



# Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

**9617**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Wednesday, 24 April 2024, 4.15 p.m.

New York

*Provisional*

*President:* Mrs. Frazier/Mr. Camilleri . . . . . (Malta)

*Members:*

Algeria . . . . .	Mr. Bendjama
China . . . . .	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. De La Gasca
France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
Guyana . . . . .	Ms. Persaud
Japan . . . . .	Mr. Yamazaki
Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Bambissa
Republic of Korea . . . . .	Mr. Sangjin Kim
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
Sierra Leone . . . . .	Mr. Sowa
Slovenia . . . . .	Mr. Žbogar
Switzerland . . . . .	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Wood

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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*The meeting was called to order at 4.15 p.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 representative of Israel to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza pursuant to resolution 2720 (2023), to participate in this meeting.

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

I give the floor to Ms. Kaag.

**Ms. Kaag:** It has been almost seven months since the terror attack perpetrated on 7 October 2023 by Hamas against Israel — a country that continues to be affected by the deep trauma of the attack and the uncertainty of the hostages' fate. In Gaza, during the same period, more than 34,000 people have been killed and tens of thousands injured or maimed. Livelihoods, homes, schools and hospitals have been destroyed. Gaza's health infrastructure has been decimated. The few hospitals that are still standing are struggling to operate owing to severe supply shortages and frequent power outages. As summer approaches and temperatures rise, communicable diseases threaten to sweep through Gaza. Children, who suffer the worst and the most in every crisis, have been deprived of nutrition, protection and education, with their future hanging in the balance. The scarcity of food and other essential goods has also led to a breakdown in civil order and a gradual unravelling of the social fabric in Gaza. There is no effective law enforcement. As the Secretary-General has said, we have a shared responsibility to secure an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid (see S/PV.9602).

Since my most recent briefing to the Security Council, on 7 March, I have continued to engage in discussions with key Governments and stakeholders across the region. I have also submitted and discussed

detailed proposals with the Governments of Israel, Jordan, Egypt and Cyprus to accelerate and streamline the delivery of goods into Gaza and ensure a consistent pipeline of goods for safe distribution across the Gaza Strip. Today I will share with the Council my assessment of the implementation of resolution 2720 (2023), including areas in which progress has been made or is lacking. Allow me to say from the outset that a paradigm shift is needed to continue to meet the immense needs of the civilian population in a secure and safe manner.

As I have stated before, effective humanitarian operations cannot be reduced to counting trucks. That is a false metric for gauging whether humanitarian assistance is sufficient, let alone whether it responds to basic humanitarian requirements. For example, treating acutely malnourished children or pregnant women is not a matter of eating more calories. They require therapeutic and supplemental foods as well as long-term medical care. Effective humanitarian operations are also about the need for a sustained flow to deliver the right quality and quantity of assistance. That requires a continued focus on the volume, predictability and sustainability of diversified aid to scale up assistance. Humanitarian agencies must be able to move food, medicine and many other supplies safely and via all possible routes and crossings into and throughout every part of Gaza.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is pivotal in providing life-saving humanitarian aid and essential social services, particularly in health and education, to Palestine refugees. As such, UNRWA is irreplaceable and indispensable as a humanitarian lifeline and must be allowed to deliver on its mandate.

On 5 April, the Israeli Government made several commitments to improve aid delivery in response to requests by the United Nations and the international community. A number of steps have been taken, including an increase in the volume of aid cleared, inspected and crossed into Gaza; the temporary opening of the Erez crossing and the opening of the Ashdod port for humanitarian goods; an increase in the number of trucks entering Gaza directly from Jordan through the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge and increased access to the north; preparations for other northern crossings; continued use of Gate 96; an expansion of the opening hours of the Kerem Shalom/Abu Salem and Nitzana crossings; the resumption of operations by some

bakeries in northern and central Gaza; and the ongoing repair of the Nahal Oz water pipeline. I have also been advised of the approval of critical communication equipment and an increase in the allocation of fuel.

While the implementation of some measures is ongoing, further definitive and urgent steps are needed to set the course for a sustained flow of humanitarian and commercial goods into Gaza in terms of volume, need and reach. Given the scale and scope of the destruction and the extent of human suffering, every day counts.

The United Nations is in contact with the Israeli Government on other measures that require urgent or continuous implementation. Those include issues pertaining to checkpoint procedures, the urgent repair of roads, timely clearances to allow humanitarian convoy movements to take place as scheduled, and the approval of additional communication devices, armoured vehicles and spare parts for critical equipment. Agreement on medical and casualty evacuation is equally urgent. Delivery at scale requires a functioning humanitarian notification system and improved and direct communications between humanitarians and military decision makers on the ground. Effective and credible deconfliction is vital for all humanitarian actors in Gaza. That list of basic measures is not exhaustive. Implementation is urgent. My office is establishing a monitoring framework to determine progress and the impact of the respective measures taken, and I will report to the Council in due course.

Allow me to share an update on the diversification of supply routes under resolution 2720 (2023). With respect to Jordan, my team has worked with the authorities concerned to launch the Jordan land corridor under a new streamlined modality. That has resulted in an increase in the number of trucks, and thereby volume, with only one transloading inside the Gaza crossing, and it has the potential for further increases. The entire United Nations family is planning for the receipt and onward distribution of cargo at scale, directly from Jordan to northern Gaza via the Erez crossing. That route is both effective and vital to reach civilians in northern Gaza and beyond.

With regards to Egypt, given the importance of the aid flow from Egypt, we will continue to streamline operations and maximize access through the Rafah and Kerem Shalom/Abu Salem crossings. We have engaged in constructive dialogue to explore opportunities for the

optimization of the efficiency of aid delivery through Egypt. To further streamline access for humanitarian cargo to Gaza from Rafah, the United Nations has proposed the establishment of an inspection, monitoring and verification unit on the Palestinian side of Rafah. The Egypt land corridor, in particular via the Rafah crossing, is important, given its volume for both humanitarian assistance and for early recovery and reconstruction of Gaza in due course.

When it comes to Cyprus, the maritime corridor provides for additional capacity for humanitarian aid to Gaza. It can never and is not intended to be a substitute for delivery by land. Land routes are the only way to bring in the bulk of supplies needed. Preparations for the building of the floating port and pier on the shores of Gaza are advancing with the involvement of the United States and other Member States. The United Nations has outlined the parameters under which it can play a meaningful role in the distribution of aid via that corridor. My office has proposed a multi-donor funding mechanism and provides Secretariat support to the maritime corridor to ensure full coordination with the operations on the ground in Gaza. United Nations monitors have been deployed to Cyprus as part of the mechanism pursuant to resolution 2720 (2023).

Finally, regarding air drops and in view of the aforementioned, several Member States have indicated their intent to phase out that mode of delivery in conjunction with the scaling up of assistance via land and sea.

I am pleased to announce that the operationalization of the mechanism for Gaza pursuant to resolution 2720 (2023) will start in the coming days, and I am grateful for the constructive cooperation. The mechanism will initially be applicable to the Cyprus and Jordan routes, respectively. Technical consultations will shortly be finalized with Egypt on that route. I have informed the Government of Israel of the operationalization of the mechanism as per the resolution. A database and notification system will go online for all cargo destined for Gaza along supply routes. The approval for the placement of international monitors at crossings, inspection and supply points has been requested from relevant authorities. Verification and monitoring inside Gaza will commence as soon as possible. In the coming weeks, my office will also be operational in Gaza. The operationalization of the mechanism will allow for pipeline prioritization, predictability, visibility and

tracking of supplies to Gaza. As the resolution intended, the mechanism is designed to facilitate and support the work of all humanitarian partners on the ground.

