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Provisional

President: Mrs. Frazier (Malta)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
China	Mr. Dai Bing
Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
France	Mr. De Rivière
Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan	Mr. Yamazaki
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Republic of Korea	Mr. Sangjin Kim
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Sierra Leone	Mr. Kanu
Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America	Mr. Kelley

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Australia, Israel, Poland and Saudi Arabia 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 briefest to participate in this meeting: Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Director of Coordination, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; and Ms. Janti Soeripto, President and Chief Executive Officer, Save the Children US.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Rajasingham.

Mr. Rajasingham: On Sunday, it will be six months since the outbreak of this horrific chapter in the conflict in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory — six months of heartache and grief for the families and friends of those killed or taken hostage in the grisly attacks of 7 October; six months of unfathomable death, destruction, deprivation, trauma and suffering for the people of Gaza; and six months that call our collective humanity and priorities into question.

In Gaza, according to the Ministry of Health, more than 32,000 people have been killed, and more than 75,000 have been injured. At least two thirds of those casualties are women and children, and thousands more are missing, many of them buried beneath the rubble. And 17,000 children are now unaccompanied or separated from their parents or families, alone amid the destruction and horror. Some 1.7 million people, or 75 per cent of the population, have been forcibly displaced — many of them, time and time again, forced

into tents, overcrowded shelters or even onto the streets and lacking the most basic necessities for dignified life and survival. Some 60 per cent of housing has now been damaged or destroyed. Therefore, it is clear that there is no protection of civilians in Gaza, and if they have no protection from the dangers of armed conflict there, they must be allowed to seek it elsewhere. Some Palestinians in Gaza have already left through Egypt, and we know that more are trying. It is vital to recall that any persons displaced from Gaza must be guaranteed the right to voluntary return, as international law demands.

I come now to the events of last week, which laid bare with clear evidence the unconscionable brutality of this conflict. Intense Israeli bombardment and ground operations, as well as heavy fighting between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups, have continued across much of the Gaza Strip, leaving hundreds more dead and injured. The prospect of a military operation on Rafah continues. As we all know, the consequences would be incomprehensible.

On 1 April, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the besieged Al-Shifa medical complex in Gaza City revealed a hospital and many buildings in the surrounding residential area almost entirely destroyed. The United Nations and partners reached the facility only today, after repeated requests were denied, to help triage the remaining patients and assess needs on the ground. Al-Shifa was the largest hospital in Gaza, formerly serving more 250,000 people. The loss to a health system already in tatters, amid skyrocketing health needs, is incalculable.

Then, on the same day, we saw seven World Central Kitchen aid workers killed in multiple Israeli air strikes on their convoy. Those workers had just unloaded more than 100 tons of much-needed life-saving humanitarian supplies from the second World Central Kitchen maritime aid shipment to a warehouse in Deir Al-Balah. They had informed the Israeli army of their movements. We extend our deepest condolences to the families and friends of those courageous, selfless people, who were there to help their fellow human beings in their time of need.

Sadly, we cannot say that that tragic attack was an isolated incident in this conflict. They join the more than 220 of our humanitarian colleagues who have been killed — 179 of them United Nations personnel, including many along with their families. I echo the Secretary-General's deep concern about the clear

violations of international humanitarian law that we are witnessing. Allegations of serious violations must be investigated and the suspects prosecuted, and all Member States can — and must — use their leverage to prevent and stop violations of international humanitarian law, through diplomatic and economic pressure, conditioning arms exports on compliance with the rules of war and cooperation in combating impunity.

The incident on 1 April was a tragedy not just for the World Central Kitchen aid workers who were killed and for their family and friends, but it was also a tragedy for the people of Gaza. The undeniable lack of protection for aid missions has forced the World Central Kitchen and at least one other aid organization, the non-governmental organization Anera, to suspend their operations. Both organizations provide hundreds of thousands of people in Gaza with food each week. It is unclear when their work will resume.

That comes amid an unprecedented food insecurity crisis in Gaza that is teetering on the edge of famine, if it has not already fallen into it. Across Gaza, food and safe water are increasingly scarce, and practically the entire population of Gaza is relying on woefully inadequate food assistance to survive. Diseases are rife, contributing to a surge in acute malnutrition, particularly among women and children. In northern Gaza, UNICEF reports that 1 in 6 children are acutely malnourished, with an estimated 3 per cent facing the most severe forms of wasting, requiring immediate treatment. At least 31 people, including 28 children, are believed to have starved to death in recent weeks. It is a situation that requires concerted action right now — waiting for a retrospective famine classification is entirely indefensible.

Despite the dangers, aid workers continue efforts to deliver assistance to people across Gaza through all available means. That includes the distribution of food, water, medical items, non-food items, fuel and medical evacuations. Last week, the United Nations and its partners reached a daily average of 550,000 people with food assistance, although we were able to get only 4 per cent of that to Gaza City and northern Gaza.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) continues to run seven health-care centres, which provide 23,000 consultations every day and have administered 53,000 vaccines since the start of the war. But it cannot be repeated enough that the scale

and extent of the assistance we are able to get to people in Gaza is wholly insufficient. The primary obstacle, however aid is brought in, is our ability to distribute it within Gaza, particularly to the north. And a serious limiting factor is that UNRWA — the backbone of the humanitarian response — has not been allowed to operate in the north of Gaza. If we are to stave off famine and address the unconscionably catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza, UNRWA — and indeed all impartial humanitarian organizations — must have safe, rapid, unimpeded access to all civilians in need. There is simply no replacement for the services UNRWA provides.

One of the cruel tragedies of Sunday's unwanted milestone is that it does not mark an end to the death, destruction and human suffering of the past six months. It does not bring an end to the ordeal of those still held hostage and the torment for their families. And that is despite clear obligations under international humanitarian law; despite the provisional order of the International Court of Justice requiring Israel to take all necessary and effective measures to ensure, without delay, the unhindered provision at scale of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance; despite the Council recognizing the need to expand the flow of aid into and within Gaza; and despite the Council's resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan (resolution 2728 (2024)).

This tragedy cannot be allowed to continue. All hostages must be immediately released and treated humanely until they are. Likewise, the people of Gaza need full compliance with international humanitarian law and with the orders of the International Court of Justice. They need compliance with the decisions of the Security Council. And, most of all, they need this devastating war to end.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Soeripto.

Ms. Soeripto: I thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to address the Council about the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

As we sit here today, and as the Council just heard, more than 220 humanitarian workers have been killed in Gaza — the highest number of humanitarian casualties in modern times. First and foremost, I would like to pay tribute to those humanitarians who have

lost their lives — who were killed — in this conflict. Nearly all have been Palestinians. They were killed serving their communities, in perhaps the worst conditions of their lives and of their careers. Day in and day out, they worked tirelessly to save lives, to feed the hungry, to provide medical care to the sick and wounded, to provide shelter and to protect. They were professionals, conducting this response to the standard of the humanitarian principles that guide our global sector. They upheld their ethical end of the bargain. The parties to this conflict — including members represented in the Security Council — have not.

One of my own colleagues, Sameh Ewaida, was killed in an Israeli air strike on 12 December, along with his entire family. That strike came days after a ceasefire draft resolution (S/2023/970) was vetoed in this Chamber (see S/PV.9499). Sameh and his wife, Fatima, were the proud parents of four children: Mohammad, aged 12, Hebba, aged 11, Zeina, aged 3, and Zein, aged 2. They died together, buried under four floors of rubble.

Children, like Sameh's, bear the brunt of conflict. Save the Children's founder said it best over 100 years ago: "Every war is a war against the child". That is sadly still true today, especially in Gaza.

In this conflict, 14,000 children have been violently killed. Thousands more are missing, presumed buried under the rubble. If I were to sit here and read the name and age of every Israeli and Palestinian child who has died on and since 7 October it would take me over 18 hours. More children have been killed in this conflict than have been killed in all armed conflict globally, every year, over the past four years.

Children are not small adults. They have a special status in conflict. They have specific vulnerabilities, an additional set of rights afforded to them and distinct obligations owed to them. They must be protected. Yet, children have been taken hostage. Thousands of children have been maimed, their limbs ripped from them by explosive weapons, mutilated by bullets, burned, crushed or struck down by preventable disease.

Inevitably, after months of systematic and deliberate denial of humanitarian access, children are now dying from malnutrition and dehydration in Gaza. Denied food and water by a brutal and illegal blockade, they have been starved to death.

The first thing that struck me when I arrived in Gaza last week was how many of the children were actually running around without shoes — over glass, rubble and debris. They were running round desperately looking for food and water because not enough is being allowed into Gaza. They were visibly, demonstrably malnourished. In all, 350,000 children under the age of 5 are at risk of starvation, as we speak. The world is staring down the barrel of a human-made famine. The hunger in the north, where people have now resorted to eat animal feed or tree leaves, is of particular concern.

If we continue down this path — of all parties to conflict flagrantly breaching the rules of war and international humanitarian law, of zero accountability, of powerful nations refusing to use the levers of influence at their disposal — then the next set of mass deaths of children in Gaza will not be from bullets and bombs. It will be from starvation and malnutrition.

This indecision and inaction is a choice, and choices have consequences. Severe malnutrition is not a quiet or painless death. As children get hungry, their bodies weaken; their muscles waste and their vision blurs. Immune systems and organs fail; hearts stop. At that stage, children are too weak to cry.

While in Gaza, I visited some excellent humanitarian programmes staffed by incredible people, including my own colleagues and many others. I saw a field hospital erected in 14 days using only locally available materials because other materials were not allowed in. Those heroic efforts are fighting against an overwhelming tide of need. There is no sanitation to speak of. The community I visited had one toilet for 600 people. Women stood in line for three hours to make use of it.

Schools normally form a spine of protection for children and are a place where children can seek humanitarian services and normality. Education is, in many ways, life-saving. But not in Gaza, where every single child is out of school and 80 per cent of education facilities have been destroyed. Our teams have found that almost every piece of educational equipment in Gaza — chairs, desks, textbooks — have been either destroyed or burned by desperate people trying to stay warm.

