts provided by Israel. On the other hand, when it comes to fabrications supplied by Palestinian terrorists — and in this case, directly from Hamas in Gaza — the United Nations treats those numbers as God’s truth, without any form of verification.

This is a conflict that started before the United Nations was even established, and throughout all these years, the United Nations blindly accepts every claim and figure from one side and one side only, without any verification mechanism, while ignoring or remaining

indifferent to all Israeli data, and that is what ends up in United Nations reports. That is what the Council is briefed with.

I ask all Council members to process what I have just said. For all those who do not understand why Israelis call out the United Nations, that is the reason. What would they do if they were in my place? What would they do if their children were slaughtered and their girls were raped? But the United Nations and its vast spider web of agencies, bodies and committees stood idly by in silence? take a moment to think about this.

To the briefer tasked with protecting all women, girls and children throughout the world, presumably including those who are Israeli and Jewish, I again want her to look me in the eye and explain to me why she has been silent in the face of acts of mass rape, sexual violence, brutal torture, kidnapping and murder. How is it? How is it that her briefing is so one-sided when they all know that Israel does everything in its power to mitigate civilian casualties, while Hamas does everything in its power to murder civilians, both Gazans and Israelis? She should not answer me. She should answer our mothers, our wives, our sisters and our daughters — she should answer the Israeli public and the Jewish people. She should at least have the courage to be honest and give us real answers. We are still waiting.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

Before I adjourn the meeting, I would like to again thank Ms. Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women; Ms. Russell, Executive Director of UNICEF; and Ms. Kanem, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, for their briefings at this meeting.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.