The extent of the destruction and the devastating impact of the war on the entire population of Gaza calls for an ambitious and comprehensive plan of support with commensurate investment. The recent United Nations, European Union and World Bank interim damage assessment illustrates the scale of the damage and the magnitude of investments required across all sectors, for example the rebuilding and repair of the more than 84 per cent of destroyed health facilities and the return of an entire student population to school while educational facilities have been affected or destroyed.

As the Secretary-General has stated, the Palestinian Authority has a critical role to play in Gaza. The international community must work towards enabling its return, strengthen its governance capacity and prepare it to reassume its responsibilities in Gaza. All efforts towards early recovery and reconstruction also need the participation of Palestinian civil society, fostering a conducive environment to re-establish the commercial sector in Gaza, and the engagement of the Palestinian business community and its investors are equally important.

I wish to echo the grave concern of the United Nations regarding the prospect of an Israeli operation in Rafah. Such action would compound an ongoing humanitarian catastrophe, with consequences for people already displaced and enduring severe hardships and suffering. The United Nations ability to deliver will also be constrained.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the importance of a paradigm shift. That requires a further scale-up in the quality and quantity of assistance and its distribution, irreversible steps to enable safe, secure and unhindered delivery inside Gaza, and planning and timely preparations for early recovery and reconstruction. There is no substitute for political will to sustain those efforts. Let us remember that behind every statistic is a human story of loss and suffering, and it is our duty to provide protection, support and therefore hope to the Palestinian population in Gaza. It is also our duty to advocate for lasting peace between Israel and a fully independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian State.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Kaag for her briefing.

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

**Dame Barbara Woodward** (United Kingdom): I thank the Senior Humanitarian Coordinator very much for her briefing.

As she said, Israel suffered the worst terror attack in its history at the hands of Hamas. More than 200 days on, Hamas continues to hold hostages. Palestinian civilians in Gaza are facing a devastating and growing humanitarian crisis and the risk of famine. The United Kingdom is joining Ms. Kaag's important efforts to prevent that situation from deteriorating even further. We have trebled our aid commitment in the last financial year, and we are doing everything we can to get more aid in as quickly as possible by land, sea and air and to contribute to the paradigm shift that she mentioned. I want to highlight three areas.

First, we welcome Israel's commitment to increasing humanitarian aid flows into Gaza, for example through the port of Ashdod and the Erez checkpoint and by extending the opening hours of the Kerem Shalom crossing. We now need to see more implementation. There has been some welcome progress in that regard, but much more needs to be done. Our Foreign Secretary reiterated that to Prime Minister Netanyahu on his visit to Israel last week.

Secondly, in addition to getting more aid in, it needs to be the right aid. That is why resolution 2720 (2023) is so important. The United Kingdom fully supports Ms. Kaag's mandate to establish a database and a mechanism to track, verify and coordinate aid. The United Kingdom has provided expert technical support to help the delivery of that mandate. And the United Kingdom will be providing more than \$3.5 million in additional funding for equipment to support the United Nations and aid agencies in getting more aid into Gaza.

Thirdly, once humanitarian aid arrives in Gaza, it is vital to ensure that it can be distributed quickly and effectively. We are calling on Israel to improve deconfliction, allow United Nations agencies and humanitarian actors unhindered and safe access into and throughout Gaza and fully enable the minimum operating requirements of the United Nations. The tragic deaths of seven World Central Kitchen workers, including three British citizens, have shown the need for action in that regard.

The United Kingdom recognizes that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is critical to the delivery of aid in Gaza. We were appalled by the allegations that UNRWA staff were involved in the 7 October attacks against Israel, and we note the ongoing investigation by the United Nations Office for Internal Oversight Services into the allegations. We are grateful for the independent review of UNRWA neutrality led by Ms. Catherine Colonna, and we will set out our position on future funding to UNRWA following careful consideration of the final report and UNRWA's response.

The United Kingdom remains resolved to continue working with international partners to urgently secure an immediate pause to get aid in and the hostages out, and then to work for a sustainable, permanent ceasefire without a return to fighting and loss of life.

**Mr. Bambissa** (Mozambique): Mozambique would like to thank Malta's presidency for convening this important briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

We also thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, for her updated information and perspectives on the situation in Gaza, particularly regarding the humanitarian situation in the past 90 days, in the light of resolution 2720 (2023). We commend her and her entire team for their unwavering dedication to addressing this human-made crisis in order to alleviate the immense suffering of Palestinians.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has long been a source of tension and tragedy in the region, and the recent escalation has resulted in significant loss of life. Israel's military operation continues to cause more civilian casualties and displacement, as well as the destruction of houses and other civilian infrastructure. The situation remains dire, and urgent action is needed to alleviate the human suffering and address the humanitarian crisis. Despite those challenges, the Council has succeeded in adopting two resolutions on the issue, resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023). They clearly call for an immediate and urgent humanitarian ceasefire, a cessation of hostilities and, ultimately, a ceasefire — not only to ensure more and better humanitarian aid for those in need in Gaza, but also to allow for the unconditional release of all the hostages and pave the way for relaunching the peace process.

The hope was that through the demand for urgent action, the suffering could be alleviated and steps could be taken towards lasting peace. Deplorably, in the four months that have elapsed since then, the resolutions have not been fully implemented. That delay is a matter of concern.

The same purposes that guided the Council in adopting those two resolutions in December must strengthen our collective conscience in enforcing international obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Mozambique strongly encourages the engagement of the relevant parties in the implementation of those resolutions, and we believe firmly that encouraging those parties is crucial in that regard. We reiterate our appeal to Council members with influence on the parties to cooperate with Ms. Kaag and her team so that they can fulfil their mandate without delay or obstruction. The Security Council must unite and speak with one voice to urgently address the pressing humanitarian situation in Gaza. The situation demands immediate, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian aid to reach those most in need, bearing in mind that thousands of people and families in the Gaza Strip are gathering at the Rafah crossing border amid escalating hostilities.

Let me underscore that the human toll of the conflict is staggering, with innocent lives caught in the crossfire. The call for a ceasefire remains therefore urgent and crucial. Diplomatic efforts and international pressure must continue.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I thank Senior Coordinator Kaag very much for her briefing.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is beyond dire. Starvation has taken the lives of children in the north. Essential supplies are dwindling. Millions have been displaced.

At this perilous moment, President Biden has called on Israel to take a series of specific, concrete and measurable steps to address the humanitarian crisis, protect civilians from harm and ensure the safety of all aid workers.

Israel must do more to prevent civilian casualties immediately. And President Biden has made clear that United States policy will be determined by its assessment of Israel's immediate and sustained action on those steps. Israel has taken some positive steps, but not nearly enough and not quickly enough. And

so, the United States' position is clear: Israel must take immediate action to open additional land crossings into northern Gaza. As Gaza faces imminent famine, lives hang in the balance, and every day matters.

To complement, and not replace, additional land crossings and increase aid flowing into Gaza, the United States is working with its partners to implement a maritime corridor. Part of that corridor entails the establishment of a temporary pier in Gaza, from which humanitarian assistance will be offloaded. We welcome the United Nations commitment to help facilitate the distribution of aid delivered to Gaza via the pier.

Another essential portion of the maritime corridor is the full implementation of Israeli commitments to open Ashdod for humanitarian shipments. As we understand it, assistance will be shipped to Ashdod and then transported through land crossings into Gaza. That is critical, and that needs to happen right away. But it does not matter how much aid gets into Gaza if that aid cannot get into the hands of Palestinians in dire need. The distribution of aid within Gaza is absolutely critical.

The plans Senior Coordinator Kaag outlined today are vital to achieving the distribution of aid at scale, and we look forward to hearing more about the United Nations efforts during today's closed briefing. I want to reiterate the Biden Administration's full support for Senior Coordinator Sigrid Kaag. And I again call on Israel to cooperate with the United Nations efforts to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance at scale.