And I have not even spoken about mental health and psychosocial support. Think of the traumas these children and families are experiencing, the horrors they continue to live through. Not one child should be

exposed to such death and violence. One mother in a community I visited told me that she needed mental health support more than food, which, in the context of a looming famine, is an interesting comment.

Despite the every-day dangers, humanitarians return to work because we believe civilians in conflict have a right to access life-sustaining basics, even when they do not have access to peace and security. And, as a global community, we have agreed to international humanitarian laws designed to make this work possible, effective and as safe as can be expected. But that is not the case today in Gaza. Nowhere is safe, and no one is safe.

We are hearing world leaders emphasize the importance of access and call for deconfliction, protection of civilians, speedy investigations and lessons learned, upholding humanitarian law and so on. That discourse creates the false impression that the humanitarian system in Gaza is being prioritized. It is not. Words belie the inaction.

Aid organizations need the Council to hear this. Let us stop pretending that the protection of civilians is being prioritized. We are overwhelmed with impediments. Human life is not being prioritized — not the lives of civilians and children, and certainly not the lives of humanitarians. An investigation is not enough. We need action; we need change; and we need it now. Let us give humanitarians safe access and a ceasefire and we can save lives.

We know how to stabilize children dying from malnutrition. We know how to treat diarrheal disease. We address those fatal threats to young children all over the world and have done so for a century. It is not rocket science; it is delicate, but straightforward. We know how to do it.

We share our coordinates with the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories and the Israeli military. We do so for every single movement and every single one of our locations and distribution centres. And we do not get on the road if we do not have confirmation that our communications have been received and that our movement has been deconflicted. What is so unsettling about the deaths of our colleagues from World Central Kitchen last week is that they did everything that they were supposed to do, but were still killed.

It is hardly news that we need from the Council is for it to adopt a permanent ceasefire resolution,

including robust measures to ensure compliance by parties to conflict, to enforce a ceasefire and the resolutions already adopted. Member States must stop fuelling the crisis with weapons they are selling to the parties to the conflict.

While the opening of the Erez crossing yesterday is welcome and long overdue, all crossing points must be opened. We need to flood Gaza with food, water and aid in order to prevent further tragedy. We need unfettered humanitarian access in all of Gaza. More aid must be allowed to come in and commercial trade must resume because markets need to function again. And we must have a plan to finance and rebuild critical infrastructure, such as hospitals, schools, water systems and homes.

I know that resolutions adopted in the Chamber do not immediately lead to changed behaviour on the ground. I saw that very vividly last week in Gaza, where bombings in Rafah seemed to intensify the evening after resolution 2728 (2024) was adopted. Ceasefires or peace happen only when men with guns want it or when it seems the better option for them. But what happens in the Chamber does matter for accountability and for setting standards that we expect everyone to abide by.

We therefore also call upon the Secretary-General to list all parties to the conflict as perpetrators of grave violations against children in the upcoming annual report on children and armed conflict. We are facing a crisis of accountability and impunity, and it must be addressed if we are to break the cycle of violence and prevent further violations in future.

What I saw and heard in Gaza last week was dehumanizing — not only for the people in Gaza. It is dehumanizing for all of us if we stand by and let it happen. The world — people in the Chamber — have the tools to address this crisis. They merely lack the political will to use them. On behalf of all children in Gaza, I urge the Council to act.

The President: I thank Ms. Soeripto for her very important and impactful briefing.

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

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria): I thank Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham and Ms. Janti Soeripto for their briefings. We greatly admire and appreciate their work for those in need.

We express our sincerest condolences to all families of the aid workers who have been killed by the Israeli occupying Power in Gaza.

Today we are gathered once again as the aggression against the innocent Palestinian civilians is reaching, in two days, its six-month mark — six months of barbarity and collective punishment, six months of suffering for the people of Gaza, six months that test the humanity of each and every one of us, six months that test the international order and our ability to preserve coexistence for future generations and six months that pushed the entire population of Gaza into famine.

The International Court of Justice observed, “Palestinians in Gaza are no longer facing only a risk of famine ... but that famine is setting in”. To address the situation, the International Court of Justice issued two orders to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people. However, the Israeli occupying Power did not comply.

Finally, the Security Council also acted by demanding an immediate ceasefire through its resolution 2728 (2024). Yet, more than 10 days after its adoption, the occupying Power blatantly refuses to implement it, a conduct unworthy of a United Nations Member bound, under Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations, to carry out the decisions of the Security Council. Yet, it is not surprising from a killing machine that commits all violations of international law with total impunity. It is confident that it will never be held accountable. And the occupying Power continues to commit more and more crimes and more and more violations. We must put an end to this aberration.

The crime perpetrated against World Central Kitchen personnel is not surprising and is no exception. It was an attack that targeted them systematically, car by car, as stated by chef José Andrés Puerta, the founder of World Central Kitchen. It is just a new chapter in the book of crimes committed. The victims are not Palestinians. Their savage killing is just as condemnable.

The large media coverage and outrage would be unjustified if it were not equal to that in response to the killing of Palestinian civilians. Should we forget that the occupying Power has killed more than 33,000 Palestinians, of whom over 70 per cent were women and children — innocent women and children — since 7 October? Should we recall that 224 aid workers have been killed by the occupying Power since 7 October?

Should we recall that 484 health workers have been killed since 7 October?

The occupying Power’s reaction to that horrible incident is shameful. Why do those seven people deserve apologies from the highest occupying authorities and not the thousands of innocent Palestinians massacred during the past six months? We have heard no apologies from those who proclaim to be peace lovers. They prove with their actions that they do not consider Palestinians human beings like other human beings, but rather, they said, they are human animals. For us, all lives matter. Palestinian lives matter. All lives matter.

To those who believe in the investigations and justice of the Israeli occupying Power, I say, where is the justice for Rachel Corrie; where is the justice for James Miller; and where is the justice for Tom Hurndall, to name a few victims? Those peace activists were killed years ago, and no justice has been delivered for them. The killing of humanitarian workers in Gaza is only a continuation of the doctrine of oppression and occupation practiced in Palestine. Kill Palestinians and their sympathizers, you have carte blanche. And once again, the verdict will be that those were regrettable incidents, and the victims endangered themselves by knowingly entering a war zone, even within deconfliction.

Since the start of the aggression, the United Nations, the United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, humanitarian actors and Member States have said that the deconfliction mechanism in Gaza is not working. It is not because of a lack of coordination that it is not working, but rather because of a deliberate act to spread fear among Palestinians and those who want to help them.

We have said it, and we repeat it again today: humanitarian actors cannot be asked to serve at the peril of their lives. They must be assured of the conditions that allow them to reach those in need. Only an immediate ceasefire can create those conditions. Otherwise, the Palestinian population risks being left to fend for itself, and the worst will be inevitable: thousands of deaths from starvation, as predicted by various reports. That situation will further deteriorate with the decision to freeze the World Central Kitchen operations and the maritime corridor from Cyprus, a decision taken while the Israeli occupying Power persists in its campaign and attempts to block and to dismantle the United Nations Relief and Works Agency

for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the backbone of the United Nations humanitarian operation in Gaza.

The international community and the Security Council cannot remain inert as life drains from Gaza. In the name of humankind we must act, and we must act now.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting. Allow me to also express appreciation to our briefers, Mr. Rajasingham and Ms. Soeripto, for the insight they provided on the worsening crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly as it relates to the food security situation and the threatening conditions under which humanitarian workers are operating.

Two weeks ago, the Council met and demanded an immediate ceasefire in Gaza for the month of Ramadan and envisaged that that ceasefire would pave the way for a permanent end to the fighting (see S/PV.9586). It was also envisaged that that ceasefire would create the conditions to facilitate the expansion of humanitarian assistance in Gaza. Regrettably, resolution 2728 (2024) is being completely disregarded, while the humanitarian situation worsens. In the days since 25 March, the Al-Shifa Hospital was completely destroyed, and the world witnessed a most brutal and brazen attack on a convoy of the World Central Kitchen, resulting in the death of seven team members. Guyana commiserates with the families of all those who lost their lives in those tragic circumstances.

We have time and again highlighted the fact that deconfliction and notification mechanisms are not functioning, resulting in serious compromises of the safety and security of humanitarian workers in the Gaza Strip. Consequently, more than 200 aid workers have been killed in the occupied Palestinian territory since October 2023. Those indiscriminate killings of humanitarian personnel are an egregious illegality that must be investigated, and the perpetrators must be held accountable.

A pattern has emerged in the conflict of indiscriminate attacks on humanitarian workers and agencies, including United Nations agencies. Palestinian civilians ultimately bear the brunt of those actions. When humanitarian agencies decide to restrict or suspend their operations owing to the dangerous conditions in the Gaza Strip, the number of civilians they can assist decreases, and the humanitarian situation thus worsens.

The strategy of collective punishment that is being inflicted on the Palestinian people has incorporated starvation as a method of warfare evidenced by, inter alia, savage attacks on those attempting to meet the needs of starving Palestinians. Palestinians themselves have been fatally attacked while seeking sustenance. We are familiar with the results of that strategy — man-made malnutrition, man-made famine, disease and death. We recall the latest Integrated Phase Classification report, which projected famine in the northern governorates of Gaza between mid-March and the end of May. Guyana believes that famine is already present in Gaza, taking note, for example, of the assessment by UNICEF in March that one in three children under 2 years of age is acutely malnourished in the north and reports by UNICEF that several children, including babies, have died from malnutrition. Those children who manage to survive will likely face serious challenges into adulthood, affecting their quality of life and productivity, and therefore their capacity to contribute to the development of their homeland. One can only conclude, then, that there is method to the madness that has been unleashed on Palestinians in Gaza, and it threatens the very survival of the nation.