Another factor limiting the distribution of aid has been the repeated failure of deconfliction mechanisms. Since 7 October, more than 230 humanitarian workers have been killed. That is tragic and unacceptable. Deconfliction mechanisms are vital. That is how we protect the lives of those who are working to save the lives of innocent people. And so, Israel must fully implement functional deconfliction procedures. It must. We reiterate our call for accountability for incidents in which humanitarian personnel were killed. That includes the deadly attack on World Central Kitchen personnel earlier this month. There must be an additional independent and transparent investigation.

As all Council members know, this week, Foreign Minister Colonna released her report on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). We appreciate

that UNRWA has taken steps to set internal policies and address its neutrality, but more must be done. And UNRWA must undertake substantial reforms to protect its sustainability and mission. We know that will take time and resources, but implementation of the reforms outlined in Colonna's report will be critical, and the United States will work closely with the United Nations and other partners to ensure UNRWA carries out its duties in a neutral and balanced way, for the benefit of the Palestinian people.

I fear many have lost sight of the fact that it is Hamas that set the conflict into motion on 7 October, when it carried out a heinous attack on Israel, slaughtering concertgoers, burning people alive and committing unspeakable acts of sexual violence. Let us not forget that important fact.

The United States has been clear from the beginning that it fully supports Israel's right to self-defence, and that support is ironclad. But we have also been clear that, as Israel continues to pursue the destruction of the remaining elements of Hamas, we are opposed to a full-scale military operation in Rafah, which would have catastrophic consequences for the civilian population. We reiterate our call for Israel to produce a credible and actionable plan to protect the civilian population in Rafah and address the humanitarian needs of those who have sought refuge in the south.

We are deeply concerned by the massive internal displacement within Gaza and the risk of forcible displacement from Gaza. Israel must act in compliance with its obligations under international law — full stop.

Since 7 October, so much suffering and pain, death and destruction has played out before our eyes on all sides of the conflict. Now more than ever, we need an immediate and sustainable ceasefire as part of a deal to release the hostages by Hamas, which will also allow us to scale up humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians. The United States is working with its partners in the region to make that possible. Hamas, however, continues to reject offers from Israel that would halt fighting and release hostages, over and over and over. If Hamas accepted the offer Israel has made, it would allow for an immediate ceasefire that would benefit Palestinians now. Hamas should take the deal. If not, it should explain to the world and to the Palestinian people why it has yet to do so, because right now Hamas is the sole obstacle to a ceasefire in Gaza.

We must all call on Hamas, especially those with the most influence, to take the deal. And we must continue to work together to support the work of Senior Coordinator Sigrid Kaag and all those working to save lives in Gaza at this moment of dire need.

**Mr. Bendjama** (Algeria): I thank Ms. Kaag for her briefing on the implementation of her mandate, as stipulated in resolution 2720 (2023), to facilitate humanitarian aid access to the Gaza Strip, despite facing multiple challenges and obstacles in her endeavour.

There have been over 200 days of ongoing aggression against the Palestinian people in Gaza, and we are still discussing access to basic human needs, such as access to food, water and sanitation, not to mention access to education, housing and health care, which have become luxuries for the entire population in Gaza.

Ms. Kaag's mission of expediting humanitarian aid delivery to Gaza's civilian population is crucial. However, more than four months after the adoption of resolution 2720 (2023), despite Ms. Kaag and her team's efforts to establish a United Nations mechanism for accelerating the provision of humanitarian relief in Gaza, that call remains unanswered and the mandate not fully implemented. The international community, particularly Member States with influence on the occupying Power, should make every effort to help Ms. Kaag fulfil her mandate. Ensuring her success is a collective responsibility — not just one person's duty.

We firmly believe that successful humanitarian aid in Gaza depends on several factors.

First, it is obvious that there must be an immediate and lasting ceasefire. Safe humanitarian action throughout Gaza cannot be ensured without a ceasefire. The past six months clearly indicate that. In the words of Ciarán Donnelly, a senior vice president of the International Rescue Committee, which operates in Gaza,

“what is increasingly clear is that the deconfliction process is a fiction. It does not provide any guarantees of safety”.

Only a cessation of hostilities can help meet the civilian population's needs. Otherwise, humanitarian actors will need to risk their lives to deliver aid.

Secondly, there must be unhindered humanitarian access. That requires opening all possible crossings and using them at full capacity. According to the

occupying authorities, since 7 October, only 40 per cent of the minimum basic needs required have been allowed into Gaza. After killing — I should say, assassinating — humanitarian workers from the World Central Kitchen, the occupying authorities launched a publicity campaign to highlight their decision to reopen the Erez crossing. However, according to the United Nations, as of last Friday, only 25 trucks have been authorized to use the Erez crossing.

The international community, including powerful countries, seems to be incapable of forcing the occupying Power to adhere to its obligations under international humanitarian law. Air drops, a last-resort solution, became the only option, but these represent only 0.3 per cent of total aid delivered to Gaza. The maritime corridor was undermined before providing tangible results. Our strong belief is that there is no alternative to land routes. All crossings must be reopened now.

Thirdly, we must recognize the irreplaceable role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This Agency continues to be the backbone of humanitarian delivery in Gaza. It should operate freely, without threat. After Ms. Colonna's report, there is no need to further debate UNRWA's credibility and efficiency. The report states that UNRWA approach to neutrality is more developed than other similar United Nations agencies or non-governmental organizations. Moreover, I repeat that Israel has yet to provide supporting evidence of its allegations against UNRWA personnel. As Ms. Colonna's report indicated, even those agencies rely on UNRWA retaining its central and irreplaceable role of providing a platform and, in many cases, infrastructure for these specialized activities. UNRWA must be empowered again and allowed to operate across Gaza, including in the north, as the risk of famine looms.

Fourthly, Resuming commercial activities, regardless of the size and efficiency of humanitarian assistance, is imperative. That requires two main conditions — ending the siege imposed by the occupying authorities and launching a vast cash-transfer programme to help revive Gaza's local market. Starting such an operation is crucial.

Fifthly, there must be no ground offensive in Rafah. We once again warn against any military action in Rafah. Such an offensive should not be allowed by

under any circumstances, as 1.5 million Palestinians have been crammed into Rafah, which has become the humanitarian hub of Gaza. The survival of Gaza's entire population depends on the situation in this city. A ground offensive would leave people with no choice but to flee to Egypt. It would become not only a humanitarian catastrophe, but also an irreversible breach of peace and security in the region and beyond.

The catastrophic situation in Gaza is a betrayal of humankind and a test of the international order and our multilateral system. This is not a natural disaster, it is a human-made disaster, and we bear the responsibility for it. The international community must ensure the implementation of the orders of the International Court of Justice and Security Council resolutions. Failure is not an option. The occupying Power, which causes death and desperation wherever it goes, cannot continue to dictate the rules. This catastrophe must be ended.

**Mr. De La Gasca** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I welcome the presence of the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza in today's meeting and the briefing that she has just provided. I reiterate Ecuador's support for the efforts of Ms. Sigrid Kaag and the work of her entire team to create a mechanism to facilitate and speed up access to aid — an urgent and important task.

More than four months have passed since the adoption of resolution 2720 (2023) last December under Ecuador's presidency of the Security Council. Unfortunately, many of its provisions are far from being fulfilled, and the valuable progress made is insufficient faced with the magnitude of the task. The civilians of Gaza must have access to the assistance they need in sufficient quantities and in a continuous and predictable manner. Food, water, sanitation, electricity, telecommunications and medical services are essential for survival. My country has repeatedly called for the unhindered provision and distribution of humanitarian aid. It has done so since the start of the war in Gaza in October 2023. Ecuador therefore appreciates the efforts made to diversify aid routes and supply lines by land, air and sea and encourages those efforts to continue, despite the problems and challenges faced.

Regarding the operational difficulties in getting aid into Gaza and distributing it around the Strip, it should be reiterated that resolution 2720 (2023) requires the parties to the conflict to cooperate with Senior Coordinator Kaag without delay or obstruction.

The adoption of immediate measures to guarantee the provision of basic services and humanitarian aid has also been ordered by the International Court of Justice in the provisional measures issued in January and March. The resolutions of the Security Council and the provisions of the International Court of Justice must be respected. Regarding the mechanism for expediting the delivery of humanitarian relief shipments to Gaza, my country hopes that it will be fully operational as soon as possible and will contribute to alleviating the scarcity faced by the civilian population.

In conclusion, I reiterate Ecuador's condemnation of the heinous terrorist acts by Hamas that began on 7 October 2023 and of all acts of violence against civilians, including sexual violence. I reiterate our demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and, in the meantime, for the guarantee of humanitarian access to meet their medical needs, as required by the resolutions of the Council.

**Ms. Persaud** (Guyana): I thank you, Madam President, for organizing today's briefing, and I thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag for the updates provided on her work pursuant to the mandate outlined in resolution 2720 (2023).

The pressing need for a ceasefire in Gaza is driven home forcefully once again in what has been laid out to the Security Council this afternoon. The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip continues to worsen, as it remains subject to Israeli bombardments from air, land and sea. The death toll stands at a staggering 34,000 plus. The number of those injured has surpassed 77,000. Those figures should shock our collective conscience and compel us to bring the war to an immediate and just end after more than 200 days of unimaginable horror.

The provisions of resolution 2720 (2023) are clear on the obligations of the parties to the conflict. They must comply with international law, including international humanitarian law. That entails ensuring, inter alia, the protection of civilians and civilian objects, humanitarian access and the protection of humanitarian personnel and their freedom of movement. It also entails upholding the obligation to ensure the provision at scale of urgently needed basic humanitarian services and humanitarian assistance. Those obligations have not been met, in clear defiance of the legally binding orders issued by the International Court of Justice on 26 January and 28 March. Of particular note is the order of the International Court of Justice that Israel take all



necessary and effective measures to ensure, without delay, in full cooperation with the United Nations, the unhindered provision, at scale and by all concerned, of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance, “including by increasing the capacity and number of land crossing points and maintaining them open for as long as necessary”.

The unavailability of sufficient land crossings remains a major hindrance to humanitarian efforts in Gaza, compounded by excessive inspection processes. Guyana reminds Israel of its obligations to allow, facilitate and enable the immediate, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance at scale directly to the civilian population throughout the Gaza Strip. We call on Israel to honour those obligations. We take note of Ms. Kaag’s extensive efforts in extremely challenging circumstances, including towards the establishment of the United Nations mechanism, and reiterate Guyana’s continued support for those efforts.

Guyana also stresses the importance of guaranteeing the safety of humanitarian personnel for scaling up humanitarian assistance in the Gaza Strip. An unprecedented number of humanitarian workers have been killed in this war, principally because of non-compliance with international humanitarian law. Humanitarian workers have been directly attacked, as seen in the killing of the seven World Central Kitchen team members. Others have fallen victim to indiscriminate shelling because deconfliction and notification mechanisms are not functioning adequately.

Allow me to draw the Council’s attention to three important points.

First, while it is crucial to scale up humanitarian support and increase access across Gaza, that alone will not save lives. For humanitarian assistance to be delivered effectively and at scale in a sustainable manner, there must be a permanent ceasefire.

Secondly, Palestinians must not be expected to subsist on humanitarian aid for any lengthy period of time. For the preservation of their dignity, conditions must be created for them to build their own livelihoods. Re-establishing the means for trade and for the market to thrive is essential. I stress again that a secure environment is paramount if that is to happen. A ceasefire is indispensable. Deciding to increase humanitarian support to Gaza while delaying a decision about a ceasefire is self-defeating.

Thirdly, Guyana reiterates the need for accountability. There is perhaps no greater deterrent than accountability. Where accountability is lacking, impunity thrives, emboldening perpetrators to the detriment of all. In the case of Gaza, impunity has brought disproportionate consequences for women and children, who are the vast majority of those being killed and maimed.

I conclude by observing that the scale of devastation visited upon Gaza has created a multidimensional crisis that requires a multidimensional approach that takes account of immediate and future needs. Guyana is prepared to work with the Council to design and facilitate the implementation of that approach. At its heart must be the creation of a free and independent State of Palestine in accordance with the pre-1967 lines. That is our duty.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag, the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, for her briefing and her efforts to find ways to enhance the delivery of humanitarian relief to Gaza in accordance with resolution 2720 (2023). As the Council is aware, we abstained in the voting on that resolution, which among other things provides for the establishment of a United Nations mechanism to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian supplies, and whose parameters we are discussing today. The reason we abstained is the resolution’s lack of a direct demand for a ceasefire, which is a key condition for ensuring safe, unhindered access to those in need. It features the “creation of conditions” of some kind for a cessation of violence in Gaza. We warned that Israel would interpret such ambiguous language as a green light, and that is exactly what happened.

We are tired of repeating that it is simply not possible to give the population of Gaza adequate assistance while Israel’s military operation in Gaza is ongoing, which it has been doing for more than six months now with the full support of the United States. That is obvious. Humanitarian aid workers are unarmed and are defenceless under fire. It is simply inhumane to require them to die in air strikes while the Council has been completely unable to compel Israel to end its hostilities.

I want to point to another important point, which is that over time the Security Council has evolved a logic for its actions regarding conflict situations. First,

the Council demands a ceasefire by the parties. Then it deploys military observers to monitor compliance, with the emphasis on “military”, because they are personnel who have been professionally trained for such monitoring. If they are not given access to the contact zone or report violations of the ceasefire, the issue arises of how to compel implementation, and in particular of whether to deploy peacekeepers. In Gaza’s case, that entire sequence of events has been turned on its head and humanitarian aid workers have in essence been asked to sacrifice their lives by doing the job of peacekeepers. That is preposterous and also very dangerous.

If the ceasefire is not being observed, let us discuss concrete measures to ensure that it is upheld. The Security Council has well-established algorithms and tools that include the deployment of peacekeeping contingents. To begin with, we could at least revisit the idea of more active involvement by the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in monitoring the ceasefire. Major General Patrick Gauchat, its Head of Mission and Chief of Staff, has already briefed the Council once (see S/PV.9513) and has promised to provide more detailed information on the resources available to the mission. We suggest revisiting that issue.

Besides that, the Israeli authorities are openly impeding the delivery of essential goods to civilians in Gaza. Last week (see S/PV.9607) we discussed in detail the situation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which is simply unacceptable. As far as we know, United Nations humanitarian agencies, including UNRWA, have maintained a significant presence in the Palestinian territory. They have sufficient resources, including financial resources. Loaded convoys are waiting at the crossings at the Gaza border and the entire spectrum of legal conditions for delivering humanitarian assistance is in place, without the need for the additional structures envisaged by the mechanism in the resolution. First and foremost, I am referring to existing international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions and the guiding principles set forth in General Assembly resolution 46/182. In the circumstances, we do not believe it is necessary to establish any special humanitarian regime for Gaza, especially as it obviously will not work while one of the parties is determined to continue military hostilities.