International humanitarian law prohibits the use of starvation as a weapon of warfare. By extension, those who seek to provide humanitarian relief to starving civilians in armed conflict should be protected and not targeted. Guyana condemns in the strongest terms all attacks on humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel operating in the Gaza Strip and calls on Israel to uphold its obligations under international law.

Guyana also underscores the critical work of agencies such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in providing food assistance, medical care, emergency aid and other critical support to the Palestinian people. We call on the Israeli authorities to reverse their decision and allow UNRWA to deliver life-saving services to the people in the north of Gaza. We stress the need to ensure adequate funding for UNRWA and call on Member States to scale up their contributions to the Agency as a direct investment in the humanitarian response in Gaza.

We also stress the importance of additional routes into Gaza, particularly land routes. We acknowledge the announcement by Israel of the temporary opening of the Erez crossing and authorization for the use of the

Ashdod port. We hope that that will not be rendered almost useless by burdensome verification processes.

In conclusion, Guyana calls for the upholding of international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Accountability is a critical element of international law, and we urge the Council to ensure that the occupying Power does not continue its flagrant violations of international law.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I thank you very much, Madam President. I also want to thank the briefers, Mr. Rajasingham and Ms. Soeripto.

There are 15 of us around the table in the Security Council, 15 of us with a responsibility to protect civilians in Gaza. Were we meeting in the north of Gaza today, all 15 of us would have been skipping meals in the past months. Ten of us would be going entire days and nights without eating. Half of us would be in desperate need of humanitarian aid, and, finally, at least five of us would be parents to children suffering severe acute malnutrition — life-threatening and with life-long consequences.

We are not meeting in Gaza, but listening to Ms. Soeripto — maybe we should have met in Gaza. We are meeting at the United Nations Security Council, where we know very well that the looming famine in the north of Gaza, and the risk of famine across the rest of the Gaza Strip, can be prevented.

Conflict-induced and man-made famine means the absolute failure of the international community and the gross violation of international humanitarian law. Starvation is used as a weapon of war. Waiting for a famine declaration will not change anything on the ground, unfortunately, but we know what will — an immediate ceasefire. Full, safe, secure and unhindered humanitarian access, in particular through land, to provide safe, nutritious and sufficient food, water and medicines will; the restoration of health, water and sanitation services and energy provision will; and adequate shelters for civilians will.

For the aid to reach people in need, we need humanitarian workers, the most brave and empathetic souls that humankind can produce. They are sacrificing their security and their lives to save others. They must be able to fulfil their calling without constant fear. They must be granted safety, security, freedom of movement and the necessary equipment and support. We repeat our continuous call for the full respect of

international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. That includes ensuring the safety and security of United Nations and all other personnel engaged in humanitarian relief activities. We are profoundly grateful for the efforts and work of the Secretary-General and the entire United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), United Nations agencies, humanitarian and medical organizations and their staff.

I want to be clear: nothing in this war happens by chance. The conduct of this war is a choice. Disrespect of international humanitarian law is a choice. And the consequences of this war, with unprecedented death and destruction and children too weak to cry, cannot but be a choice.

With the appalling attack on World Central Kitchen and the earlier attacks on UNRWA, Médecins Sans Frontières and others, the number of humanitarian workers killed in Gaza has reached 224. We condemn all attacks on humanitarian, medical and United Nations personnel in Gaza and underline our call for accountability. The faces of humanity left in Gaza are under attack and have been for the past six months.

The Council has adopted three resolutions on the situation in Gaza, most recently resolution 2728 (2024), which calls for an immediate ceasefire leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire, the release of hostages and the delivery of humanitarian aid. Orders of the International Court of Justice are binding and Security Council resolutions are binding for each and every State Member of the United Nations. They must be implemented. International order and our collective security depend on respect for the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the commitment that we all adhere to.

This Sunday, we will mark six months of the war in Gaza. Six months later, it is imperative to reflect on the enduring suffering of Gaza's civilians and hostages, not merely through discussions but through decisive, impactful actions. Six months of destruction and devastation cannot be a milestone we should mark with a mere meeting of the Security Council. We have seen the spillover effects of this conflict in almost the entire Middle East region. The conflict in Gaza is a threat to international peace and security, and the Council should make sure to end it.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Madam President, for convening this emergency meeting, and we thank the speakers for their briefings.

Last month, the Council met at the request of Guyana and Switzerland, as informal focal points on the issue of conflict and hunger, warning of the food insecurity in the Gaza Strip (see S/PV.9560). We heard the United Nations insist that, without an immediate ceasefire, famine in Gaza was almost inevitable. Despite the adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), which demands an immediate ceasefire, the fighting has continued, and food insecurity has worsened. The lack of access to food and insufficient water supply, agriculture and food production are catastrophic for the population of the Gaza Strip.

Switzerland expresses the utmost respect for all the humanitarian aid workers who are risking their lives to provide relief. Our thoughts today are with the organizations and families of the more than 200 humanitarian workers who have been killed in Gaza since 7 October. Attacks on humanitarian workers are a violation of international humanitarian law and must stop immediately. To that end, concrete deconfliction measures must be put in place.

The Gaza Strip has rapidly become the most dangerous place for humanitarian workers. Widespread insecurity and restrictions on movement are forcing humanitarian organizations to suspend their operations at a time when humanitarian needs are greatest. As a result, the entire aid system is in danger of collapsing, and the continuation of the maritime aid corridor from Cyprus is in particular jeopardy. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and other humanitarian organizations must have unhindered access to the population in need.

Every day counts: the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification has warned of a risk of famine between now and the end of May. According to UNICEF, Gaza is experiencing the worst level of child malnutrition in the world. Malnutrition in early in life can lead to stunted growth, impaired cognitive development and increased vulnerability to infections and disease. Those impacts are irreversible and will affect those children for the rest of their lives.

On 28 March, the International Court of Justice asked Israel to work closely with the United Nations to ensure the unrestricted and large-scale provision by all interested parties of urgently needed basic services

and humanitarian aid. Switzerland recalls that the provisional measures decided by the International Court of Justice on 26 January and 28 March are binding on the parties. Switzerland therefore expects Israel to comply. We therefore once again call on the parties to comply strictly with international law, in particular, international humanitarian law and human rights law.

Switzerland remains very concerned about the impact of the hostilities on the civilian population. A large-scale operation in Rafah must not take place, given the catastrophic humanitarian consequences it would have. In addition, resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024) must be implemented immediately. All hostages still detained in Gaza must be released immediately and unconditionally. An immediate ceasefire leading to a sustainable ceasefire is essential to protect lives and prevent famine. Without reliable security guarantees, humanitarians cannot fulfil their mandate to save lives and help people in need. We must return to humanity. An immediate ceasefire is the only way to ensure that no more civilian lives are lost.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I join others in thanking Director Rajasingham and President Soeripto for briefing us today.

The United Kingdom is appalled by the killing of seven World Central Kitchen aid workers, including three of our British nationals, in an Israeli air strike in Gaza on 1 April, bringing the number of humanitarian staff killed thus far to more than 200. I share our deep and sincere condolences with their families and with all those who have lost loved ones during this war.

Our Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary spoke immediately with Prime Minister Netanyahu and Israeli Foreign Minister Katz to ask for a transparent investigation. We will study carefully the results of the investigation from the Israeli Government, and we welcome the commitments that Israel has made since on humanitarian operations.

Aid workers should never be targeted. More than 200 have been killed in this conflict. Israel must do much more to protect them and to ensure their safety so that they can deliver urgently needed life-saving humanitarian assistance. For that to happen, we call for three major changes.

First, Israel must make significant, concrete changes to put in place an effective deconfliction mechanism immediately. It is imperative that those

doing life-saving work are properly protected and allowed full, unhindered access to conduct their work safely.

Secondly, we welcome the steps Israel has now taken and call on it to do everything necessary to allow effective humanitarian relief. We welcome the assurances that Israel has given to United Nations agencies and others that it will now open the port of Ashdod and more land crossings into Gaza, increase the quantities and types of aid allowed to enter by land and improve water supplies. The amount of aid getting in has thus far been insufficient.

Full, unhindered access, as well as an enabling operating environment for distribution, is necessary to meet humanitarian needs and avoid famine. And all parties must fully comply with international humanitarian law and work with Under-Secretary-General Kaag to scale up assistance and implement resolution 2720 (2023), without delay.

Finally, we need to see major and immediate changes in the conduct of Israel's military campaign to protect civilians. I reiterate the United Kingdom's call for the immediate implementation of resolution 2728 (2024).

This weekend will mark six months since Israel suffered the worst terror attack in its history. Throughout this crisis, the United Kingdom has been unequivocal in our condemnation of Hamas and our demand for the unconditional release of the hostages. We must see an immediate cessation of hostilities to get aid in and hostages out, leading to progress towards a sustainable ceasefire.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Director of Coordination of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and Ms. Janti Soeripto, civil society representative, for their briefings about the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, where, despite resolution 2728 (2024), which demands an immediate ceasefire, the ruthless military operation of the Israel Defense Forces continues.

Only four days remain until the end of the holy month of Ramadan, but judging by the bellicose rhetoric of the leadership of West Jerusalem, no ceasefire, which is expressly demanded in resolution 2728 (2024) is expected — not even for a short period of time. As a

result, in the past 24 hours alone, 62 people have died in the enclave. The total number of Palestinian lives lost in the Gaza Strip exceeds 33,000, including 13,000 children. An approximate 12,000 more are presumed killed, with their bodies buried under the rubble that covers almost the entire territory of the enclave, where 70 per cent of buildings have been destroyed.

Against that backdrop, the Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, Ms. Albanese, concluded that Israel has met the threshold for the commission of genocide. At the same time, she labelled “humanitarian camouflage” the assertions made by the Israeli authorities about the alleged compliance with international humanitarian law during the military operation in the Gaza Strip, as well as their reference to the right to self-defence and to fight against terrorism.

With each passing day, the humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate. Every single day, we receive more and more chilling data.