On that note, we all have to recognize one simple thing. The problem is not whether or not we have

mechanisms for the delivery of humanitarian relief but the absence of the necessary conditions for it, owing to the intense fighting and to the fact that the Israel Defense Forces do not make exceptions for hospitals, schools or humanitarian convoys. We firmly believe that humanitarian access must be granted in accordance with international humanitarian law and that humanitarian aid workers should be guaranteed an adequate level of security and protection. In that connection, we want to once again repeat that the overriding aim of the international community, as represented by the Council, is to ensure an immediate and lasting ceasefire. Only then can we seriously discuss solving the problems of food security, sanitation, education and other vitally important services. We would of course like to believe that the proposed mechanism for the delivery of humanitarian relief will make a difference, but that is unrealistic given the fierce hostilities and the ongoing cleansing operations. Things have gone so far that Israeli settlers are raiding Palestinian villages, committing murder and arson. In such circumstances, humanitarian aid workers will continue to die and the one-stop shop that is proposed under the mechanism will hardly help.

Since our objective today is to have a focused discussion on the concept note regarding the modalities for the operation of the mechanisms, I would like to ask its authors a few questions. The main one is about whether the Israeli and Palestinian sides agreed on the implementation of such a mechanism. Were the details of the plans for the entry of humanitarian supplies discussed with them, and if so, with whom? Are there guarantees that the Israeli authorities will not inspect trucks, which they are doing now, and that they will not withhold authorization for their entry into Gaza for months on end? If there are no such guarantees, what value does the mechanism add? How is it different in practice from the current working methods? On the contrary, it would appear that the mechanism will become yet another bureaucratic barrier involving additional checks and inspections. Another important point is that the concept note refers to Kerem Shalom and Rafah, which are already letting supplies through, albeit in fits and starts. Why does it not consider other land and sea crossings, specifically the five checkpoints on the Israeli border, the temporary pier in Gaza and the Ashdod port?

There is no section in the document about the United Nations staff who are expected to cooperate with the Israelis and Palestinians, as well as various

United Nations agencies, to ensure that the mechanism functions. It mentions only some sort of key partners, relevant authorities and humanitarian actors. That needs to be precisely defined. We would also like additional information about commercial deliveries under the mechanism, which is supposed to handle strictly humanitarian tasks. Given that this approach has no analogies or precedents, we would be grateful for further clarification.

**Mr. Geng Shuang** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, for her briefing.

It has been 200 days since the Gaza conflict began. In those 200 days, we have seen hunger and famine spread, the health-care system collapse, innocent lives lost and millions of people struggling desperately on the brink of death. There is no justification for prolonging the conflict, and there is no excuse for killing civilians. The international community must make every effort to mitigate the disaster, save lives and end the conflict. I have three points to make.

First, we are deeply concerned about the continually worsening humanitarian disaster. The three Council resolutions dealing with this — resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024) — and the two International Court of Justice orders on provisional measures all explicitly call for greater humanitarian access, but they have never been effectively implemented and the delivery of humanitarian aid continues to encounter various kinds of human-made restrictions. If that continues, it will definitely result in more civilian deaths from famine and disease. We urge Israel to open all land crossings in order to guarantee the rapid and safe delivery of humanitarian supplies at scale into Gaza and their safe and orderly distribution within Gaza to those in dire need. We expect that the mechanism established by Senior Coordinator Kaag will play a greater role in reducing and eliminating obstacles to humanitarian supplies before and after their entry into Gaza. Israel should cooperate with all humanitarian efforts, including those of Senior Coordinator Kaag.

Secondly, we support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in continuing to play its role. The guarantee of aid delivery by humanitarian agencies is the responsibility of the occupying Power. Hunger cannot be weaponized, and relief cannot be politicized.

The independent review group led by Ms. Colonna has released its report, which notes that UNRWA has had in place for many years a significant number of robust mechanisms to ensure the Agency's neutrality and ability to respond to non-compliance and hold those responsible for it accountable in a timely manner, and that it has far more such mechanisms than any other United Nations agency. At this point, the debate on UNRWA's neutrality should come to an end. We urge all countries to resume funding for UNRWA as soon as possible and to refrain from using any pretext to impose additional collective punishment on the population of Gaza. Israel made serious allegations against UNRWA linked to terrorism, for which no evidence has yet been shared. We are concerned about that. China reiterates that without solid evidence, it is unacceptable to attack UNRWA maliciously and even make false accusations against the entire United Nations system.

Thirdly, we again call on the Council to push for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. More than six months of harsh reality has made it abundantly clear that a Gaza under fire does not have the conditions needed for aid delivery. Resolution 2728 (2024), which clearly calls for a ceasefire in Gaza, is indisputably binding, and all Member States are obligated to implement it. We are gravely concerned about Israel's frequent bombardments of Gaza in recent days. We urge Israel to immediately cease all military operations against Gaza and abandon its plan to conduct an offensive against Rafah. Countries with significant influence on Israel should be impartial and play an active role in bringing about a ceasefire. China supports the Council in taking further actions to ensure the implementation of the resolution.

**Mr. Sowa** (Sierra Leone): We want to thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, for her very comprehensive briefing.

My delegation recalls resolution 2720 (2023), which calls for the establishment of that position and of an effective United Nations mechanism for providing humanitarian aid to the people in the Gaza Strip. The Senior Humanitarian Coordinator's role of facilitating and expediting humanitarian aid in Gaza is especially critical at this juncture, given that 1.1 million people are projected to face catastrophic levels of food insecurity in the region. Regular updates from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on the situation in Gaza confirm that the volume of humanitarian supplies

entering Gaza since the start of hostilities in October 2023 is far below the approximately 500 trucks per day that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) estimates are needed to meet the basic essential food, health and other needs of the people there.

Sierra Leone acknowledges the enormity of the task of increasing the quantum of humanitarian aid into Gaza in order to minimize the impact of the conflict on civilians, especially women, children and other vulnerable persons. We commend the continued engagement and consultation by the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator since her appointment with the Israel Defence Forces and other stakeholders in the region on removing the significant humanitarian access constraints in order to ensure unfettered access via all routes — air, land and sea — into the Gaza Strip. Such a consultative and well-coordinated approach is essential for seamless aid distribution to address the urgent and continuing needs of the people there, especially in the current environment of heavy bombardment and ongoing clashes. Additionally, we anticipate that an established United Nations mechanism, as stipulated in resolution 2720 (2023), will resolve current operational constraints, improve collaboration with humanitarian actors in the region and increase their delivery capacity throughout the Gaza Strip.

In supporting the Office of the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator and ensuring that she delivers on her mandate to facilitate, coordinate, monitor and verify humanitarian relief consignments to Gaza, my delegation will continue to call for, first, an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, as stipulated in resolution 2728 (2024) to enable full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all civilians — the absence of which will only stifle progress. In that vein, we request the Office of the Senior Humanitarian Coordinator to coordinate efforts with UNRWA to ensure that Palestinians get full access to humanitarian aid.

Secondly, in reminding parties to the conflict of their obligations under international law, we draw their attention to the consequences associated with blatant violations. We urge parties to the conflict to prioritize the survival, security and dignity of all civilians. We further call for a functioning humanitarian notification system and a stable communication network that will

guarantee the protection of United Nations and other humanitarian personnel and enhance the efficient delivery of essential commodities.

Sierra Leone reiterates its call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas and, in the interim, demands that access be granted to the International Committee of the Red Cross and/or other humanitarian workers to visit and support the victims.

In conclusion, Sierra Leone reaffirms its support to the good offices of the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator and stresses the need for the requisite resources to be made available for an efficient service delivery. As a Council member, we will continue to participate and engage in processes that seek to broker peace and improve the lives of the civilians in both Palestine and Israel.

**Mr. Sangjin Kim** (Republic of Korea): I thank Senior Coordinator Sigrid Kaag for her very useful and informative briefing on the implementation of resolution 2720 (2023).