We would like to reiterate our position in that regard. In order to prevent a humanitarian apocalypse and mass starvation in Gaza, what we urgently need is a genuine ceasefire and for Israel to respect international humanitarian law. That is the only way to prevent this tragedy from claiming more victims. With the ongoing military operation in the enclave, it is impossible to provide adequate humanitarian aid, including food assistance.

Since the escalation in Gaza began, the Security Council has adopted two dedicated humanitarian resolutions, including resolution 2728 (2024), which calls for a ceasefire. Those resolutions contain provisions regarding unfettered humanitarian access to those in need and unconditional compliance with obligations under international humanitarian law to ensure minimum operating conditions for humanitarian agencies. Israel is also failing to honour those obligations.

We believe that the Council should agree on measures to be taken against West Jerusalem in response to its blatant disregard for Security Council decisions and the Charter of the United Nations. Such measures could include, for example, an arms embargo or other types of sanctions. The Council must stand in unison in that regard. It is unacceptable for some members of the

Council to send signals that cast doubt on the need to implement its resolutions.

Palliative measures will not improve the situation in the Gaza Strip. I am referring to air drops of humanitarian aid and the construction of a temporary maritime pier. Aid agencies themselves have concluded that such measures are purely symbolic in nature and do not contribute to the normal delivery of the required amount of aid. What is more, dozens of Palestinians have drowned or perished during the implementation of those measures. This is not the time for humanitarian public relations, which has been used in order to cover up the unwillingness or inability to take measures to end the bloodshed and ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access.

The situation is greatly exacerbated by Israel's overstated case regarding the supposed crisis in the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which is a unique body for providing comprehensive support to 6 million Palestinians in both the occupied Palestinian territories and in neighbouring Arab countries. Despite the fact that the Israeli authorities have not provided information to substantiate their allegations against UNRWA staff, Washington nonetheless decided, at the legislative level, to suspend funding for the Agency. Moreover, certain Western States that have resumed payments to the Agency's budget have expressly stated that those funds should not be used to finance UNRWA's work in Gaza.

We would like to say a few words on the information war waged by West Jerusalem against UNRWA. Because of unsubstantiated accusations, the veracity of which is highly questionable, the Agency is experiencing serious reputational and financial difficulties. But the main problem is that even the modest assistance that UNRWA could otherwise offer, is not currently being provided as a result. What is more, Israel has denied the Agency humanitarian access to northern Gaza, where the situation is the direst. That obstruction must end. We are all fully aware that there is no alternative to UNRWA in the West Bank, Gaza and the adjacent Arab countries. Security Council members must not play along with Israel, which embarked on a crusade against UNRWA long before the events of 7 October.

I would like to turn now to the safety of humanitarian workers. As recently as Tuesday, seven employees of the volunteer organization World Central Kitchen were

killed in a targeted Israeli attack. They were escorting food aid, so direly needed by the people of Gaza. The incident sparked an outcry and outrage in Western capitals, as the humanitarians killed were mostly Western nationals. Washington even went so far as to level an unusually sharp criticism of its Middle Eastern ally. Overall, in the course of the conflict, Israeli rocket attacks on Gaza's humanitarian facilities, schools and hospitals, have already resulted in the deaths of 224 aid workers, not to mention the tens of thousands of dead Gazans. We once again ask the simple question — Will those atrocities be investigated? Will the Council demand it of Israel? Or are our Western colleagues focused only on the deaths of their compatriots? What does the Secretariat leadership plan to do? It has already lost 179 staff members who were carrying out their heroic duties. Why did the United Nations immediately begin to address Israel's accusations against UNRWA, but when it comes to those egregious cases in which United Nations staff died, as far as we can tell, it has not even begun an investigation?

In essence, what we are seeing in Gaza is a siege and a blockade aimed at causing famine among the civilian population and a clear example of the use of starvation as a method of warfare. We recall that such actions are expressly prohibited by international humanitarian law and the relevant resolution 2417 (2018). The occupying Power's decision to temporarily open the Erez border crossing, adopted on the eve of this meeting in order to mitigate the aforementioned indignation of Western capitals, does not change the overall picture. Israel has still not implemented the Security Council's main demand — an immediate ceasefire.

The Council is obliged to ensure that all parties to the conflict fully implement all its decisions aimed at ending violence in Gaza, increasing humanitarian assistance to civilians in the Strip and preventing their forcible transfer. Only then can we begin to think about new initiatives aimed at achieving a long-term settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict within the recognized international legal framework.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): I thank Mr. Rajasingham and Ms. Soeripto for their valuable briefings.

We are nearing six months since the conflict in Gaza erupted owing to Hamas's terrifying attacks on Israel. Recent developments seem to only be worsening the situation on the ground.

Despite last week's adoption of resolution 2728 (2024) demanding an immediate ceasefire during the holy month of Ramadan, hostilities continue unabated. On 2 April, we witnessed the killing of seven World Central Kitchen aid workers by multiple Israeli strikes in Gaza, sparking global outrage. Already more than 220 humanitarian workers have lost their lives.

Japan extends its sincere condolences to the colleagues and the families of the victims. Those incidents have forced humanitarian organizations to suspend their operations, which is having a catastrophic impact on the lives of people in Gaza, who desperately need life-saving assistance.

Attacks on humanitarian workers are absolutely unacceptable. In that vein, Japan urges Israel to take the necessary measures to prevent a recurrence of such incidents.

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza is spiralling deeper into catastrophe. People in Gaza are facing starvation, the spread of preventable diseases and unimaginable suffering. There is famine. Even though many countries, including Japan, have resumed funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, if attacks on humanitarian workers continue, the Agency cannot carry out its work.

This week, we heard from the representative from UNICEF that dozens of children in northern Gaza have reportedly died from malnutrition and dehydration (see S/PV.9594). We must make every effort to get aid into Gaza through all possible means, including by land, air and sea. Those in Gaza cannot wait another day. Japan hopes the recent announcement regarding the opening of the Erez crossing will allow more humanitarian aid to reach people in Gaza.

For the catastrophic nightmare to end, Japan urges all concerned parties to implement an immediate ceasefire, an imperative to improve the humanitarian situation, without further delay in accordance with resolution 2728 (2024). We must save the lives of civilians, including innocent children, by silencing the guns, expediting humanitarian deliveries into Gaza and working towards the release of hostages.

Lastly, we remain strongly supportive of the ongoing diplomatic efforts led by the United States, Egypt and Qatar to that end. We will continue to play our role in achieving peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Algeria, Guyana and Slovenia for the initiative to convene today's meeting and thank the two briefers for their briefings.

It has been six months since the conflict in Gaza erupted. More than 33,000 innocent civilians have lost their lives in the fighting with millions more struggling in despair in the midst of an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe. The Security Council adopted resolution 2728 (2024) on 25 March calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. However, it is heartbreaking that the fighting has continued for more than 10 days with civilians and humanitarian workers in Gaza exposed to daily gunfire and bullets. Every day close to 100 of innocent women and children die from bombings, hunger and disease. The tragedy of Gaza tests the conscience of humankind and the credibility of the Security Council.

First, the full implementation of resolution 2728 (2024) must be taken as a matter of urgency. All resolutions of the Security Council are binding. It is the obligation of all Member States to implement the resolutions and the commitment they all made when joining the United Nations. We urge Israel to implement the resolution immediately and cease its military attacks on Gaza and its collective punishment of the people of Gaza.

We call on the major Powers with significant influence on the parties concerned to play an active role in promoting the implementation of the resolution. We support the Security Council in taking further necessary action to implement resolution 2728 (2024).

Secondly, there is no time to lose in alleviating the humanitarian disaster. Gaza is already suffering from severe famine and the collapse of the medical system. The humanitarian disaster is beyond imagination. Israel must fully implement the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice and immediately lift the blockade of Gaza and the obstacles to humanitarian access. Rafah and all land crossings must be fully opened to allow for the rapid, adequate and safe passage of humanitarian supplies.

Thirdly, Israel must cease its attacks on humanitarian institutions and personnel. China strongly condemns the recent attacks on humanitarian convoys. The attacks on humanitarian workers are shocking. They also reminded us that, since the outbreak of the conflict, Israel's attacks have already claimed the lives of more

than 170 humanitarian workers. They have destroyed life-saving humanitarian facilities and supplies.

Israel must abide by international law and international humanitarian law and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and guarantee the security of humanitarian agencies. Israel must stop its malicious attacks and exercise restrictions against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

The lessons of the current round of conflicts are tragic. They remind us once again that only through the full implementation of the two-State solution, the realization of an independent Palestinian State and the correction of the historical injustice long suffered by the Palestinian people will it be possible to break out of the vicious cycle of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. As a critical step, we firmly support Palestine's full membership in the United Nations and support the Security Council taking action as soon as possible. At the same time, we advocate the convening of a larger, more authoritative and more effective international peace conference to develop a timeline and road map for the realization of the two-State solution.

China will continue to work with the international community and make unremitting efforts to put an end to the fight in Gaza so as to alleviate the humanitarian disaster and realize the two-State solution.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr Rajasingham and Ms. Soeripto for their briefings.

France condemned Israel's strike which resulted in the death of seven non-governmental organization World Central Kitchen humanitarian workers. We have asked the Israeli authorities to conduct an in-depth investigation and punish those responsible. The Israeli authorities have committed to that and must follow through. Seven humanitarian workers were killed while trying to assist civilian populations who are on the verge of famine. Their deaths, let us not forget, come on top of 177 United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) staff. For the United Nations, that is the heaviest death toll since the Organization was established.

The protection of humanitarian aid workers must be upheld in all circumstances. The law of war, the principles of precaution and proportionality, and international humanitarian law must be upheld.

Two million people lack everything in Gaza. It is vital to be able to deliver assistance on a massive scale and guarantee full access, in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the Council. The United Nations' coordinating role is essential, as is that of UNRWA. France is taking note of the measures announced today by the Israeli Government. We call on the Government to implement its announcements without delay and to fully respect international humanitarian law.