I would like to express the Republic of Korea's sincere appreciation for Ms. Kaag's tireless efforts. Indeed, since her appointment earlier this year, we have witnessed some improvements in humanitarian efforts on the ground, as Senior Coordinator Kaag just indicated — some progress has been made.

Nonetheless, as the current situation shows no clear sign of ending, the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza is also being extended, exacerbating the long-standing suffering of Gazan civilians, especially women and children, as famine deepens. Sadly, that tragic trend has not changed despite numerous Security Council meetings, the adoption of resolution 2728 (2024) demanding an immediate ceasefire and ongoing diplomatic efforts by the United States, Egypt and Qatar.

The Republic of Korea takes note of Israel's announcement earlier this month that it would open further access points into Gaza, including the opening of the port of Ashdod and the Erez crossing, and enhanced deliveries from Jordan. During the Council's meeting last month, Ms. Kaag mentioned those measures as possible ways to enhance life-saving assistance into Gaza. Without the lifting of all barriers to ensure sufficient and sustained humanitarian assistance at scale, the suffering of civilians in Gaza will intensify even further.

As a close friend, the Republic of Korea calls on Israel to swiftly implement those commitments, as such measures will not only ease the suffering of Palestinians, but also enhance the credibility of Israel in the international community. And actions speak much louder than words. As the most efficient and swift routes for the delivery of humanitarian aid are through land crossings, we hope that all possible land crossings, including Karni, can soon be opened widely. The use of maritime corridors, being an important supplement for land crossings, should also be enhanced. And in that regard, we really appreciate efforts to expand the use of sea routes by relevant countries, including the United States and Cyprus.

As the Council has repeatedly stressed, the safety and security of humanitarian workers, regardless of their nationalities, must be guaranteed. Notifications and deconfliction mechanisms must be fully integrated into the systems and operations of the parties.

Lastly, we would like to reiterate our firm position that an immediate ceasefire is essential to end the humanitarian suffering in Gaza and simultaneously lessen regional tensions. Another major military operation, including the looming ground operation into Rafah, must not be realized.

And based on the ceasefire, Senior Coordinator Kaag's other major mandate — reconstruction — should begin, considering Gaza's immense needs. To resume meaningful negotiations towards the vision of the two-State solution, a ceasefire and the reconstruction of Gaza are essential.

**Mr. Žbogar** (Slovenia): I also thank Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza Ms. Kaag for her briefing to the Council. We welcome her update on the implementation of her mandate in line with resolution 2720 (2023).

In resolution 2720 (2023), the Security Council demanded that the parties to the conflict allow, facilitate and enable the immediate, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance at scale directly to the Palestinian civilian population throughout the Gaza Strip. People are dying in Gaza owing to malnutrition and dehydration. That is not assistance at scale. People are dying in Gaza collecting assistance. That is not safe. People are dying in Gaza, as basic humanitarian and medical items are being denied owing to their dual-use nature. That is not unhindered. People are still dying in Gaza, as they are not getting adequate assistance today. The resolution was adopted in December. That is not immediate.

Slovenia is deeply concerned about the continuously deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, reaching catastrophic levels and imminent famine. We remain profoundly concerned about the threat of a full-scale operation in Rafah, and we join other Council members in calling on Israel not to carry it out.

We call for the removal of all barriers to the delivery of humanitarian assistance. As stipulated in resolution 2720 (2023), that includes opening all available routes and border crossings. We call on Israel to fully implement the announced opening of the Erez crossings and use of the Ashdod port. We stress the importance of facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid from Jordan and Egypt.

We welcome Ms. Kaag's efforts to ensure the implementation of resolution 2720 (2023) and to establish the mechanism for the facilitation, acceleration and verification of humanitarian relief for Gaza. We welcome her engagement with a number of partners. We deeply appreciate the efforts of countries in establishing a maritime corridor and continuing to give hope through airdrops. However, we underline that land routes remain the safest and most efficient way of delivering assistance at scale.

We are particularly concerned about the safety and security of United Nations and humanitarian personnel working in Gaza. Much more is left to do to ensure full implementation of resolution 2720 (2023). That includes significant improvements in the deconfliction mechanism, the removal of constraints to fuel supply, addressing delays and insecurities at checkpoints and allowing the entry of appropriate safety equipment for United Nations and humanitarian workers. While we welcome the recent entry of 15 out of 30 new trucks to enhance delivery, we underline that many trucks have been destroyed in the ongoing conflict. All those barriers inevitably hinder the United Nations capacities and efforts.

Slovenia believes a number of barriers can be lifted only with political will. That includes better border crossing coordination and smoother inspection processes, as well as a sufficient number of drivers and trucks being cleared for use. It includes the full use of existing capabilities, such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which remains the backbone of the humanitarian response in Gaza. And it includes ensuring the safety and security of humanitarian workers and drivers, also

in different high-risk areas throughout Gaza. Lastly, and very importantly, it includes greater predictability in aid delivery.

Slovenia repeats its call for the full implementation of resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024), as well as the International Court of Justice provisional measures of 26 January and 28 March. We call for the full respect of international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. We once again underline the need for accountability. We share the concern expressed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding reported discoveries of mass graves in Al-Shifa and Nasser medical complexes.

I have said it behind closed doors, and I will repeat it again: the pictures and news coming from Gaza will haunt us. They will haunt us as individuals sitting on the Council and as the Council itself. There is only one way to adequately address the situation. Therefore, we once again call for an immediate ceasefire, the release of hostages and the removal of all barriers to humanitarian aid. That must be followed by a meaningful commitment to a political process.

**Mrs. Baeriswyl** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, for her briefing and commitment. Four months have passed since the adoption of resolution 2720 (2023), during which she has made every effort to coordinate the delivery of aid to the civilian population, at a time when we have been facing and continue to face a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.

As the Secretary-General said at the beginning of the year,

“Humanitarian delivery is not an exercise of counting trucks. It is about ensuring that the right volume and quality of assistance reaches people in need” (S/PV.9534, p. 3),

as required by international humanitarian law. To that end, we expect the parties to finally fully implement the binding resolutions the Council has adopted since Hamas’s acts of terror on 7 October, which Switzerland has strongly condemned. The same applies to the International Court of Justice’s order that Israel take all necessary and effective measures without delay, in close cooperation with the United Nations, to ensure — without restriction and on a

large-scale — the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian aid to the population. The Council must ensure compliance with the resolutions it has itself adopted. The effects, which are expected immediately, have been emphasized time and again: effective protection of civilians, the implementation of a ceasefire, humanitarian access to those in need and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. We must insist just as urgently on regional de-escalation.

Failing to do so, every day will bring new civilian victims. The prospect of a large-scale military offensive at Rafah is unacceptable, as it would further exacerbate the situation of the civilian population, which is beset by displacement, hostilities, epidemics and famine.

The Security Council must insist that the parties immediately comply with their obligations under international law. The use of starvation as a method of warfare is strictly prohibited by international humanitarian law and constitutes a war crime.

All humanitarian actors in Gaza, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, must have safe and unhindered access to the population in need. To achieve that, humanitarian aid must be able to flow through all crossing points and then be distributed throughout the Gaza Strip, in particular in the north. Reports that aid to Gaza yesterday reached its highest level since 7 October are encouraging. However, that is far from sufficient, and we must step up our efforts.

We recall that arbitrary obstruction of humanitarian access is also prohibited under international humanitarian law, as are attacks on humanitarian personnel, facilities and equipment. United Nations, humanitarian and medical personnel, as well as the infrastructure of the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations, must be strictly protected. It is imperative that the Council speak out on that issue, beyond specific contexts. Switzerland is in contact with all Council members on a draft resolution to that end.

Finally, Switzerland calls for independent investigations into all violations of international humanitarian law committed in the Middle East. The perpetrators of all these violations must be held to account.

I repeat that the immediate implementation of the relevant Council resolutions calling for a ceasefire, the safe, swift and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid

to Gaza, and the release of the hostages must be our priority. As members of the Security Council, we must redouble our efforts in order to achieve those goals as quickly as possible and to avoid — at all costs — an even more serious regional escalation. That is a *sine qua non* if we are to restore the prospect of a peaceful future in which the people can live in dignity and security.

Switzerland remains ready to support efforts that can revive the hope of peace through a solution with two democratic States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side, in peace, within secure and recognized borders, based on the 1967 borders, with Gaza as an integral part of a Palestinian State.

**Mr. Yamazaki** (Japan): I too thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, for her valuable update.

The current situation in Gaza, which began 200 days ago with the brutal terror attacks by Hamas and other groups, has led to unprecedented destruction and a humanitarian catastrophe. Around half of Gaza's population, approximately 1.1 million people, are at risk of entering the most severe stage of famine. There is an acute shortage of basic necessities, including safe water, food, shelter and medicine. The gravity of the crisis in Gaza cannot be stressed enough.

In the light of the extreme challenge, we highly respect Ms. Kaag's tireless efforts to streamline and expedite the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza by proposing a United Nations mechanism in line with resolution 2720 (2023). We fully support the role of the United Nations Office for Project Services in that regard.

Japan underscores the urgent need to enhance the flow of humanitarian aid into and throughout Gaza. We call on Israel to reopen land crossings, particularly the Kerem Shalom crossing, in order to ensure the steady flow of aid. The land routes and more entry points into Gaza are vital, as there is no viable alternative. We also support the activation of a maritime corridor so as to ensure that aid reaches those in need. Japan also echoes and supports the voices calling for greater protection of humanitarian aid workers.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) plays a central role in Gaza's desperately needed humanitarian operations, and there is no substitute for its essential functions. In that regard, we welcome the final report

and recommendations of the independent review group and hope that UNRWA will steadily implement those recommendations. Japan resumed its funding to UNRWA on 2 April and has already disbursed approximately \$35 million since then. Also, our first in-kind contributions to UNRWA since the resumption will be delivered in early May in Egypt.

Lastly, the Security Council last month adopted resolution 2728 (2024), demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. However, that has not been achieved, and the humanitarian crisis remains dire. A ceasefire is a critical component for improving the humanitarian situation in Gaza while laying the ground for future reconstruction efforts. Japan therefore expresses our strong support for the serious diplomatic efforts of the United States, Egypt and Qatar to bring about a cessation of hostilities and the release of the hostages. We appreciate their tireless efforts. We reiterate our strong appeal to all parties concerned to reach a deal, without delay.

**Mr. De Rivièrè** (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, for her briefing. France calls for the full implementation of resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023).

Ms. Kaag's account confirms the catastrophic state of the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Two million people lack everything. The number of civilian casualties continues to mount. Famine is taking hold. In that context, it is critical that the aid matches the scale of the needs.

Humanitarian aid must be allowed access through all crossing points, as needed. France takes note of the measures announced by the Israeli Government in that regard and calls on Israel to fully implement them, without delay, and to take all necessary measures to ensure the large-scale delivery of aid throughout the Gaza Strip. That includes opening all crossing points and issuing all necessary permits to that end. We welcome the efforts of regional partners, in particular Egypt and Jordan, to enable more substantial aid deliveries, and we welcome the opening of a maritime corridor from Cyprus.

France is continuing its mobilization in that regard. We support the Grain from Ukraine initiative, which will enable the World Food Programme to deliver Ukrainian wheat to the civilian population of Gaza, and are in favour of an additional delivery of food aid by the World Food Programme to the north of the Gaza Strip.

It is imperative to remove all obstacles to humanitarian access. Israel must allow immediate, safe and unhindered humanitarian access, as demanded by the International Court of Justice. It is not enough to count the number of trucks entering Gaza each day, but to ensure that they are loaded with the needed goods. It is not enough for humanitarian aid to reach the Gaza Strip. It must also be able to circulate within it and be distributed safely. Obstructing the delivery of relief supplies can constitute a crime within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. There are still many restrictions on the objects and goods that can enter Gaza, in particular for health infrastructure, but also for water and sanitation and waste treatment.

The protection of humanitarian workers must be guaranteed in all circumstances. The laws of war and the humanitarian principles of precaution and proportionality in the conduct of hostilities must also be respected. France calls on all actors to guarantee the effectiveness of deconfliction mechanisms.

France demands the full implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Council, starting with the release of all hostages. An immediate and lasting ceasefire must be reached, and the protection of civilians must be ensured. We are not facing a natural disaster. A cessation of hostilities is the best way of resolving the humanitarian crisis. France reaffirms its firm opposition to a ground offensive in Rafah, which would result in countless civilian victims and a humanitarian catastrophe.

The Security Council must resolutely commit to a resolution of the conflict and lay the foundation for a political settlement. Only the two-State solution can deliver to Israelis and Palestinians the peace and security to which they aspire. France is actively mobilized to that end and remains convinced of the central role that the Security Council must play.

We have submitted a draft resolution that addresses all aspects of the crisis to the members of the Council. It promotes this approach, and I call on all Council members to support it.

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

I begin by thanking Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, for her informative briefing.

Four months after the adoption of resolution 2720 (2023), we regret that there has been no meaningful increase in the scale and predictability of the Organization's humanitarian response in Gaza. Malta once again demands the immediate implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Council regarding the need for an urgent ceasefire, the release of all hostages and the facilitation of the desperately needed humanitarian aid into and throughout Gaza.

In the face of such dire humanitarian conditions, Malta is deeply dismayed by the unjustified blockade of aid into and throughout, Gaza. Famine has gripped the north of the Strip, and the rest of the population is now the most food-insecure in the world. More than 34,700 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, the vast majority of them women and children. Furthermore, as the Secretary-General recalled, reports continue to emerge of the use in Gaza of deadly experimental artificial-intelligence targeting systems, to devastating effect.

Last week the Council also met to discuss the irreplaceable nature of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (see S/PV.9607). There can be no meaningful aid response in Gaza without the Agency. We have also taken note of the final report regarding its neutrality, which determined that UNRWA has in place significant mechanisms to ensure compliance and respond to breaches of neutrality, and we welcome the Agency's commitment to implementing the recommendations in the report. However, UNRWA and indeed all humanitarian aid in Gaza continue to be undermined. In these difficult times, we must avoid politicizing the work of humanitarian actors and undermining the legitimacy of the United Nations in Gaza. We also reject and condemn the staggering number of humanitarian and United Nations staff killed so far by Israel during this conflict. It will be critical to ensure thorough and transparent investigations, leading to accountability, in every case.

The established humanitarian notification and deconfliction system must be respected, and yet we are seeing the opposite of that in the destruction of hospitals and bombing of aid convoys. We also echo the Secretary-General's call for a credible and independent investigation of the recent reports of mass graves at the Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis and the Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. The provisional orders of the International Court of Justice on 26 January and



28 March, including those regarding the delivery of humanitarian aid into and within Gaza, must be complied with. While Malta welcomes the ongoing attempts to move aid to Gaza via alternative routes, mainly by air and sea, land access provides the only suitable aid modality that can immediately and comprehensively halt the humanitarian crisis. We are encouraged by the promises made by the Israeli Government regarding the opening of the port of Ashdod and the Erez crossing for humanitarian aid. We reiterate our call for such measures to be retained and strengthened in order to address the terrible situation on the ground.