France demands the full implementation of resolution 2728 (2024) of the Security Council and an immediate and lasting ceasefire. In Gaza, we are not seeing a natural disaster. The humanitarian crisis is a result of the war, and the best humanitarian response is for the war to end. France would like to reiterate its firm opposition to a ground offensive in Rafah, which would result in an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe. We also demand the immediate and unconditional release of hostages detained by Hamas and other terrorist groups. We would like to reiterate our condemnation of the terrorist attacks, including sexual violence, perpetrated on 7 October.

Achieving a ceasefire is a top priority for France. Let us address the cause, not just the symptoms. It is also high time for us to, at last, lay the foundations for a political settlement to implement the two-State solution. That is the only solution that can guarantee Israelis and Palestinians peace and security. France is actively engaged to that end, working with the parties and all regional and international partners. The draft resolution we have submitted for the consideration of Security Council members is part of that effort, and I call on them all to support it.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I thank this morning's briefers, Mr. Rajasingham and Ms. Soeripto, for their timely and sombre reports. I reiterate Ecuador's support for the valuable and self-sacrificing work of United Nations staff and agencies in the conflict zone.

I would also like to recognize and appreciate the heroic work of the humanitarian workers who — since the reprehensible terrorist acts perpetrated by Hamas last October — have risked their lives to deliver food or to save others, in increasingly difficult conditions. I pay special tribute to the humanitarian workers who have lost their lives in the conflict, in particular the seven World Central Kitchen workers killed this week, and send condolences to their home countries and their

families. The Secretary-General referred to that very clearly this morning.

Humanitarian personnel must never, under any circumstances, under any pretext whatsoever, be targeted. There is no justification for doing so. Such acts must be investigated and responsibility must be established. The principles of international humanitarian law are not optional and do not depend on reciprocity.

The suspension of humanitarian activities owing to a lack of minimum protection and security conditions aggravates the already grave food crisis. It is imperative to remedy the situation. To that end, the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East work is vitally important and must be supported. We call on all who are able to do so to contribute to funding its operations, the continuity of which affects the stability of the entire region.

Last week the Security Council adopted a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire during the month of Ramadan and the unconditional and immediate release of the hostages still held by Hamas. Resolution 2728 (2024) also emphasizes the need to expand the flow of humanitarian assistance to Gaza. Timely implementation of that resolution would have prevented the deaths of humanitarian personnel, allowed hostages to be reunited with their relatives and increased assistance to the civilian population. Therefore, I reiterate the call for the full and immediate implementation of resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024), in order to prevent further death and destruction.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): I thank Director Rajasingham for today's briefing on the situation in the Gaza Strip. I also appreciate Ms. Soeripto for her sobering testimony regarding what is happening on the ground.

As we are now nearing six months since the current catastrophe started, it is gravely dismaying to witness that hostilities continue unabated, causing devastating humanitarian consequences in Gaza.

Three days ago, the World Health Organization announced that the Al-Shifa medical complex in Gaza City, the largest hospital in Gaza, is no longer functional after Israel's military operation, further threatening the already precarious health system in the Gaza Strip.

Despite international efforts, including through maritime corridors and airdrops, Gaza is now facing a catastrophic food crisis, due to the significant restrictions on land deliveries of life-saving assistance and unsafe conditions.

As civilian infrastructure for food production and distribution has been severely damaged, Gaza cannot sustain itself without outside assistance. Against that disturbing backdrop, my delegation is deeply appalled by the killing of seven World Central Kitchen staff members in an Israel Defense Forces strike who were simply delivering live-saving humanitarian assistance in the Gaza Strip. It is reported that World Central Kitchen alone has provided more than 35 million hot meals across Gaza since the onset of the current catastrophe. Korea extends its deep condolences and consolation to the victims of that incident and their bereaved families and wishes a speedy recovery for the injured.

Now, several key humanitarian aid organizations on the ground, including World Central Kitchen, are reported to have suspended their operations following that devastating incident. That is a dismaying development, as the international community is struggling to expand humanitarian aid at scale throughout Gaza.

Let me clearly repeat our shared tenet, enshrined in international humanitarian law: all parties to conflicts must not attack humanitarian workers and they must ensure unhindered access to humanitarian assistance. All barriers to the provision of humanitarian assistance in Gaza should be lifted as demanded by resolution 2728 (2024). We hope the Israeli Government's announcement yesterday of steps to increase the flow of aid to Gaza leads to tangible improvements on the ground.

At the same time, humanitarian notification procedures and deconfliction mechanisms should be enhanced to stop the recurrence of incidents like the deaths of the World Central Kitchen staff members. Korea re-emphasizes that resolution 2728 (2024), adopted last month, should be implemented and calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire as that is the only viable way to ensure safe and unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Kelley (United States of America): I thank Director Rajasingham and Chief Executive Officer Soeripto for their briefings.

The Security Council and General Assembly have affirmed the imperative of protecting humanitarian personnel, including in resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024). As we heard today, tragically, that has not been heeded by the parties in Gaza.

One of the most recent pieces of evidence of this was the tragic strike on a World Central Kitchen convoy, which killed several humanitarian workers, on 1 April. As President Biden said on Tuesday, the United States is outraged and heartbroken at the deaths of those individuals, who were providing food to starving civilians in the middle of a war. Those workers were brave and selfless. They show the best of what humankind has to offer when the going really gets tough. An incident such as that should never have happened and must never happen again.

We all know, moreover, that was not a stand-alone incident. The conflict has been one of the worst in recent memory in terms of the number of aid workers who have been killed. More than 220 humanitarian workers have perished since 7 October in Gaza, some while on duty. Many more have been injured. Those incidents are unacceptable. Humanitarian personnel must be protected. Full stop.

We are deeply concerned that Israel has not done enough to protect humanitarian aid workers or civilians. For that reason, draft resolution S/2024/239, which the United States introduced last month in the Council, demanded all parties to the conflict fully respect humanitarian notification and deconfliction mechanisms and remediate any deficiencies. Although Russia and China vetoed that draft resolution, we repeat that call today. As President Biden conveyed to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu on 4 April, Israel must announce and implement a series of specific, concrete and measurable steps to address civilian harm, humanitarian suffering and the safety of aid workers. United States policy with respect to Gaza will be determined by Israel's immediate action on those steps.

Given the serious allegations regarding United Nations and Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) personnel tied to Hamas, we fully support the ongoing investigations into the organization and look forward to the independent review conducted by former French Foreign Minister Colonna. At the same time, however,

we note UNRWA's indispensable role in distributing humanitarian assistance in Gaza, especially given a looming famine. Onerous restrictions on UNRWA's work are unacceptable, especially given grave concerns about a looming famine.

Of course, even as we press Israel to do much more to protect humanitarian workers and facilitate the life-saving work of the United Nations, including UNRWA, we must not ignore how Hamas's actions have put humanitarian personnel at risk. Tunnelling under and storing weapons in hospitals is a violation of the laws of war, and we condemn it.

We also continue to do all we can to help deliver humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians in Gaza through all available means. But those actions are not enough to meet the needs of the Palestinian civilians in Gaza. Humanitarian assistance is desperately needed now, and it must be facilitated to mitigate the impact of an impending famine. Gaza's entire population knows acute levels of food insecurity. Gaza's entire population is in need of humanitarian assistance.

That is why we continue to underscore that an immediate ceasefire is essential to stabilize and improve the humanitarian situation and protect innocent lives, and we have urged Prime Minister Netanyahu to empower his negotiators to conclude a deal without delay to bring the hostages home. We urge Hamas as well to accept the deal on the table.

We continue to support those negotiations and will continue to work to protect humanitarian staff and facilitate increased provision of humanitarian assistance into and throughout Gaza.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting at the request of Algeria, joined by Guyana and Slovenia, to receive an update on the risk of famine and attacks against humanitarian workers in the occupied Palestine territory, in particular the Gaza Strip. I thank Director Rajasingham and Ms. Janti Soeripto for their important information and sobering briefing.

A couple of days ago in this Chamber, we held a briefing (see S/PV.9594) during which we were presented with the devastating impact of the Gaza conflict on children. The report from the Global Nutrition Cluster, referenced during that briefing, indicates that approximately 15 per cent of children under 2 years of

age in northern Gaza are acutely malnourished, and that the region is facing imminent famine.

Several other open meetings have been held on the region since the start of the year, and in all of those meetings, we have been briefed about the unremitting Israeli bombardment of Gaza which has decimated almost all public and private infrastructure and has halted socioeconomic activity in Gaza. Markets, private enterprises and financial institutions, the bedrocks of economic activity, are non-functioning in Gaza. Infrastructure for essentials services, such as water and sanitation, energy and health, have been decimated.

The global community is aware of the result of the two-week military operation in the Al-Shifa Hospital, which has left most of the hospital structure in ruins. The numbers regarding civilian casualties and internally displaced persons, with women and children being the most affected, are profound and must not be normalized. Despite the volatility in the region and the dangers they face, humanitarian workers have remained resolute in assisting civilians in accessing food and life-saving aid needed for their daily survival.

We recall resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024), which demand that parties to the conflict comply with their obligations under international law to protect civilians and the need to allow for full, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all parts of the Gaza Strip. Those resolutions of the Security Council are binding, and we are deeply concerned about the glaring non-compliance by the parties.

We are also deeply concerned that civilians and humanitarian personnel are still being victims of strikes often leading to their demise. The United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory recently reported that, at that stage in the conflict, at least 196 humanitarian personnel had been killed in the occupied Palestinian territory. The update from Director Rajasingham puts the tragic total at 226 humanitarian workers killed, 179 of which are United Nations personnel.

Hundreds of humanitarian workers have paid the ultimate price, from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in the Near East Palestinian humanitarian workers to the World Central Kitchen workers. We offer our deepest condolences to their families and the organizations.

Each day we are reminded of the risk of famine and the steep rise in malnutrition due to intense hostilities and restricted humanitarian access. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has reported that at least 576,000 people in Gaza are one step away from famine and are facing catastrophic levels of deprivation and starvation. With a view to minimizing the impact of the dire humanitarian situation amid these projections of food insecurity and famine, malnutrition and disease, my delegation would like to emphasize several points.

First, Sierra Leone condemns all attacks against civilians and humanitarian personnel. They must stop, and effective deconfliction measures to deliver humanitarian aid must be implemented.

Secondly, we continue to strongly urge the parties to the conflict to respect the relevant resolutions of the Council by fully implementing resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024).

Thirdly, we reaffirm the relevance and validity of the provisional measures prescribed by the International Court of Justice's order of 26 January 2024 and the request for a modification order, made on 28 March 2024, which, inter alia, obligate the State of Israel:

“to ensure, without delay, in full cooperation with the United Nations, the unhindered provision at scale by all concerned of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance, including food, water, electricity, fuel, shelter, clothing, hygiene and sanitation requirements...throughout Gaza”.

Fourthly, Sierra Leone emphasizes the importance and imperative of accountability for the grave violations of international law by all responsible parties. We call for a peace that is accompanied by accountability to end impunity.

Sierra Leone reiterates its position on the vital role of UNRWA amid the myriad factors impeding its humanitarian response. The need for the Agency's continued services cannot be overstated, as UNRWA remains the bedrock for the provision of life-saving humanitarian services to Palestinians across the Middle East region.

Let me close by echoing the need for intensified political engagement and dialogue in the relentless pursuit of peace premised on the two-State solution.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): I wish to thank Malta's presidency for convening this urgent meeting

on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. Our gratitude goes to Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Director of Coordination of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and Ms. Janti Soeripto, President and Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children US.

Some 11 days ago, the Council overwhelmingly adopted resolution 2728 (2024), submitted by the 10 elected members of this important organ. The purpose and object of that resolution was clear and unambiguous — first, to achieve an immediate and lasting ceasefire; secondly, to secure the release of hostages; and thirdly, to allow for the flow of humanitarian aid, in larger quantities, in order to effectively address the humanitarian tragedy presently unfolding in Gaza.

We members of the Security Council adopted resolution 2728 (2024) because our unanimous stance — that the death of children, women and men in Gaza is unacceptable and defies our conscience, our humanity and the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The adoption of that resolution was a clear testament that no member of the Council can justify the relentless military operations in Gaza, which is causing untold suffering among the Palestinian people. This is a critical situation that demands our immediate attention and concerted efforts in order to protect the people in Gaza.

Of great concern to us all is the fact that the ongoing military action appears to respect no laws of war, no rules of warfare and no moral boundaries. The large number of tragic deaths of humanitarian workers — more than 200 thus far — bears testimony to that assertion. The recent deaths of the World Central Kitchen workers in Gaza illustrates the scope of the tragedy. The loss of these dedicated humanitarian workers is highly deplorable. These and other humanitarian workers who perished in Gaza were solely devoted to providing essential aid to those in need. Their deaths constitute a flagrant violation of the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

We deeply regret the attack on Al-Shifa Hospital, carried out in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which underscores the critical importance of safeguarding civilian health facilities and maternity wards during armed conflicts.

We welcome the recent International Court of Justice order on the Gaza question. It mandates that Israel must take specific measures to address the crippling shortages of essential supplies in the war-ravaged Gaza Strip and underscores the urgency of addressing the humanitarian crisis and ensuring that aid reaches those in need.

In that regard, we urge Israel to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza by implementing measures to improve the situation. Those measures include opening more land crossings to facilitate the entry of essential supplies such as food, water and fuel into war-affected Gaza.

We urge Member States to fully cooperate with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which plays a vital role in providing humanitarian aid to the population in Palestine. UNRWA's assistance is essential for the well-being of civilians in the region.

As we work towards the implementation of resolution 2728 (2024) and other relevant Council resolutions, we should continue fighting for a peaceful and stable future in the Middle East, which hinges on the vision of a two-State solution: Israel and Palestine, living side by side, as independent and sovereign States and coexisting as good neighbours, as prescribed by the Charter of the United Nations.

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

I begin by thanking the briefers for their statements.

We are deeply shocked by Israel's killing of seven aid workers from World Central Kitchen in Gaza on 1 April. That brings the total number of humanitarians killed in the latest round of conflict in Gaza to more than 220, including 179 United Nations personnel, with the number increasing day by day. We express our sincere condolences to the loved ones of all United Nations and humanitarian personnel killed in Gaza.

Malta calls for a thorough, independent and urgent investigation into that completely unacceptable event and all previous ones. Accountability for any violations of international law, including international humanitarian law, must be ensured. Perpetrators must be held accountable. The latest attack once again underlines the urgent need for an immediate and permanent ceasefire.

We note that the movement of the humanitarian staff from the World Central Kitchen was carried out in coordination with Israeli authorities, who were notified through the United Nations humanitarian notification system. All procedures were followed, and yet the attack still happened. We stress once again that these systems are in place to ensure that these exact incidents do not take place.

We recall the international humanitarian law obligations of all parties to protect humanitarian workers. Strikes on humanitarian workers are unacceptable, especially when those workers are providing much-needed humanitarian assistance to civilians in need. It is clear that more must be done to ensure full compliance with those obligations.

On this occasion I emphasize once again our firm conviction that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a stabilizing force in Gaza and in the region, and there is no replacement to the services it provides. Member States must ensure that UNRWA can implement its operations in line with its mandate and that relief workers are protected. We call upon Member States to continue to contribute to the Agency and to ensure that it has the necessary resources to operate.

We continue to observe obstacles being imposed by Israel preventing the safe, rapid and unhindered facilitation of humanitarian assistance into and within Gaza. Since the outbreak of the conflict, Israel has obstructed a meaningful humanitarian aid scale-up in Gaza by placing onerous, arbitrary bureaucratic and administrative impediments on aid delivery. Tent poles, chemotherapy drugs and basic commodities are being blocked from entering Gaza. Furthermore, it continues to block food from reaching Gazans who are in desperate need. According to the latest data, the entire population of the Gaza Strip is facing crisis levels of hunger. Around half a million people are on the verge of human-made and conflict-induced famine. More must be done. We cannot simply wait for a retrospective famine classification before acting to prevent it. In that context, we deeply regret that the World Central Kitchen has now been forced to suspend its operations and to return large consignments of undelivered food owing to the fear of further attacks. Malta underlines that resolution 2417 (2018) clearly states that the use of starvation as a weapon of war may constitute a war crime.

We further stress that Israel must facilitate the use of all available routes and border crossings to and throughout the Gaza Strip. The announced opening of the Erez crossing, the Kerem Shalom crossing and the Ashdod port is a necessary and positive development. The full and rapid implementation of those measures is fundamental.

We are also deeply shocked by images of the aftermath of the Israeli military's siege on Al-Shifa Hospital. Any systematic targeting of civilians using hospitals or medical facilities or their improper use by the parties is in direct contravention of international humanitarian law and resolution 2286 (2016). That resolution and all other Security Council resolutions must be respected and implemented.

Finally, Malta reiterates its firm position that de-escalation and dialogue are the only ways to allow the necessary space to relaunch negotiations for a just, comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the conflict, based on the two-State solution along the pre-1967 borders.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Some minutes ago, we witnessed an attempt at cynical and unscrupulous manipulation on the part of our United States colleagues. In his statement, the representative of the United States emphasized that the call to protect humanitarian aid workers was contained in the United States draft resolution that Russia and China vetoed (S/2024/239). At the same time, he slyly omitted the fact that resolution 2728 (2024), which was eventually adopted by the Security Council, also contains such demands, referring to the need to implement resolution 2720 (2023), which is devoted to that topic. He also kept quiet about the fact that the draft resolution that we rightly vetoed did not contain a demand or even a call for a ceasefire. It therefore effectively gave the green light for the Israeli operation in Rafah.

We believe that such low standards of megaphone diplomacy should have no place in the Security Council. Instead of such unscrupulous moves by our colleagues from the United States, they should have concentrated on putting pressure on Israel, and they should also stop

supplying it with weapons that are being used to kill Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): We want to express our appreciation to Algeria, Guyana and Slovenia for calling for the convening today's important meeting, and I also want to express our appreciation for the unanimous decision taken by the Group of Arab States yesterday, through our representative, the Ambassador of Algeria, to ask for this meeting and to the two other countries, Guyana and Slovenia, for joining in that endeavour. And I want to thank the two briefers from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Save the Children US, Mr. Rajasingham and Ms. Soeripto, for their briefings.

Allow me to address Security Council members today not only in their capacity as diplomats representing their States, but as parents and grandparents, as daughters and sons and as members of families that they love and cherish. Last night, a Palestinian father sat powerless by the bedside of his 2-month-old baby, watching him die slowly of hunger, after searching for hours and days for baby formula in northern Gaza to no avail. A mother had to leave her children in their home for their safety while she went out to try and find flour. She heard a loud bombardment as she reached the corner of the street and rushed back with no flour, only to find her home destroyed and her kids killed. We speak of this terrifying assault against life in Gaza in days and months — 180 days, six months, But parents calculate in hours and agonize in minutes and seconds. And they wonder, how much longer will they have to wait, how much longer can they preserve shreds of life before those, too, are torn apart? To how many children will they have to bid an eternal farewell? Or how many children will they leave behind if they themselves are to perish?

Israel has destroyed homes, killed entire families, displaced the entire population, demolished the hospitals and made every effort to ensure no help could reach our people. It is killing those who heal, those who rescue, those who provide aid and relief, those who feed and those who report. Being a Palestinian is enough to be killed. Trying to help Palestinians, like this brave woman and her organization, is enough to be killed. Council members saw it more than two weeks in Al-Shifa Hospital, where Israel summarily

executed people, arrested and tortured them, including the wounded, the sick and medical personnel, without feeling the need to provide much explanation or any evidence. It then burned down the most important hospital in the entire Gaza Strip, continuing to bring the health system to its knees at the time it is most needed to save lives.