While we recognize the fact that eight World Food Programme trucks have entered via the port in the past few days, the volume is insignificant when compared to the humanitarian needs, what was called for and what was promised. Israel must do much more to abide by its legal obligations as a Member State, a party to the conflict and an occupying Power. That includes opening crossings to enable the safe passage of aid into and throughout Gaza. The United Nations must be allowed to scale up its response in Gaza in a meaningful and principled way. The delivery of aid must not be part of the political negotiations.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support for the work of the United Nations, Ms. Kaag and her team. Malta will continue to underline the need for a massive scaling up of aid to address the needs of those who are suffering in the ongoing catastrophic conditions within Gaza.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Israel.

**Mr. Miller** (Israel): First and foremost, we want to thank Ms. Kaag, the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator, for her briefing and her important work on the ground. Since Ms. Kaag's appointment to the role of Senior Humanitarian Coordinator following the adoption of resolution 2720 (2023), Israel has done its utmost to give her and her staff the highest levels of support and cooperation. We greatly value the ongoing discourse with her, which is of course vital to promoting the very important efforts in the humanitarian domain. We will continue to work closely with Ms. Kaag and her team.

Despite the immense obstacles on the ground since 7 October 2023, Israel has continued to elevate and step up its support for the humanitarian efforts and has

found creative solutions despite extremely complex and challenging circumstances, including, significantly, actions by Hamas that hamper and clash with those initiatives. Our ongoing efforts have nonetheless brought about substantial results on the ground, with a dramatic increase in the volume and quantities of aid over the course of the past few months. With regard to the daily flow of aid into the Gaza Strip, in recent weeks between 300 and 400 trucks a day carrying aid and essentials were inspected and granted access by the Israeli authorities. Since 7 October, more than 25,000 trucks, carrying almost 500,000 tons of aid, have been able to access the Strip. Significantly, the number of trucks inspected and approved in recent weeks is meaningfully higher than in previous months and was made possible by the Israeli authorities' ongoing efforts to increase activity at the Kerem Shalom and Nitzana crossings. We also recently announced the opening of Gate 96 crossing, which is utilized for direct humanitarian access to the northern part of the Gaza Strip, and we will soon allocate the opening of another route that will enable more aid to be shipped from Ashdod and other locations.

Together with that, recent days have seen more aid trucks using the route via Jordan. That channel, known as the Jordanian channel, coordinated jointly between Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan, will allow 100 Jordanian military trucks to enter daily for three days a week. That will be in addition to the United Nations aid trucks that will also use that route three days a week. Last week we witnessed a record 200 trucks using the route from Jordan, and we expect to see even higher numbers in the future.

The establishment of vital infrastructure is also under way. Israel would like to take this opportunity to thank the many countries and organizations involved in the construction of field and floating maritime hospitals, including those currently in the final stages of construction. Israel stands ready to provide any further support needed in those areas, including for the ongoing transfer of patients to third countries and for ambulances entering Gaza.

As for water supply and access, Israel recently repaired two additional vital water-pump lines — the Nahal Oz line, which will supply water to the northern Gaza Strip, and the second Bani Suheila line. In that regard, Israel's recent support for the reactivation of wells in the northern Strip is also an important aspect. Earlier this week, four tankers of cooking gas and

four of fuel designated for the operation of essential infrastructure entered the Strip. We also note that 25 bakeries are currently operational in Gaza, providing more than 3 million loaves of bread, rolls and pitas daily. In addition, in March and April alone, around 7,000 packages were dropped by air into Gaza, with more than 1,600 packages specifically for the northern part of the Gaza Strip.

Those steps and others were all made possible through the commitment of the Israeli authorities to the humanitarian efforts, as well as our coordination and joint work with different partners in the region and beyond. In that regard, Israel would like to commend the United States for its immense efforts on the humanitarian front, led on the ground by Mr. David Satterfield.

While Israel has clearly stepped up its efforts — and that is according to external sources as well — it is essential for the United Nations to step up its capabilities too. As growing numbers of trucks are inspected and granted entry from Israel's side, we are concerned that those supplies are not always swiftly distributed in the Gaza Strip. As has recently been reported, the main problem at the moment is not getting assistance into Gaza but rather getting it distributed within the Strip. Unfortunately, we have seen several occasions lately when large numbers of trucks carrying aid, after being inspected and granted passage by Israel, stood ready and waiting on the Gaza side of the Kerem Shalom crossing. They waited there for days without being dealt with by the United Nations. On some days almost three times the amount of aid entering was left piled up on the Gaza side, and its distribution was therefore delayed. The truckloads on the Gaza side, which at times reached several hundred, were eventually attended to, but those situations create bottlenecks at the crossing and the logistical gaps affect the flow of delivery. The United Nations must find solutions to that logistical gap. Among other things, it should extend its hours of activity, increase the number of trucks and initiate more convoys to northern Gaza, especially as looting incidents have recently been reduced in that area.

As we sit here in the Chamber discussing the humanitarian efforts, which are indeed extremely important, we cannot remain silent in the face of the most horrific humanitarian case of injustice — the 133 hostages held by Hamas and other terrorist groups since 7 October. While the Council expects Israel to step up its efforts and do its part with regard to getting

humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, the Council must step up its own efforts and demand that this horror, which has lasted more than six months, finally end. It is regrettable that the Council cannot bring succour to the hostages and their families. We are here to remind everyone that the monstrous terrorist kidnappers of the hostages have allowed them no basic humanitarian assistance at all. Israel will do whatever it takes to bring them home, and the Council must step up to that task too.

**The President:** I now give the floor to Ms. Kaag to respond to comments and questions raised.

**Ms. Kaag:** I believe there were three questions. I will respond to those.

First of all, on the question of consent with regard to the mechanism, which the representative of the Russian Federation asked about, the mechanism is mandated by the Council and is therefore not a voluntary arrangement or an à la carte option. But we have had very close and constructive discussions with the Israeli authorities at all levels regarding the operationalization of the mechanism and the details related to the notification system, as well as the database, and we intend to operationalize it, as I said. We count on the cooperation of everyone to ensure implementation because it is aimed at facilitating, expediting and, obviously, underpinning the actions on the ground by humanitarian actors. I also discussed it in a series of meetings with Mohammad Shtayyeh, the then Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, and with Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa and a number of his senior officials. I have therefore engaged at the highest levels in both Israel and with the Palestinian Authority, as of course I have done with other important partners in the region.

With regard to the concept note, the funding proposal that was actually sent to donors and Member States on 15 March referred to crossings that had already been opened. However, the concept note itself indicates in the cover letter that

“the mechanism will also be able to service additional aid delivery routes to Gaza as well as maximize efficiencies of existing routes”.

Taken in totality, it will therefore serve as a one-stop shop for the facilitation of humanitarian relief consignments to Gaza through all the current entry points and additional ones as well, which I listed in my

remarks regarding the Israeli authorities' intention to open more, along with those that have been open since 5 April, with key functions in Gaza. In keeping with the mechanism, for goods coming from Jordan in the first instance, as well as to Gaza through Erez, other current and I hope prospective northern crossings, as well as the maritime route, will be used.

Regarding the last question about resolution 2720 (2023), it is clear that it requires the mechanism to be used to verify the humanitarian nature of aid. However, it is of course a logical premise that the way the mechanism is structured means that it could also be used for commercial goods in future, in due course, when we are talking about early recovery and reconstruction. But it is structured with a view to conforming to the language of the Council for humanitarian assistance.

However, that rests on the parties. I would like to stress that commercial goods are very much needed within the Gaza Strip. We need both the informal and formal economies to be rebooted and combined with cash assistance. The availability of cash is currently lacking in the Gaza Strip for a number of reasons, and that is critically important in helping to restore elements of human dignity for the civilians in Gaza.

I thank the Council very much for its support of political unity and a united voice, and we will continue with the teams in the wider United Nations family to do our utmost to deliver on the expectations.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Kaag for the clarifications she has provided.

*The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.*