We present our deepest condolences to the families of medical personnel, of rescue team members and of the more than 200 aid workers who have been killed, and we express our admiration of all the humanitarians who are pursuing their sacred mission at the peril of losing their lives. They should not be abandoned, but rather supported and protected.

The killing of the aid workers from the World Central Kitchen is not an isolated incident. It is confirmation of what Council members all knew for months now. Israel is targeting those that the laws of war were established to protect. Israel knew very well who it was targeting, hitting three cars in three locations despite the fact they were identifiable and that those targeted had coordinated with Israel the delivery of aid. It says it suspected one person; therefore, it killed many. Never mind distinction, precaution, proportionality or protected status — never mind human decency.

It is unfortunate that it took the killing of foreign nationals for some to fully acknowledge the fate reserved for Palestinians for 180 days now. As the World Central Kitchen CEO eloquently said,

“This is not only an attack against WCK; this is an attack on humanitarian organizations showing up in the most dire of situations where food is being used as a weapon of war. This is unforgivable”.

It is even more unforgivable that Israel, as occupying Power, is the one responsible for ensuring that the civilian population is not harmed or starved. Instead, it is not only inflicting such harm and starvation, but is also killing those trying to alleviate them. For Israel, the entire civilian population and anyone helping them, along with the entire civilian infrastructure, are legitimate targets. It is enough to call them “collateral damage”, express grief and move on to committing the next crime.

Israel baselessly argued that the problem was in the organization delivering life-saving humanitarian assistance, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which has a

fundamental role and which is doing heroic work on the ground. Now even the non-governmental organizations that have worked in the worst possible circumstances around the world are saying they cannot operate in Gaza because of the environment created by Israel.

While killing more than 32,000 Palestinians and maiming more than 72,000 Palestinians with its bombs and bullets, Israel has also made sure to create a human-made famine — the worst of its kind, affecting more than 2 million people, who are besieged and starved, with tons of assistance only a few kilometres away. Who can still speak of shared values with Israel, which is committing such crimes, without being devoured by shame?

The Council finally demanded an immediate ceasefire leading to a lasting and sustainable ceasefire. Israel ignored that demand. Resolution 2728 (2024) must be implemented. It is the responsibility of the Council and of all States to ensure that it is upheld. The International Court of Justice ordered Israel twice in the past two months to undertake measures to prevent the real and imminent threat of genocide, including to take all necessary and effective measures to ensure, without delay, in full cooperation with the United Nations, the unhindered provision at scale of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to Palestinians throughout Gaza. But Israel breached the order.

The problem is not that the Council adopted resolutions, that the International Court of Justice ordered provisional measures or that humankind has elaborated the rules that led United Nations bodies to adopt those positions, and which positions should be observed. The problem is that Israel can violate those rules, demands and orders with total impunity.

No one — no country — should arm or shield those committing atrocities. They must be held accountable, or those crimes will continue. Faced with such outrage for its attack on foreign nationals from the World Central Kitchen, Israel took its first measures, dismissing two senior officers and reprimanding three others. That is the punishment for the commission of war crimes? That is outrageous. And who will be held accountable for all the tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians killed? Are our lives not worthy of holding accountable those who murder us and kill us in large numbers?

History will remember that Israel continued to be present within these walls while trying to bring down the United Nations and the international law-based

order the Organization stands for, destroying and displacing an entire people and denying their right to existence and their State, unchecked and unhinged, while the State of Palestine, committed to the rule of international law and to just and lasting peace, has yet to become a Member of the United Nations. That is only one more injustice to which our people is being subjected, one more contradiction between the clarity of the statements and the ambiguity of certain actions. There are no nuances, no ifs and buts, no justification for what Israel is doing. None. There is no justification for the continued denial of our right to self-determination and to freedom and dignity in our land.

We knew, members all knew, what was coming six months ago. We knew, and members knew, that Israel would resort to mass and indiscriminate killing and to total destruction and devastation, and that famine was on the way. This genocide was announced by Israeli leaders. It was perpetrated in broad daylight. It was displayed on the screens. It was discussed in meetings of members of the Council. Many members were mobilized to stop it, but there are still tools that were not used, not even considered.

One day, as in the cases of other genocides, a lot will be said about those failures. But we cannot wait. Action is needed now at every level and with every means possible. I call on members, individually and collectively, to do more, now, in order to figure out a way to stop these massacres and the premeditated killing of children, and women and men. I call on members to bring immediate relief to desperate parents who have witnessed what no parent should endure, and children who have suffered what no child should suffer, for 260,000 minutes now. Our failures mean their death. That should be reason enough for us to do everything in our power to bring this tragedy to an end.

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

Mr. Erdan (Israel): I wish to begin by expressing Israel's sorrow over the tragic incident that claimed the lives of the World Central Kitchen employees in Gaza. We express our deepest condolences, and our hearts go out to the families, their countries and the World Central Kitchen. That was a tragic mistake. Israel never targets civilians deliberately — never — let alone aid workers carrying out crucial work. Israel holds the critical support of aid workers in the highest regard, and we will continue to coordinate with them and

secure them in their missions. That incident has been thoroughly investigated, and the findings show that the strike was carried out owing to a misidentification at night during a war under very complex conditions. The incident was investigated by an independent expert body and was completed last night. The findings were presented both to the Israeli leadership and World Central Kitchen officials before being released to the public. As a result, two senior military officers have already been dismissed from their posts.

Israel has coordinated aid distribution with international organizations thousands of times since the start of the war, and there is no question that that event was not deliberate. The military's standard of operating procedure was violated, but it was the result of a tragic mistake made owing to Hamas's cynical modus operandi of exploiting civilian infrastructure and vehicles. Israel will learn from the investigation and make every effort to ensure that such a tragedy is not repeated.

Israel is in the midst of a defensive war fought in unprecedented conditions against an enemy that fights from underground tunnels and hospitals and that deliberately uses civilians as human shields. We did not start the war, and we did not want the war. We were attacked, massacred by ruthless terrorists who are committed to repeating the massacre. Hamas chose to fight from within civilian population centres in Gaza and, as heart-wrenching as it is, tragic mistakes can happen. Every country that has fought a war in dense urban conditions understands that.

Owing to the complexity of the battlefield in Gaza, tragedies that took the lives of our own people have occurred. Israel Defense Forces soldiers, our soldiers, have fallen from friendly fire. And Israeli hostages, our hostages, have been mistakenly killed by our soldiers. Those are all tragedies, but the reality is that the loss of innocent lives during a war is sometimes unavoidable, despite all the efforts that Israel goes above and beyond to make. That is why the world must not forget for one moment why the war began.

Israel abides strictly by the laws of war, and the Israel Defense Forces have implemented more precautions to mitigate civilian harm than any other military in history. Israel dropped 7 million flyers warning civilians to evacuate, 13 million text messages have been sent, military maps were even distributed, outlining safe areas and evacuation routes. Those

measures are unprecedented, and I do not know of any other military that meets those standards.

Our enemy, on the other hand, Hamas, cares nothing for the well-being of civilians and entrenches itself among the civilian population, all in order to deliberately maximize the number of civilian fatalities in Gaza. That is their goal. Do members have anything to say about how Hamas turned Al-Shifa Hospital into a terror base? Over the past weeks, hundreds of terrorists were neutralized and arrested, all inside a hospital. Does the Council have anything to say about it? That is what Hamas is — an enemy that makes every effort to maximize civilian casualties. That is the script that they have written so that members can pressure Israel into a ceasefire and save them. For Israel, every loss of life is a tragedy. Yet for Hamas, the death of civilians is their strategy. We were the ones who were butchered, and we are now fighting to not be butchered again. If Hamas's terror capabilities are not obliterated, its members will rearm, regroup and recommit atrocities against Israelis until they annihilate us. That is exactly what they have been doing for the past 18 years since we evacuated and disengaged from Gaza.

No country wishes this war to end more than Israel. It is our children who are fighting in Gaza, making the ultimate sacrifice, but we have no other choice.

The formula for an immediate ceasefire is clear. The members of Hamas must turn themselves in and release all the hostages. If that is done, the war can end today. One hundred and eighty-two days have passed, and the Council still has not even condemned Hamas. Instead, it has demanded a ceasefire with no strings attached, a ceasefire that is not conditioned on the return of the hostages. That is a free pass for barbarism and sadistic violence. Any ceasefire that ensures Hamas's survival is a green light for many more 7 Octobers.

Members know that there can be no solution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians in our region as long as Hamas continues to rule in Gaza, but some Council members prefer to ignore Hamas's genocidal ambitions. It is in its Charter, by the way. If the Council showed Hamas that terror is not tolerated and increased the pressure on it by, for example, designating Hamas as a terror organization, the war could end faster.

Not only is Hamas responsible for every casualty in Gaza, but it is also responsible for the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Israel facilitates the constant entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza — 19,000 aid trucks

have already entered Gaza since the start of the war carrying over 350,000 tons of aid, including 250,000 tons of food. Field and floating hospitals have been established, and no limits are placed on the amount of aid that can enter Gaza. The only reason that the aid does not always reach the civilian population is because Hamas loots it, and the United Nations is incapable of handling the capacity of supplies being brought in. At any given moment, there are hundreds of trucks held up on the Gazan side of the Kerem Shalom crossing waiting to be received and distributed by aid agencies. The United Nations agencies failed to establish an effective distribution mechanism, but rather than taking responsibility, they blame Israel.

Nevertheless, despite the lies, Israel is committed to making every effort to facilitate aid. Yesterday, as was pointed out by Madam President, Israel's Security Cabinet decided to ramp up the amount of aid entering Gaza. More ports and crossings are opening, and we are taking measures that no other country at war has ever taken.

While the United Nations was quick to forget the horrors of 7 October and chooses to focus only on the situation in Gaza, as we speak here now, there are more than 100,000 Israelis who have been displaced, with their children, from their homes for more than six months. More than 12,000 rockets have been fired at Israel from Gaza, and more than 3,500 rockets and missiles have been fired at Israel from our northern border, from Lebanon. Millions of Israelis are running back and forth from bomb shelters almost every day. There are 134 families who are still praying for the return of their loved ones held hostage by Hamas, and the entire country is mourning the victims of the Hamas massacre.

Millions of Israelis face constant Palestinian terror attacks but sadly that is a fact that the United Nations chooses to neglect. After all, Israeli suffering means almost nothing between these walls. In each Council meeting, a flawed picture is painted. Council members focus on Israel, making demands and issuing condemnations against Israel, while ignoring the terrorists that planned and initiated this war and what should be done to thwart their genocidal schemes. That is also the responsibility of the Council — the lives of Israelis, not only the lives of Palestinians — the future of Israelis.

The Palestinian representative here does not represent Hamas and has no influence over its members. He speaks in the name of only the Palestinian Authority which pays terrorists and until today has never condemned the massacre. And the Palestinian Authority, as Council members know, has no presence in Gaza.

What does the Council have to say about the murderous Hamas terrorists; about the continuous rocket fire on Israel; about the exploitation of civilian sites, such as hospitals, for terror; about the looting of humanitarian aid; and about Israeli women who are being raped right now in captivity and children being tortured? What steps are Council members taking against Hamas? Does the fact that a representative of Hamas is not sitting in this Chamber mean that Council members can ignore its atrocities and exploitation of Gazans as human shields? These discussions sadly are completely detached from reality, even though the truth is so clear.

When will the United Nations finally hold Hamas accountable? The time has come to stop defending terrorists.

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

Mr. Alwasil (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to wish you success in managing the work of the Council. I would also like to thank the representative of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham; and the representative of Save the Children US, Ms. Janti Soeripto, for their briefings on the famine crisis and the targeting of humanitarian workers, as this topic poses a challenge to the international community and humankind as a whole.

Seventy-nine years have passed since the founding of this Organization, which was established to promote international action among countries and organizations to serve humankind and improve the lives of peoples. However, to this day, millions of people still face the threat of hunger and food shortages, as successive international reports have revealed annually the

increase in hungry people around the world, which has now reached more than 700 million people according to the latest statistics of the World Food Programme.

It is imperative for States and organizations to work hard to achieve the most important Sustainable Development Goal, which is the total eradication of hunger. In that regard, I take the opportunity to extend my gratitude to international humanitarian and relief organizations for the important roles and sacrifices they undertake in order to deliver what is needed to those who deserve them around the world, without religious, ethnic, racial or political considerations.

At a time when international law stipulates the provision of material and logistical support for relief and humanitarian organizations around the world, two days ago, the entire world was saddened about an incident that happened in the besieged Gaza Strip but was not surprised owing to the perpetrators. The Israeli war machine targeted the humanitarian convoy belonging to the World Central Kitchen. That blatant attack resulted in the killing of several people of different nationalities for no fault other than providing relief to the afflicted Palestinian people. Undoubtedly, that incident is further evidence added to the record of violations committed by the Israeli occupying Power against relief workers. The number of victims among relief workers has reached a number that cannot be tolerated by the international community, in a dangerous precedent that violates all international conventions, laws and norms. The Arab Group therefore condemns in the strongest terms the crimes committed against the staff of the World Central Kitchen and other relief workers who have given their lives to serve innocent people who face the threat of death from systematic starvation, which unfortunately is being used as a weapon in that severe crisis by the Israeli occupation through the continuing closing of crossings and prevention of the entry of food, water, medicine and fuel. Palestinian civilians have also been targeted when they attempt to reach food aid. That has happened on more than one occasion, leading to the exacerbation of the already catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and to a large number of Palestinians victims, especially women, children and sick people. The Arab Group condemns such incidents, which constitute war crimes under international humanitarian law, and the Israeli occupation must be held fully responsible.

That massacre is undoubtedly further evidence of the genocide that the Israeli occupying Government

is carrying out through its military operations in the Gaza Strip. The Arab Group therefore calls for an international investigation into that incident, which comes six months after the start of the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip.

Thus far, that aggression has led to the martyrdom of more than 33,000 Palestinians and has wounded more than 75,000 others, most of them women and children. Moreover, that incident took place despite all international calls and continued condemnation, as well as Council resolutions calling for an immediate ceasefire and the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people, who are facing the danger of a real famine due to Israel's intransigence. The most recent is resolution 2728 (2024), adopted on 25 March, which calls for an immediate ceasefire during the holy month of Ramadan.

The Arab Group calls on the Council to adopt another resolution, under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, in order to ensure that Israel, the occupying Power, abides by a ceasefire, gives access to humanitarian aid, puts an end to the brutal aggression against the Palestinian people and provides them with protection. The Arab Group stresses the need for the Council to undertake its mandated role to force the occupying State to comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions, international law, international humanitarian law and the two recent orders issued by the International Court of Justice regarding the genocide that Israel is perpetrating against the Palestinian people.

The Arab Group emphasizes that it will continue its efforts at all levels and in all international forums to help the Security Council undertake its main responsibility of maintaining international peace and security and to guarantee that the Israeli occupying State commits to an immediate and permanent ceasefire and allows the unhindered entry of humanitarian aid while ensuring the international necessary protection to the Palestinian people and humanitarian aid workers so that they can carry out their noble tasks.

The Arab Group confirms its support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which plays an irreplaceable and indispensable role. The Agency is a lifeline for more than 2 million Palestinians who are living through an unprecedented catastrophe in Gaza. The Arab Group condemns the fact that the Israeli occupation army has killed more than 176 UNRWA

staff since the beginning of the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip. We value the decision taken by a group of friendly States to resume their support for UNRWA so that it is better able to perform its role by alleviating the humanitarian disaster caused by the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip and helping refugees in the Agency's five areas of operation.

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

Mr. Larsen (Australia): I am grateful for the opportunity to address the Security Council today.

Australia is horrified by the trajectory of the conflict and the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Throughout the conflict, Australia has called for restraint, the protection of civilians and safe and unimpeded access for life-saving humanitarian assistance. Instead, more than 1 million Palestinians are on the brink of famine, and more than 30,000 civilians and 190 humanitarian workers have been killed. Among those aid workers are Australian Lalzawmi "Zomi" Frankcom and her World Central Kitchen colleagues — killed while carrying out urgent and vital support to the people of Gaza.

The death of any aid worker in such circumstances is outrageous, unacceptable and creates further dangers for civilian populations. Wartime does not obviate responsibility for observing international law. We have made clear to the Netanyahu Government that we expect a thorough, genuine and transparent investigation and full accountability. We call for all parties to the conflict to comply with resolution 2728 (2024).

We acknowledge the opening of additional border crossings by Israel. That must translate into massive and sustained increases in humanitarian aid reaching those in need. We repeat our demands for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire leading to a sustainable ceasefire. Hostages must be released, civilians must be protected and aid must flow.

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

Mr. Szczerski (Poland): Poland follows with great concern the current devastating crisis in the Middle East. We know very well the consequences of war, invasion and terror, which are felt for generations.

We are deeply shocked by the deadly strike on a World Central Kitchen convoy, which took the lives of seven aid workers. One of the fatal victims of the attack was a Polish citizen, Damian Soból.

Allow me to say a few words about our citizen. Mr. Soból was a volunteer, with a long-standing commitment to humanitarian causes. He was involved in providing aid to people — not only in Gaza, but also in other parts of the world, including Türkiye, Morocco and Ukraine. Please allow me to convey from the Chamber our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Soból. We extend those condolences to the families and loved ones of all other humanitarian workers who have lost their lives in this horrific event. May their souls rest in peace.

The details of the attack revealed by the media are deeply disturbing. The strike happened along a road used to transit aid through Gaza, which was supposed to be a deconflicted area. Although the Israeli army had been notified of the transport, the Israel Defense Forces hit the convoy three times.

On 7 October, Poland was shocked by the brutal attacks of Hamas. Polish authorities, at all levels, have condemned them in the strongest possible terms. Our position remains unchanged. We see the use of innocent civilians as human shields as particularly repulsive, and we have consistently called for the release of all hostages, without any preconditions. We have continuously stressed that Israel — like any other State — has the right to defend itself.

But we also stress that the right to self-defence must be exercised in full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law. Self-defence must therefore not result in the suffering of innocent civilians, nor in the death of those who come to help them. That is why, since the very beginning of the escalation of the conflict after 7 October, Poland has reiterated that it is an imperative to address the humanitarian needs of the civilian population suffering in Gaza.

For decades, Poland has been active in humanitarian and development aid projects in the Middle East, with a particular focus on Palestine and Lebanon. But it is important to stress that humanitarian aid cannot be provided without safe access and safe working conditions for the United Nations humanitarian agencies and international humanitarian organizations. Humanitarian workers must be protected at all times,

in line with international law. Instead, the members of humanitarian organizations in Gaza are in constant danger and are not able to perform their work.

Today we pay tribute to the heroism of Damian Soból and his commitment to helping those suffering and those in need. We also pay tribute to all other employees and volunteers of humanitarian aid missions who sacrificed their lives. International law must be upheld, even in times of conflict. The resolutions adopted by the Security Council regarding the humanitarian situation in Gaza must be respected. These are common values and rules. In that vein, we call on Israel to conduct a swift, full and transparent investigation and hold those responsible fully to account.

In conclusion, Poland reiterates its unwavering commitment to peace and stability in the Middle East. We are strongly in favour of a robust coordination of all efforts to restore calm in the region. Preventing a regional spillover and restoring calm in the Middle East is more urgent than ever. We believe that the United Nations community should be able to develop a common position on this extremely important issue. Otherwise, the escalation and spread of the conflict may have devastating and long-lasting consequences that we all would like to avert.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.